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# In Heaven as It Is on Earth: The Social and Ethical Dimensions of Higher and Lower Levels of Salvation

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# In Heaven as It Is on Earth:
# The Social and Ethical Dimensions of Higher and Lower Levels of Salvation

**Alexander Kocar**

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# Abstract

This dissertation considers the causes and effects of different levels of salvation in ancient Judaism and Christianity. I examine two Jewish followers of Jesus (Paul the Apostle and John of Patmos) as well as several early Christian authors (e.g., the *Apocryphon of John*, the *Shepherd of Hermas*, and certain Valentinians) who believed that there were multiple levels of reward among the saved depending on the virtue of the person or people in question. Thus, in addition to hell for the damned, they imagined there was not merely one heaven for the saved, but rather multiple levels of heaven. An investigation into *who* earns the higher or lower level of salvation and *why* (e.g., What constitutes the greatest virtue? Who is a savable sinner?) reveals much about the historical, social, and philosophical context of these different authors.

By constructing a difference between a lower and higher level of salvation, ancient authors could devise soteriological hierarchies that could account for ethical imperfections and social differentiation between their communities and outsiders as well as reinforce idealized portrayals of conduct among members of their own group(s). With this in mind, my dissertation pursues a series of questions that relate to the formative period of ethical norms and boundary drawing in the New Testament and early Christianity by asking the following: how did certain thinkers identify and describe ethical and social difference among people; what ideological commitments motivated them to make such distinctions; what were the social effects of different salvific categories and different ethical standards; and what impact did these soteriologies have upon the development of competing notions of ethical responsibility? In answering these questions, my dissertation interacts with and contributes to ongoing discussions on ancient ethics (especially free will and responsibility), the construction of orthodoxy and heresy, and debates surrounding the origins of *Christianity* as a universal, *tertium* quid.

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**For my wife and best-friend, Meghan Collins Kocar,**

**with love and gratitude.**

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# Introduction: Salvation and Society

According to the Parable of the Workers in the Vineyard, a landowner pays all of his workers – despite great differences in how long they each worked – the same wage (Matthew 20:1 – 15). This metaphor for equal salvation prompts complaints among the characters of the story (Matthew 20:11-12): "And on receiving [the usual wage; see: salvation] they grumbled at the landowner saying, 'These last worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the day and the scorching heat.'" While this parable emphasizes the idea that all who turn to God will be granted equal reward, the frustration of the workers was as relatable to the ancient audience as it is today.

In contrast to Matthew's parable is John's inclusion of Jesus's words of comfort to his disciples in John 14:1 – 2. Just after Jesus reveals that Peter will deny him, his disciples become agitated. Jesus assures them, "Do not let your heart be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. In my Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, would I have told you I go to prepare a place for you?" Despite Peter's less virtuous actions, Jesus consoles him that there is still a place for him among the saved. Nevertheless, this difference in rooms implies that one's salvific end is somehow tailored to one's conduct.[1]

At the core of this dissertation is a question: what is the relationship between soteriology and ethics? More specifically, what do higher and lower levels of salvation indicate about the ethical frameworks and social contexts of their formulators? This question first arose for me after reading Irenaeus and his claim that Valentinian higher and lower levels of salvation

[1] Clement of Alexandria (e.g., *Stromata* VII.2.9) alludes to John 14:2 in order to argue for higher and lower levels of salvation.

*preclude* ethics.[2] Was this true, and was this true for other instances of higher and lower levels of salvation?

The short answer to both questions is no. What is far more interesting, however, is that I soon discovered that higher and lower levels of salvation are often *symptoms* of specific forms of theoretical or social stress, i.e., ancient thinkers posited this soteriology in order to answer pressing questions, which were distinct to their social context(s). My focus in this dissertation, therefore, is not a "tradition" of higher and lower levels of salvation as it evolved diachronically; rather, I will examine three particular cases wherein a particular social and/or theoretical problem led some ancient authors to propose higher and lower levels of salvation as a viable solution.

Consequently, in **PART I** we shall consider two Jewish followers of Jesus, Paul and John of Patmos, as they attempted to picture the salvation of Israel and the Nations. The crux for both authors, as we shall see, was how to preserve and balance Israel's special status against the inclusion of Gentiles *qua* Gentiles. For both authors, the use of different levels of salvation provided a way. In **PART II**, we shall examine the problem of saints and sinners living alongside each other in second-century Christian communities. As we shall see, two early Christian texts, the *Shepherd of Hermas* and the *Apocryphon of John*, both constructed higher and lower levels of salvation to account for this ethical variance. And finally, in **PART III**, we shall investigate an early Christian movement most often called "Valentinian" (e.g., the *Excerpts of Theotodus,* the *Tripartite Tractate*, and Heracelon) in order to explicate their division of humanity into three "types," i.e., hylic, psychic, and pneumatic. As we shall see, this tripartite division, typically seen as indicative of a determinist soteriology, was in fact a complex explanation of their missionizing successes and failures.

[2] See my discussion in **PART III**.

Each of these solutions explicates prevailing social problems or ethical questions in light of how things *will* turn out in the end for *whole* groups of people. Thus, all of the authors and texts considered herein describe *corporate* salvation, i.e., salvific ends are tailored specifically to classes or types of persons, not individuals.[3] Therefore, they are all, with varying degrees of emphasis, teleological narratives that lay out different *sorts* of persons and the roles they play and *will* play – for good and evil – in the unfolding of salvation history. In order to be morally praiseworthy, a person must understand and play the role assigned to him or her.[4]

These roles, however, are particular to each author and products of a specific milieu. Consequently, by examining the manner in which, for example, Paul or the *Shepherd of Hermas* has each constructed a cast of *dramatis personae* and located these characters in the drama of salvation history, we can understand better each author's ideological commitments and historical contexts. For example, the portrayal of specific virtues and vices, differing ethical roles and standards, and various *means* to be saved all are indicative of the specific contexts and problems these authors and texts were seeking to address.

By organizing this dissertation around the understudied typological feature of higher and lower levels of salvation, I hope to offer new answers to a number of familiar questions and debates. To this end, I create odd or uncommon conversation partners (e.g., Paul and John or the *Shepherd of Hermas* and the *Apocryphon of John*) and break up texts and authors traditionally interpreted as saying the same things (e.g., the *Tripartite Tractate/Excerpts of Theodotus* and Heracleon). Furthermore, I complicate certain enduring dichotomies in the study of the New

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[3] This appears most likely to be a product of genre constraints of teleological narratives (i.e., texts that tell the story of salvation). I consider this issue in greater depth in **Chapters 4** and **9**.

[4] My thinking on the role of narrative and its impact on ethics has been influenced by Stanley Hauerwas; though, I doubt he would agree with the ends to which I have applied his arguments. See further Stanley Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom: A Primer in Christian Ethics* (University of Notre Dame Press: Notre Dame, 1983), chapter 2 especially.

Testament and early Christianity, e.g., spiritual v. ritual and universal v. particular (**PART I**), orthodox v. heresy (**PART II**), or voluntary v. determinist (**PART III**).

Each part consists of three chapters. The first chapter (**Chapters 1**, **4**, and **7**) of each part will serve as the introduction to the major questions and themes that will be explored in greater detail in the following two chapters. The second chapter of each part (**Chapters 2, 5,** and **8**) will feature comparisons of two texts or authors and is meant to address a pre-existing scholarly dispute. And the final chapter of each part (**Chapters 3**, **6,** and **9**) will be a synthetic conclusion that will expand upon the earlier two chapters. In order to understand the argument of each part, therefore, the individual chapters must be read sequentially and cannot be read in isolation of one another.

In addition to serving as introduction, **Chapter 1** provides an outline of what I mean by ancient (i.e., circa Second-Temple) Judaism and surveys the diversity of Jewish views on the eschatological fate of Gentiles. In **Chapter 2** I bring together and cross-pollinate two historiographic trends, each of which is invested in interpreting Paul and John respectively as Jewish and not Christian (see: supersessionist) authors; by bringing these two trends into close conversation with one another, I argue forcefully against a prominent hermeneutic that minimizes ethnic and ethical differences between Gentiles and Jews. This intervention is meant to caution against the imposition of the label of Christianity, which often levels out important soteriological and ethical differences in favor of a single, universalizing category "Christianity."

Building on **Chapter 2**, I argue in **Chapter 3** that John and Paul both devised and tailored specific ethical expectations for Gentiles and Jews in light of the eschatological role(s) they each will play. As we shall see, Revelation tells the ethical and soteriological story of five groups of people: Jewish martyrs and the priestly elect, Gentile converts and priests, remedially

saved Jews, saved Gentiles, and all the rest who are destroyed. John reconciled expectations for Gentile salvific inclusion with complex spatial and temporal subordination while all the while underscoring that Gentile salvation is not primarily about saving the Nations but was rather *part* of Israel's restoration. In this way, according to John, salvation history will conclude with higher and lower levels of salvation and different roles for different types of the saved.

In the second half of **Chapter 3**, we shall consider the Paul's attempts to similarly differentiate between the salvation and expected conduct tailored for Jews and Gentiles respectively. I make and defend the following four claims regarding the Apostle to the Gentiles: Paul 1. prioritized Israel's salvation over and above that of the Nations; 2. maintained the continued importance of Torah observance for Jews; 3. constructed *different* ethical standards for those Gentiles who might be saved; and 4. claimed that all, both Jews and Gentiles, who were saved, were saved *in* Christ.

In **Chapter 4**, I situate two early Christian texts, the *Apocryphon of John* and the *Shepherd of Hermas*, in the context of second-century debates about the problem of suitable desserts. Do certain ethical virtuosos *deserve* great salvific rewards? What happens when the saved sin again? How do you differentiate between the damned and those sinners who might still be saved? Throughout **PART II**, we shall consider how the *Apocryphon of John* and the *Shepherd of* Hermas answer these questions, and what these answers indicate about the social constitution of their communities.

In **Chapter 5**, I introduce the *Shepherd of Hermas'* and the *Apocryphon of John'*s versions of higher and lower levels of salvation; of special interest will be the content of the two levels of ethical conduct: saints and savable sinners. Following this, **Chapter 6** examines how both texts conceive of sinfulness as part of their efforts to reintegrate sinners into their

communities. By examining what constitutes each text's highest ideals, minimum ethical requirements, notion(s) of sin, strategies for resisting deviant conduct, and means for reincorporating sinners, we gain insight into a formative period of Christian ethical discourse.

**PART II** as a whole is also meant to address a poorly argued yet persistent cliché among scholars, i.e., that groups later designated as heretics did not (and *could* not) have had the same kinds of social organizations (i.e., churches) as those retrospectively called orthodox. Once we remove this anachronistic binary (heresy v. orthodoxy) as an orienting tool, however, we find that there is no sound reason internal to the "orthodox" *Shepherd of Hermas* or the "heretical" *Apocryphon of John* to assign these texts to radically different social settings. Instead, as we shall see, both texts were deeply concerned over the stability of their communities and developed soteriological solutions to the problem of the ethical variance. Consequently, in light of both their social concerns and the period in which they were written, I conclude that both texts belong to the context of close-knit, urban house churches of the late first and early second-centuries.

**Chapter 7** provides an overview of the nebulous early Christian movement called Valentinian. I briefly survey a number of scholarly debates about the Valentinian *corpus*, as well as their soteriological and ethical commitments. Of special interest is an introduction to the tripartite anthropology endorsed by three texts, the *Tripartite Tractate,* the *Excerpts of Theodotus*, and Heracleon's *Commentary on John*.

In **Chapter 8**, I address a longstanding scholarly divide over whether to interpret the Valentinians as soteriological determinists and thus unethical or as *ethical* and thus *not* soteriological determinists. Drawing upon insights from both camps, I carve out a middle position that affirms that some Valentinians deployed a soteriology with multiple and fixed levels of salvation, but that they also maintained standards for ethical conduct and moral

responsibility by means of this soteriology. To this end, I demonstrate that the *Tripartite Tractate* and the *Excerpts of Theodotus* fashioned certain roles in the drama of salvation history in light of their ongoing missionizing struggles and successes. Due to this teleological emphasis, neither text contains a notion of *voluntary choice* typically associated with the attribution of moral responsibility; however, as I show, this does not entail a *lack* of ethics. Instead, the *Tripartite Tractate* and the *Excerpts of Theodotus* endorse a *different* framework for assigning moral praise or blame, thereby demonstrating the plurality of ethical frameworks in antiquity.

Finally, in **Chapter 9** I consider the views of a third Valentinian author, Heracleon. As we shall see, Heracleon's views differ from his Valentinian peers. Similar to both the *Excerpts of Theodotus* and the *Tripartite Tractate*, Heracleon connects the tripartite division of humanity with the ethical expectation that the more advanced pneumatics are responsible for and obligated to help save psychics; there is, however, no evidence in Heracleon of higher and lower levels of salvation. Although Heracleon differs from his Valentinian peers on the issue of soteriology, it is unclear whether his views may have resulted from deliberate intra-Valentinian debate or from his choice of inter-texts and literary genre. In either case, Heracleon's *Commentary on John* complicates as well as supports some of the conclusions we arrived at in the **Chapter 8**, and it also provides additional insights into the diversity of this early Christian missionizing movement.

# Part I

## The Salvation of Jews and Gentiles:

### Higher and Lower Levels of Salvation in the Letters of the Apostle Paul and John of Patmos' Revelation

# Chapter 1
# Jewish Soteriology and the Problem of "Universalism"

## Universalism and the Erasure of Difference

In his thought-provoking book on the Apostle Paul, Daniel Boyarin asserts: "Paul was motivated by a Hellenistic desire for the One, which among other things produced an ideal of a universal human essence, beyond difference and hierarchy."[1] Although Boyarin adamantly argues that Paul sought to abolish hierarchy and difference, his specific reconstruction of Paul – due in part to its extreme and "Hellenizing" (see: Platonizing) formulation – remains rather marginal among scholars.[2] Nonetheless, similar characterizations of the Apostle Paul as an anthropological and soteriological universalist reappear throughout Pauline studies.[3] In this context, universalism connotes the radical equality or sameness of all humanity (Gal. 3:28: "There is no longer Jew or Greek, no longer slave or free, no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus"[4]) and uniform standard(s) for salvation for all of humanity (1 Cor. 15:22: "For just as all die in Adam, so all will be made alive in Christ").[5] In other words, just as there is a single and

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1 Daniel Boyarin, *A Radical Jew: Paul and the Politics of Identity* (Berkeley et al: University of California, 1994), 7.
2 An additional factor may be Boyarin's unabashed praise and promotion of a Paul resembling that of Ferdinand Christian Baur's. For a clear historiographic survey and contextualizing critique of Baur's Paul and similar formulations, see Dale Martin, "Paul and the Judaism/Hellenism Dichotomy: Toward a Social History of the Question," in *Paul Beyond the Judaism/Hellenism Divide* (ed. Troels Engberg-Pedersen; Louisville: Westminster/ John Knox, 2001), 29 – 61. See also Martha Himmelfarb's review of Boyarin's *Radical Jew* in *Association for Jewish Studies* 21 (1996): 148 – 51.
3 For competing notions of "universalism" in Paul, see the excellent but also eclectic collection of papers exploring the historical appropriateness and philosophical usefulness of (re)framing Paul's writings in light of "universalism" in *St. Paul Among the Philosophers* (ed. John D. Caputo and Linda Martin Alcoff; Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009); for an excellent recent study making use of ethnic reasoning and discourse to critique alleged Pauline universalism, see further Caroline Johnson-Hodge, *If Sons then Heirs: A Study of Kinship and Ethnicity in the Letters of Paul* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).
4 All biblical translations are NRSV; however, I frequently adapt and modify these translations in order to highlight possible interpretations that may go overlooked in conventional renderings.
5 Some interpreters might also add to this series universalism *in scope*, i.e., including all of humanity; this theoretical development, however, makes better sense in the ideological context of someone like Origen and his cosmological and theodicean concerns rather than in the letters of Paul who was constrained by an ever-dwindling timeline and motivated by several pressing pastoral concerns specific to his addressed communities. For a concise and

uniform portrait of humanity, so too is there a singular source of salvation, i.e., Jesus Christ. Therefore, since every person is equal and saved by the same means, then, so it is argued, this entails a single set of criteria – variously conceived as exclusively soteriological or soteriological and ethical – according to which each person will be judged and thereby held morally accountable.[6] As a result, *this* Paul has rejected Judaism and its particularism in favor of a new and universal religion where salvation is available to every person on the same soteriological (and ethical) grounds.[7]

Although this perspective has no shortage of proponents, it requires modification and clarification. Paul could not reject "Judaism" in this sense because Paul's Judaism was not a reified and doctrinally bounded belief system that could be straightforwardly rejected in favor of

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contextualizing treatment of Origen's universalism, see Paula Fredriksen, "Historical Integrity, Interpretative Freedom: The Philosopher's Paul and the Problem of Anachronism," in *St. Paul Among the Philosophers*, 61 – 73.

[6] Although most modern scholars would not subscribe to Luther's radical interpretation that every person is saved by faith and faith alone, a number of scholars have proposed a lowest common denominator of ethical and soteriological criteria. Although with some notable variation, this lower common denominator option often takes one of two forms: 1. the *subtraction* of all Jewish practices that might distinguish or separate Jewish Jesus followers from Gentile converts; or 2. the *addition* of some ethical and purity requirements to Gentiles in order to facilitate the creation of a unified community of Jews and Gentiles where certain Jewish practices and/or scruples can still be observed. Representing this second view are Mark Nanos and Terence Donaldson who have incorporated Jewish justifications for righteous Gentiles, e.g., the Noahide Commandments and Rules for the Sojourner. See Mark Nanos, *The Mystery of Romans: The Jewish Context of Paul's Letters* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996); and Terence Donaldson, *Paul and the Gentiles: Remapping the Apostle's Convictional World* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997). See also Alan Segal's enlightening discussion of the difference between the Rules for the Sojourner and the Noahide Commandments, particularly helpful is Segal's careful attention to the possible power-disparities in play, e.g., the Rules for the Sojourner might be more prevalent in a context in which Jews are the majority in power, whereas, the Noahide Commandments may fit better within the context of Disapora Judaism. See Segal, *Paul the Convert: The Apostolate and Apostasy of Saul the Pharisee* (Yale University Press: New Haven, 1990), 187 – 223; and idem, "Universalism in Judaism and Christianity," *Paul in His Hellenistic Context* (ed. Troels Engberg-Pedersen; T & T Clark: Edinburgh, 1994), 1 – 29.

Drawing upon Nanos, Donaldson, Segal and others, I will return to the Jewish construction of ethical expectations tailored specifically to Gentiles in **Chapter 3**.

[7] Thus, Paul supposedly rejects the "works of the law" since they are the parochial and nationalist practices of the Jews through which they socially differentiate themselves from the Nations; consequently, insofar as the works of the law do not contribute to salvation but instead only create dissent and disparity between Jews and Gentiles, Paul, so the argument goes, has embraced a new, universal religion, Christianity, that is free from this source of nationalistic boasting. See the influential article by James D. G. Dunn, "Works of the Law and the Curse of the Law (Galatians 3:10 – 14)," *New Testament Studies* 31 (1985): 523 – 42.

another anachronistically formulated category, Christianity.[8] Secondly, although Paul does believe that Jews and Gentiles are saved insofar as they become co-heirs to the promise made to Abraham by participating *in* Christ (Abraham's seed) through baptism (Gal. 3:29), this does not entail a radical and totalizing universalism that eliminates social, ethical, or even eschatological difference. For Paul, soteriology and ethics are related, but they do not have a strictly causal relationship where one (ethics) determines or earns the other (salvation). Nor does one (soteriology) necessarily subsume or compress the other (ethics) into a uniform system wherein ethics is secondary and contingent insofar as they are only how one stays "in" the single saved people.[9] Third and finally, there is not a totalizing salvific path that transcends or subtracts all ethnic or eschatological difference in the service of a single soteriological and ethical system; instead, we find in Paul's letters different timelines and different standards for appropriate conduct for Jews and Gentiles, despite the fact that both share a single means, Jesus Christ, for salvation.[10]

With these points in mind, I will examine the complex soteriological and ethical views of Paul and the structurally similar views of his first-century Jewish compatriot John of Patmos as each describes the eschatological salvation of the Nations and Israel. As I will show, both Paul the Apostle and John of Patmos differentiate between and prioritize the salvation of Israel over

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[8] *Pace* E.P. Sanders' (*Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Religion* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1977), 552) oft-quoted claim: "In short, this is what Paul finds wrong in Judaism: it is not Christianity." See below for my discussion of the historically contingent and non-essentialist nature of "Judaism."

[9] This language of staying "in" is an obvious reference to E. P. Sanders' famous construction of covenantal nomism; see, for example, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 419 – 28 and 511 – 23. It is not that I think Sanders is categorically wrong. In fact, I think Sanders' explanation is admirably economical for the vast number of sources it seeks to encompass; however, as we will see, I am interested in parsing the situatedness of Paul – especially his pastoral concerns and the impact of his eschatological beliefs – and this situatedness tends to be minimized when we try to fit Paul into a one-size-fits-all of Judaism soteriology.

[10] Whether or not Paul truly endorses a universal anthropology is outside the scope of **PART I**; suffice to say, Paul does differentiate between biblical expectations for Jews and Gentiles from a top-town and teleological (salvation history) perspective. On the issue of anthropological difference and its relationship to ethical expectations in early Christianity, see further **PART III** of this dissertation.

that of the Nations.[11] Paul programmatically underscores this priority at the onset of his Letter to the Romans (1:16; cf. 2:9 – 10; 9:24; 15:8 – 9) by noting that salvation (σωτηρία) comes first to the Jew and then to the Greek ("Ἰουδαίῳ τε πρῶτον καὶ Ἕλληνι").[12] At the climax of his narrative of salvation history in Romans 11, Paul emphasizes again Israel's salvific priority insofar as *all* of Israel will be saved while only the *full number* of Gentiles (τὸ πλήρωμα τῶν ἐθνῶν) may be engrafted onto the metaphorical olive tree that represents the salvation reserved for Israel.[13]

John of Patmos similarly divides all of humanity into two groups – Jew and Gentile – and also maintains a salvific hierarchy between the two. Drawing upon the language of a holy war census in Revelation 7, John enumerates and thereby highlights the 144,000 thousand (12,000 from each of the restored 12 tribes of Israel) of the saved before describing the secondary and subordinate participation of the Gentiles. In the eschatological vision of Revelation 21 – 22, John further describes this hierarchical relationship by appealing to the concentric space of a new earth with a new Jerusalem as its center in order to accentuate how in the eschaton redeemed Jews and Gentiles will play different roles: some Jews[14] will serve as priests in the restored Temple, while saved Gentiles, in accordance with Isaiah 60, will offer homage as repentant pilgrims.

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[11] Many scholars have transformed this dichotomy of Israel v. Nations to mean Christians v. all others. As we shall see in **Chapter 2**, this is untenable for John and Paul. On the issue of *who* was included by the title Israel, see further Graham Harvey, *The True Israel: Uses of the Names Jew, Hebrew, and Israel in Ancient Jewish and Early Christian Literature* (Leiden: Brill, 1996) and Peter Richardson, *Israel in the Apostolic Church* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1969).

[12] Although Luke's (Acts 17:1 – 2) description of a two-step program, wherein Paul first preached in the synagogue of each city, is provocative, caution dictates we must treat Luke's reconstruction of Paul with a healthy degree of skepticism (*pace* Mark Nanos, *Mystery of Romans*).

[13] See Dale Martin's provocative recasting of *extra ecclesiam nulla salus* to *extra Israel nulla salus* in "The Promise of Teleology, the Constraints of Epistemology, and Universal Vision in Paul," in *St. Paul Among the Philosophers,* 101.

[14] As we will see, these priests may include former Gentiles who converted to Judaism in accordance with Isaiah 66: 20 – 24; cf. Isaiah 2:2 – 4.

Over the course of **PART I**, we shall investigate the problem of how, why, when, and to what degree Gentiles could participate in Israel's impending eschatological redemption and the social and ethical implications of such theoretical speculation. Although the Jesus movement became a predominantly Gentile movement within a few generations after the death of Jesus of Nazareth, I will avoid as much as possible importing teleological and anachronistic assumptions shaped by this later development, in particular the assumption that the earliest Jesus followers imagined themselves as a "third race" existing alongside Jew and Gentile.[15] Instead, by remaining sensitive to the binary between Jew and Gentile undergirding the social and soteriological expectations of early Jewish authors such as Paul and John, I will argue that these two authors – the only two we confidently know by name from the whole of the New Testament – maintained differing ethical expectations for Jews and Gentiles.

As we shall see, both John and Paul interpreted the unfolding story of salvation history and the imminent end of the current age through the lens of Jewish scriptures and prophecies about the restoration of Israel and the ingathering of the Nations. Events, however, were not unfolding precisely as they expected. Consequently, both John and Paul had to improvise and creatively adapt their exegetical expectations in an effort to reconcile them with their experiences. J. Christiaan Beker's hermeneutic of coherence and contingency is instructive:[16] both Paul and John are committed to the truth of salvation history, the shape and content of which have been revealed throughout Jewish scriptures; both authors, however, have also revised and adjusted their expectations for salvation history dialectically in light of real world circumstances. Consequently, it is important to bear in mind not only how each author draws

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[15] See Philippa Townsend, *Another Race? Ethnicity, Universalism, and the Emergence of Christianity* (Ph.D. Dissertation: Princeton University, 2009).

[16] J. Christiaan Beker, *Paul the Apostle: The Triumph of God in Life and Thought* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980); cf. Terrrence Donaldson who argues against Beker that *three* levels (convictional core, theological explication, and contingent hermeneutic) are required in his *Paul and the Gentiles*, 37.

upon varying streams of Jewish prophetic expectations but also how each author reshapes and applies these exegetical resources to his particular context.

**PART I**, therefore, not only attempts to argue for the existence of a specific soteriology – one of shared salvation with an internal distinction of higher and lower rewards – but it thereby also seeks to complicate overwrought binaries of "universalism" v. "particularism" and "grace" v. "merit." These weighty theological dichotomies are too often posited as mutually exclusive or essentializing insofar as they signify *the* core of an author's motivation/worldview. I hope to show, by contrast, the messiness and dynamism of the competing social and theoretical commitments behind Paul and John's soteriology of higher and lower levels of salvation.[17] In the remainder of **Chapter 1**, I provide an outline of what I mean by Judaism in this period as well as the diversity of Jewish views on the eschatological fate of Gentiles.

In **Chapter 2** I bring together and cross-pollinate two historiographic trends, each of which is invested in interpreting Paul and John respectively as Jewish and not Christian (see: supersessionist) authors. By bringing these two trends into close conversation with one another, I will argue forcefully against a prominent hermeneutic that minimizes ethnic and ethical differences between Gentiles and Jews. This intervention is meant to caution against the imposition of the label of Christianity, which often levels out important soteriological and ethical differences in favor of a single, universalizing soteriology and ethic where all are responsible to and judged on the basis of the same set of criteria.

Finally in **Chapter 3**, w shall examine the social and theoretical justifications and probable impact of higher and lower levels of salvation in John of Patmos and Paul the Apostle.

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[17] In recognizing the gravitational pull that Paul and John's biblical convictions exert on their conceptual frameworks, I depend upon the discussion of embedded or situated rationality found in Jeffrey Stout, *The Flight from Authority*: *Religion, Morality, and the Quest for Autonomy* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 1981), 149 – 76; and Alasdair MacIntyre, *Whose Reason? Which Rationality?* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 1988).

Of particular interest will be how both authors deploy the language of spatial and temporal difference in order to distinguish between Gentile and Jewish salvation and to privilege particular sorts of conduct and values. It is my contention that neither Paul nor John imagined a universal humanity completely free from difference and hierarchy;[18] accordingly, both Paul and John proposed soteriological and ethical ideals that were tailored to each author's biblically informed expectations for Jews and Gentiles. By considering John and Paul's ethics and soteriology, I hope to illuminate the ethical ideals and boundary-drawing of a very specific and early period of the Jesus movement, a period prior to and ignorant of the later threefold division of humanity into Jew, Gentile, and Christian.

## Judaism and Jewish Views of Gentile Salvation

There was a wide range of overlapping and sometimes contradictory expectations for Gentile involvement in Israel's eschatological redemption and celebration in ancient Judaism, ranging from complete conversion and entrance into the ranks of priests and Levites such as we find in Isaiah 66 to the utter annihilation of all Gentiles found in *War Scroll* (1 *QM* 1.1 – 2) or 4 Ezra (12:33; 13:38). As we shall see in **Chapter 3**, both John and Paul are somewhere between these two extremes: John envisions Gentile involvement, as Gentiles, to be closest to the eschatological pilgrimage of Isaiah 60 and thus expects resurrected Gentiles to turn to God and to be present at the eschatological celebration at Jerusalem as pilgrims offering veneration. Paul, for his part, constructs a biblical pastiche to explain both the unexpected delay in the parousia and Israel's apparent "stumbling" and to reconcile these apparent difficulties with God's

[18] "It is important to recognize that although Paul uses the terminology of *anthrôpos* (3:28) and *pas/pantes* (11:32), he never loses sight of the fact that Jews and Gentiles were two distinct peoples who even in Christ cannot be fused together into one general category of *homo universalis*." J. C. Beker, "The Faithfulness of God and the Priority of Israel in Paul's Letter to the Romans," *Christians Among Jews and Gentiles: Essays in Honor of Krister Stendahl on his Sixty-Fifth Birthday* (ed. George W. E. Nickelsburg and George W. MacRae; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), 10 – 16, citation from 13.

guarantee that *all* of Israel will be saved. Consequently, Paul devises a complex narrative of salvation history with differing and staggered timelines for Gentile and Jewish baptism into Christ (Romans 9 – 11).

Although both authors expect that some Gentiles will be saved insofar as they will participate in Israel's eschatological celebration, both Paul and John emphasize the temporal and spatial subordination of these saved Gentiles to Israel.[19] As we will see, Paul and John's soteriology is a continuation – with some modifications – of a strand in Biblical and Second Temple Judaism of higher and lower levels of salvation for Jews and Gentiles respectively. To provide a context for their construction of higher and lower levels of salvation, therefore, we turn now to a survey of ancient Jewish soteriological speculation about the fate of the Nations.

### *Ancient Judaism*

Ancient Judaism was not monolithic.[20] Accordingly, there were several competing and often conflicting streams of traditions and opinions about the eschatological fate of Gentiles. For the sake of brevity, I have typologically organized these varying opinions into three synthetic categories on the basis of how they represent the fate of Gentiles: utter destruction; equal salvation of all the saved; and finally higher and lower levels of salvation.[21] To illustrate the

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[19] See **Chapter 3**.

[20] There are a number of excellent recent studies emphasizing the diversity and historical contingency of various elements and strands of ancient Judaism: see especially Shaye J.D. Cohen, *The Beginnings of Jewishness: Boundaries, Varieties, Uncertainties*. (University of California Press: Berkeley, 1999) and Seth Schwartz, *Imperialism and Jewish Society: 200 B.C.E. to 640 C.E.* (Princeton University Press: Princeton, 2001).
On the issues of continuity, rupture, and change in ancient Judaism, see further Ra'anan Boustan's helpful historiographic outline of competing perspectives between those highlighting rupture through top-down or global shifts and those concentrating on continuity, especially in localized practices such as synagogue observances. Ra'anan S. Boustan, "Augustine as Revolutionary? Reflections on Continuity and Rupture in Jewish-Christian Relations in Paula Fredriksen's *Augustine and the Jews*," *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 99.1 (2009): 74 – 87, see especially 75 – 78.

[21] My three typological categories are formulated to suit the needs of this chapter and are thus in some ways idiosyncratic; nonetheless, I found a number of scholarly overviews of the general diversity of Jewish views on the salvation of Gentiles – even if I differ from their conclusions – to be illuminating. See especially E. P. Sanders,

general features of each typological category, I will briefly consider a few paradigmatic examples. It is essential, however, to keep in mind that this overview is intended as a brief sketch of the diversity of Judaism in Paul and John's day and thus functions as prologue to my project of situating Paul and John within their broader context; I do not intend to be compendious nor will I be able to consider the numerous instances of texts and authors who transgress and problematize the artificially bounded categories I have created.

Before I consider these three specific typological groupings, a brief outline of what I mean by "Judaism" will be helpful. As numerous scholars have shown, ancient Jewish identity is a complex amalgam of ethnic, cultural, and political factors that does not have a unifying objective or empirical criterion or series of criteria that can provide a single definition of what it means to be Jewish.[22] Nonetheless, although Judaism could mean different things to different authors depending on their social location and ideological commitments, constructing the category itself was central to the common project of Jewish identity formation and boundary drawing.[23] In this way, Judaism and Jewishness could be fashioned and deployed not only to create social and theoretical distance from "outsiders," but also to reinforce and privilege various values and practices among "insiders."

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*Jesus and Judaism* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 212 – 21; Terence Donaldson, *Paul*, 51 – 78; idem, *Judaism and the Gentiles: Jewish Patterns of Universalism to 135 CE* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2007); Mark Nanos, *Mystery*, 57 – 64.

[22] See Shaye J. D. Cohen's excellent study on "Jewishness," *The Beginnings of Jewishness*, passim.

[23] Significant categories of identity will have elements of theoretical fixity and social fluidity. See further Denise Kimber Buell, *Why This New Race? Ethnic Reasoning in Early Christianity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005).

As part of an essentializing binary of us (Jews) and everyone else (Gentiles/ the Nations), some ancient Jewish authors constructed *Jewishness* or *Judaism* on the model of *Hellenism*, i.e., as a totalizing way of life – encompassing beliefs, practices, and values – that could be learned.[24]

> Even if "Judean" always retained its ethnic meaning, in the Hasmonean period common mode of worship and common way of life became much more important in the new definition of Judean/Jew. Just as a barbarian could become a Hellene through speaking Greek and adopting a Greek way of life, a gentile could become a Jew through worshiping the God of Jerusalem (i.e., believing firmly in God) and/or adopting a Judean way of life (i.e., observing the ancestral laws of the Judeans).[25]

Epitomizing this notion of Judaism, the author of 2 Maccabees promotes a notion of Jewishness that privileges specific features of culture and practice:

> [This is] the story of Judas Maccabeus and his brothers, and the purification of the great temple, and the dedication of the altar…of those *who fought bravely for Judaism* (τοῖς ὑπὲρ τοῦ Ιουδαϊσμοῦ φιλοτίμως ἀνδραγαθήσασιν), so that though few in number they seized the whole land and pursued the barbarian hoards, and regained the temple famous throughout the world, and liberated the city, and *re-established the laws* that were about to be abolished. (2 Maccabees 2:19 – 22, emphasis added).[26]

Nonetheless, despite privileging discrete cultural practices and values – in addition to or sometimes in place of ethnic heritage[27] – this notion of Judaism still aims to reinforce the fundamental binary of Jews and Gentiles, thereby demarcating and distinguishing Jewish practice and identity (i.e., a Jewish way of life) from that of the Nations.[28] It is with this

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[24] Shaye J. D. Cohen, *Beginnings*, 109 – 39, especially 132 - 39; Martha Himmelfarb, "Judaism and Hellenism in 2 Maccabees," *Between Temple and Torah*: *Essays on Priests, Scribes, and Visionaries in the Second Temple Period and Beyond* (Tübingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 2013), 191 – 210.

[25] Shaye J. D. Cohen, *Beginnings*, 133.

[26] See 2 Maccabees 4:9 – 17 for the author's opposing definition for Hellenism.

[27] See Martha Himmelfarb's *A Kingdom of Priests*: *Ancestry and Merit in Ancient Judaism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006) for her excellent diachronic survey of this tension between ancestry and merit.

[28] See also Shaye J. D. Cohen (*Beginnings*, 136): "The key to the new idea of a change of citizenship or political enfranchisement is the Greek concept of *politeia*, which means, among other things, both 'citizenship' and 'public way of life.' The Harmonean state extended Judean citizenship to the Idumaeans and Ituraeans, two neighboring peoples, thus incorporating them into the Judean League…as price for membership, the Hasmoneans demanded that the Ideumaeans and the Ituraeans be circumcised and follow the laws of the Judeans. Since most of the Idumaeans and the Ituraeans were already circumcised, this was not particularly onerous, and the Idumaeans and the Ituraeans clearly thought that the advantages to be gained by the alliance outweighed the cost."

functional notion of Judaism in mind, as a dynamic and high-stakes means to police boundaries and to privilege certain shared values and practices, that we can make better sense of John and Paul's distinctive views and their place in the broader context of Second Temple Judaism.[29]

### *Jewish Soteriologies and the Fate(s) of Gentiles*

Turning to my first typological category, we note that some ancient Jewish authors affirmed the impending and inescapable eschatological destruction awaiting all Gentiles. Emblematic of this perspective is the second century BCE retelling of the book of Genesis, *Jubilees*, which recasts the story of Abraham and the significance of circumcision in order to detail the fate of the Nations as follows:

> This law is for all the eternal generations and there is no circumcising of days and there is no passing a single day beyond eight days because it is an eternal ordinance ordained and written in the heavenly tablets. And anyone who is born whose own flesh is not circumcised on the eighth day is not from the sons of the covenant, which the Lord made for Abraham, since (he is) from the children of destruction. And there is therefore no sign upon him so that he might belong to the Lord because (he is destined) to be destroyed and annihilated from the earth and to be uprooted from the earth because he has broken the covenant of the Lord our God.[30]

Not only are all Gentiles destined for destruction but even *former* Gentiles,[31] according to the author of *Jubilees*, are doomed since they too were not circumcised on the eighth day.[32]

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[29] I use "Second Temple Judaism" as an imperfect placeholder for the period of time between the era of Ezra and Nehemiah (6th – 5th c. BCE) to the composition and consolidation of the Mishnah (2 – 3rd c. CE).

[30] *Jubilees* 15:25 – 26, translated by O.S. Wintermute in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha: Volume 2* (ed. James Charlesworth; Doubleday: New York et al., 1985).

[31] On not calling these former Gentiles "converts," see Martha Himmelfarb (*Kingdom of Priests,* 74 – 84) who notes the conceptual impossibility, according to *Jubilees*, for anyone *not* born of Israel to convert and *become* a Jew.

[32] Elsewhere, *Jubilees* (7:20 – 21) supplies a moral rationale for this universal condemnation of Gentiles via the story of Noah and his commands to his sons to honor parents, love neighbors, do justice, and to avoid fornication, pollution, and injustice. Although this story is similar to what in later and Rabbinic texts becomes called the Noahide Commandments (e.g., t. Sand. 13.2; t. AZ 8.4), *Jubilees*, as Alan Segal notes, uses this narrative to justify the categorical exclusion and salvific unworthiness of Gentiles because they do not obey these commands (Segal, "Universalism," 10 – 11). In Rabbinic interpretation, however, the Noahide Commandments function *inclusively* and entail that some (perhaps very few) Gentiles *could* be righteous and thus deserving of a place in the world to come. On the Noahide Commandments, see further David Novak, *The Image of the Non-Jew in Judaism: The Idea of the Noahide Law* (2nd edition, edited by Matthew Lagrone; Oxford: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2011);

Echoing the "holy seed" ideology of the book of Ezra,[33] *Jubilees* features a genealogical model for inclusion among Israel.[34] The author of *Jubilees*, as Martha Himmelfarb notes, goes even further than Ezra in fashioning Israel as a uniquely holy race by likening Israel and her priestly observances to angels and their temple practices in heaven.[35]

Adapting this binary of saved Israel and damned Nations, some texts argue that even some from among ethnic Israel will join the totality of the Nations in perdition. These texts contrast the holiness or piety of Israel (or at least the holy remnant) in order to condemn outsiders who are portrayed as children of the demonic rulers of the world (*War Scroll* 1 *QM* 1.1 – 2; cf. *The Community Rule* 1QS 2:4-9) or as people who are sinfully disobedient of God's commandments (4 Ezra).[36] These texts, then, like *Jubilees*, deploy a salvific binary to help police boundaries and reinforce internal cohesion by emphasizing specific practices and values while forbidding activities that weaken these boundaries.[37]

According to my second typological category, the saved all appear to enjoy undifferentiated salvific rewards.[38] Although this second typological grouping includes texts that

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for Novak's argument (which differs from Segal's) for differentiating between the Rabbinic formulation of the Noahide Commandments and the episode in *Jubilees* 7, see Novak, *Image*, 17 – 19.

[33] Ezra 9:1 – 2: "After these things had been done, the officials approached me and said, 'The people of Israel, the priests, and the Levites have not separated themselves from the peoples of the lands with their abominations, from the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Jebusites, the Ammonites, the Moabites, the Egyptians, and the Amorites. For they have taken some of their daughters as wives for themselves and for their sons. Thus the holy seed has mixed itself with the peoples of the lands, and in this faithlessness the officials and leaders have led the way."

[34] Christine Hayes, Christine. *Gentile Impurities and Jewish Identities: Intermarriage and Conversion from the Bible to the Talmud* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 73 – 91.

[35] Martha Himmelfarb, *Kingdom of Priests*, 78 – 84.

[36] 4 Ezra 12:32 – 33; 13:35 – 38; cf. 2 Baruch 48:40 – 47 (although 2 Baruch 72 does make an exemption that some Gentiles may be saved). For similar examples of Gentiles deserving destruction due to their immorality, see T.Mos. 1.12 and 1 Enoch 63.

[37] See, example, *Jubilees*' (30:7 – 17) rejection of intermarriage; cf. Martha Himmelfarb, *Kingdom of Priests*, chapter 2.

[38] Isaiah 25: 6 – 10a: "On this mountain the Lord of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wines, of rich food filled with marrow, of well-aged wines strained clear. And he will destroy on his mountain the shroud that is cast over all peoples, the sheet that is spread over all nations; he will swallow up death forever. Then the Lord God will wipe away the tears from all faces, and the disgrace of his people he will take away from all the earth, for the Lord has spoken. It will be said on the day, 'Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him,

may contain additional passages more consonant with my third typological grouping,[39] one apparent constant among these sections that emphasize the relative equality of this shared salvation is that those saved from among the Nations must transform themselves. This transformation is variously described, but it is most often a "conversion" to monotheism and worship of Israel's God (e.g., Isaiah 56; Psalm 22:27; 1 Enoch 10:21; 1 Enoch 91:14; Tobit 13:11, 14: 6 – 7a; Sib Or. 3.564 – 70, 715 – 23, 757 -75).[40]

Furthermore, this transformation of the Nations appears frequently in contexts where the authors are illustrating the oneness of God, his total supremacy, and his universal rule of all creation.

> In days to come the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be raised above the hills; all the nations shall stream to it. May people shall come and say, 'Come let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths.' For out of Zion shall go forth instruction, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. He shall judge between the nations, and shall arbitrate for many peoples…" (Isaiah 2:2 – 4; cf. Micah 4:1 – 4)

Thus, for Isaiah, as well as a number of other Jewish prophets and writers, the radical inclusiveness of all of humanity is not exclusively, much less predominantly, about minimizing or leveling out all differences distinguishing Israel from the Nations; rather, the more pressing concern is a theological claim about the preeminence of Israel's God and the "ways of the Lord."[41] By extension, therefore, this inclusive yet inwardly-focused[42] rhetoric praises God's

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so that he might save us. This is the Lord for whom we have waited; let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation. For the hand of the Lord will rest on this mountain.'" See also Isaiah 66:21 – 24.

[39] See especially Isaiah 60, cited below as the example *par excellence* for higher and lower levels of salvation.

[40] My description here is shaped by the literary genre and content of those texts that describe Gentile eschatological salvation; for a broader survey of various types or degrees of Gentile respect for and/or conversion to Judaism, see Shaye J.D. Cohen, "Crossing the Boundary and Becoming a Jew," *Harvard Theological Review* 82.1 (1989): 13 – 33; in short, I am more interested in texts relating to the social order and standards of conduct in the eschaton than in "quotidian situations." On this distinction, see further Paula Fredriksen, "Judaism, the Circumcision of Gentiles, and Apocalyptic Hope: Another Look at Galatians 1 and 2," *Journal of Theological Studies* 42.2 (1991): 532 – 64.

[41] Isaiah 56 synthesizes this theological promotion with the recurrent prophetic interest in those who are on the margins of society, e.g., the *foreigner* (בֶּן-הַנֵּכָר; *LXX*: ἀλλογενής); see Isaiah 56:6 – 8: "And the foreigners who join

chosen people, and extols them to persevere and withstand current oppression and difficulties until the world is set right again.[43]

Such radical inclusiveness, nevertheless, was not unproblematic, nor was it without critique and disagreement.[44] Consequently, a number of texts differentiate and subordinate the salvific rewards meted out to Gentiles, whether as proselytes or as Gentiles, albeit usually these Gentiles have at least become ethical monotheists. The *Damascus Document*, found in fragments among the Dead Sea Scrolls and the medieval Cairo Genizah, subdivides humanity into four usable but also hierarchical categories: priests, Levites, the whole assembly of Israel, and proselytes (*CD* XIV: 4 – 5).[45] Although included among the saved, these proselytes are a

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themselves to the Lord, to minister to him, to love the name of the Lord, and to be his servants, all who keep the Sabbath and do not profane it, and hold fast my covenant – these I will bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer; their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be acceptable on my altar; for my house shall be called a house of prayer for all Nations (πᾶσιν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν). Thus says the Lord God, who gathers the outcasts of Israel, I will gather others to them besides those already gathered."

[42] By interpreting these passages and others, like Isaiah 42:6; 49:6 ("a light to the Nations"), as inclusive yet inwardly focused, my argument intersects with the findings of scholars who have challenged the notion that ancient Jews, due in part to their monotheistic beliefs, were active missionaries seeking to convert the world. As opposed to obligating its readers to missionary practices, it appears instead that these passages sought to motivate their Jewish audience to be ethical exemplars whose uprightness and conduct should be the model that all other nations should strive to imitate. There a number of ancient parallels for such an inwardly focused ethic, perhaps most interesting, due to his surprising similarity, is Plotinus: John Dillon, "An Ethic for the Late Antique Sage," *The Cambridge Companion to Plotinus* (ed. Lloyd P. Gerson; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 315 – 335. For scholarly critiques of the representation of ancient (especially Second Temple) Judaism as a "missionary religion," see Paula Fredriksen, "Judaism," 537 – 43, 545 – 46; Scot McKnight, *A Light Among the Gentiles: Jewish Missionary Activity in the Second Temple Period* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991); and Martin Goodman, *Mission and Conversion: Proselytizing in the Religious History of the Roman Empire* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), especially 60 – 90.

[43] Zechariah 8:20 – 23: "Thus says the Lord of hosts: Peoples shall yet come, the inhabitants of many cities; the inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying, 'Come, let us go to entreat the favor of the Lord, and to seek the Lord of hosts; I myself am going.' Many peoples and strong nations shall come to seek the Lord of hosts in Jerusalem, and to entreat the favor of the Lord. Thus says the Lord of hosts: in those days ten men from nations of every language shall take hold of a Jew, grasping his garments and saying, 'Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you.'"

[44] See for example, Ezekiel's attempt to reinforce boundaries between Israel and the Nations: "Say to the rebellious house, say to the house of Israel, Thus says the Lord God: O house of Israel, let there be an end to all your abominations in admitting foreigners (בְּנֵי־נֵכָר; *LXX:* ἀλλογενεῖς), uncircumcised in heart and flesh, to be in my sanctuary, profaning my temple when you offer to me my food, the fat, and the blood…Thus says the Lord God: No foreigner, uncircumcised in heart and flesh, of all the foreigners who are among the people of Israel, shall enter my sanctuary." (Ezekiel, 44:6-7, 9; cf. Isa. 52:1)

[45] In contrast, Philo (*virt.* 20:102 – 104; *sp. leg.* 1.52 – 54) remarks that converted foreigners (τοὺς ἐπηλύτας) should be included among Jewish community without distinction, but loved as much as "one loves oneself."

"marginal group, like the poor and the biblical sojourner."[46] In this way, the *Damascus Document* maintained important conceptual boundaries among the saved, thereby preserving Israel's distinctiveness and elevated status.

Furthermore, a number of passages – often from authors who elsewhere seemingly endorse undifferentiated salvific rewards – indicate that Gentiles may and could be saved as Gentiles; yet, in the passages, Gentile salvation was subordinate to Israel and frequently required service to Israel. As we saw above, although complete conversion was not always required, it was expected that Gentiles undergo some form of transformation or reorientation in order to be saved. Thus, we have a number of texts that claim good Gentiles could join in Israel's eschatological celebration, though only in a secondary and subordinate role.[47]

The narrative setting for these higher and lower levels of salvation is often expressed through the motif of eschatological pilgrimage, in which the Nations, after realizing their past errors, pay homage to God and bring reparations to Israel.[48]

> Nations (גּוֹיִם; *LXX*: ἔθνη) shall come to your light and kings to the brightness of your dawn…Foreigners (בְּנֵי-נֵכָר; *LXX:* ἀλλογενεῖς), shall build up your walls, and their kings shall minister to you; for in my wrath I struck you down, but in my favor I have had mercy on you. Your gates shall always be open; day and night they shall not be shut, so that nations shall bring you their wealth, with their kings led in procession. For the nation and kingdom that will not serve you shall perish; those nations shall be utterly laid waste. (Isaiah 60:3, 10 – 12)

A number of Second Temple texts similarly deploy the evocative imagery of this eschatological pilgrimage scene (e.g., 1 Enoch 10:21; 1 Enoch 90:28 – 38; *Psalms of Solomon* 17:26 – 34).[49]

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[46] Martha Himmefarb, *Kingdom of Priests*, 123 – 24; see *CD* VI. 17 – 21.

[47] What constitutes "good" is elastic and depends on the point of view of each author; for example, 2 Baruch 72 declares that only those Nations who never knew and thus never oppressed Israel will survive.

[48] In addition to Isaiah 60, see the paradigmatic language of Zechariah 14:14b, 16 – 17: "And the wealth of the surrounding nations shall be collected – gold, silver, and garments in great abundance…Then all who survive of the nations that have come against Jerusalem shall go up year after year to worship the Jing, the Lord of Hosts, and to keep the festival of booths. If any of the families of the earth do not go up to Jerusalem to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, there will be no rain upon them."

Not only were these eschatological scenes meant to reassure Jewish readers that their current subjugation to and oppression by the Nations would be overcome, but that as part of the eschatological celebration the offending Nations – after they renounce their wickedness and pay for their crimes – would henceforth interact justly with Israel, since it will be Israel that will then have the upper hand (e.g., Philo, *Praemiis et Poenis*, 164 – 72). It is significant to note in these pilgrimage scenes that while the Nations play a role in the eschatological celebration of the restored Israel, they do not become Jews, instead remaining Gentiles or at least some class of individuals that is fundamentally distinct from saved Jews.[50]

As even this cursory outline of Jewish views about Gentile salvation shows, there was no consensus perspective. Furthermore, as I emphasized in each of my three typologies for the fate of Gentiles (destruction; equal salvation; and higher and lower salvation), there were various situational and theoretical factors that could impact how these ancient authors devised and discussed Gentile soteriology. To paraphrase Lévi-Strauss, Gentiles are "good to think with."[51] Thus, we found that not only was there not a single Jewish perspective on whether, where, or how Gentiles would be saved; but also that passages discussing Gentile salvation often were part of larger or more pressing social and theological arguments, including issues of boundary-drawing, demonstrating God's preeminence, or even offering consolation *via* hope for eschatological restoration and an era of fair-dealing with the Nations of the world.[52] To put it

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[49] See the excellent article examining this motif of the eschatological worship of the Nations in Enochic literature by Loren Stuckenbruck, "The Eschatological Worship of God by the Nations: An Inquiry into the Early Enoch Tradition," *With Wisdom as a Robe: Qumran and Other Jewish Studies in Honour of Ida Fröhlich* (ed. Károly Dániel Dobos and Miklós Köszeghy; Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2009), 189 – 206.
[50] Paula Fredriksen, "Judaism," 547 – 8.
[51] Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind* (University of Chicago Press: Chicago, 1966).
[52]Terence Donaldson, *Paul* 75: "In part, this [lack of a normative view of salvation of Gentiles] is due to the fact that the function of the nations in covenantal formulations is more that of a foil to Israel than an item of interest in its own right. In part, it is due to a tension inherent in the covenantal idea itself: in that Israel's God is the creator and sovereign of all, the Gentiles cannot be excluded from God's purposes; but in that Israel has been chosen in distinction from the other nations, the Gentiles cannot simply be included without the potential threat to Israel's

another way: there was no foregone or inevitable view to which these Jewish authors *must* adhere.

Similarly, John and Paul's views about the salvation of the Nations intersect dynamically and dialectically with their specific theological, ethical, and eschatological convictions. Although John and Paul fit broadly into my third typology of higher and lower levels of salvation, their attempts to live out the diverse visions for Israel's eschatological redemption confound rigid categorization. For example, both were motivated by monotheistic apologetics drawn from passages belonging to my second typological category (undifferentiated salvation); and, as we shall see, there were also significant differences between their own expectations vis-à-vis soteriological timelines, social boundaries, and ethical expectations.

In my next two **Chapters** then, I will consider the similarities and differences between Paul and John as both wrestle with the theoretical and sociological difficulty of reconciling Israel's pride of place with various prophetic expectations about the eschatological redemption of Gentiles. Although both authors similarly endorse what I call salvific hierarchy between Israel and the Nations, their rationales, boundary-lines, ethical expectations, and eschatological narratives differ greatly. Much of their conceptual overlap arises because Paul and John are both drawing from and synthesizing many of the same divergent prophetic expectations regarding the salvific status of the Gentiles. In this way, each author constructs a composite and "anthologizing"[53] or "allusive"[54] eschatological pastich concatenating various biblical strands to illustrate and inter-textually buttress his own vision for the salvation of Gentiles.

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special status. Israel's self-identifying story provides no clear indication of how this tension is to be resolved. It is also due in part to the changing variety of sociopolitical contexts in which Jewish communities encountered Gentiles throughout the Second Temple period."

[53] See Michael Fishbane's description of Daniel's similar practices of anthologizing old prophetic announcements in Daniel 9 – 12: "Several factors give this clustering its particular cultural and exegetical value. First, Dan. 9 – 12 does not simply contain the *ad hoc* explication, reapplication, or (re)specification of the then ancient Jeremian oracle (Jer. 25:9 – 12), but is a coherent formulation of an apocalyptic programme out of many earlier prophetic

In **Chapter 2**, I will examine the significance of the distinction between Jew and Gentile that each author makes in order to caution against importing a third grouping, i.e., "Christian" or "Jewish Christian," insofar as these forcibly restructure John and Paul's principle categories for mapping humanity. Building on **Chapter 2**, I will argue in **Chapter 3** that John and Paul each devised and tailored specific ethical expectations for Gentiles in light of the eschatological role(s) played by Gentiles. It is essential to bear in mind that both believed they were living on the cusp of Israel's redemption; thus, the proximity of and activities expected in the eschaton provide both the motivation as well as content for specific codes of conduct.

To put this another way: when scholars draw attention to *seemingly* problematic and fuzzy middle-ground categories, e.g., "Jewish Christians" like Paul,[55] they are posing questions that are unanswerable on the grounds of and *alien* to Paul's writings because he firmly believed *this world is already fading away* (1 Corinthians 7).[56] Similarly, John weaves a biblically inspired tapestry of evocative images of the imminent end-times (Revelation 1:3); moreover, he also divides all of humanity into either Jew or Gentile, and sees that identity as determining one's ethical conduct and eschatological hope.

While both John and Paul both anticipate the eschatological restoration of Israel and the ingathering of the Nations, each advocates a different approach vis-à-vis the salvation of the Gentiles. Paul is attempting to bring the Nations in *now*. By contrast, John envisions the

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pronouncements." Michael Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 515.

[54] See John J. Collins' comments on the allusive use of prophecy in apocalyptic texts: "In many cases…the use of older texts consists only in the use of a phrase that brings a biblical passage to mind without claiming to interpret it in a definitive way. So the opening chapter of 1 Enoch is a patchwork of biblical phrases, alluding *inter alia* to Balaam's oracle in Numbers 23 – 24. This allusiveness enriches the language by building associations and analogies between the biblical contexts and the new context in which the phrase is used. It also means this language lends itself to multiple levels of meaning and becomes harder to pin down in a univocal, unambiguous way." John J. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction to Jewish Apocalyptic Literature* 2nd edition (Eerdmans: Grand Rapids, MI, 1998), 18.

[55] *Pace* Terence Donaldson, "Jewish Christianity, Israel's Stumbling, and the *Sonderweg* Reading of Paul," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 29.1 (2006): 27 – 54.

[56] *Pace* Alan Segal (*Paul the Convert*, 218 – 223) who asks whether Paul's son have been circumcised.

ingathering of the Nations will take place only after Christ's thousand year reign; furthermore, he believes it will be brought about by God, not by missionizing apostles like Paul.

# Chapter 2
# Saving Jews as Jews and Gentiles as Gentiles

*I know the slander from those who say that they are Jews but are not; they are a synagogue of Satan. (Revelation 2:9*; cf. 3:9*)*

*For a person is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is true circumcision something external and physical. Rather, a person is a Jew who is one inwardly, and real circumcision is a matter of the heart – it is spiritual and not literal. Such a person receives praise not from others, but from God.* (Romans 2:28 – 29)

## Jewish, not Christian or Jewish-Christian: The Problem of Retrospective Categories

For both Paul the Apostle and John of Patmos, the term Jew (*Ioudaios*) is a positive category with important implications for social boundaries and soteriology: John categorically rejects outsiders who (wrongly according to John) claim to be Jews; and Paul distinguishes between those who are inwardly (and truly) Jews from those who have only the external (and therefore false) appearance of a Jew.[1] Christian scholars reading the New Testament have long struggled with the problem that their purportedly Christian forefathers use *Jewish* and not Christian self-designations; heightening their unease, neither Paul nor John ever use the neologism "Christian."[2] Their solution: for John and Paul, Christians are the new *ioudaioi* and *Jews* are

[1] Similarly for Paul, Israel is an important, self-designating category for ethnic Jews (*pace* Terence Donaldson, *Paul and the Gentiles: Remapping the Apostle's Convictional World* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997). See further **Chapter 3** on Romans 9 – 11, especially 11:25 – 26, where Paul assures his readers that God *must* save all of Israel because God *is* trustworthy and thus will abide by his past promises; in other words, Paul's conception of Israel is a continuation of prophetic constructions and *not* a universalizing and undifferentiated place-holder for the saved, Jews and Gentiles.

[2] This discomfort is not unique to modern readers but similarly troubled many early Christians; for examples drawn from fourth-fifth century authors in particular, see Andrew Jacobs, "A Jew's Jew: Paul and the Early Christian Problem of Jewish Origins," *Journal of Religion* 86 (2006): 258 – 86.

now "those who say they are Jews but are not" (Revelation 2:9) or those who are only "externally Jewish" (Romans 2:28 – 29).[3]

What is at stake in how we classify John and Paul? Whether explicitly or implicitly, scholars often retroject Christianity or functionally synonymous placeholders that signify a third and universal way onto Paul and John.[4] The result is a leveling out of difference among the saved: the saints, the elect, and Israel are all Christians who are equally saved without attention to specifics or internal tensions. In so doing, scholars, even those who may go to great lengths to avoid obviously anachronistic labels, import a tripartite scheme that obscures more than it clarifies. As we shall see, John and Paul both view the world as fundamentally divided into two groups of people – Jews and Gentiles. As such, Jews and Gentiles, according to John and Paul, each have different soteriological profiles and are expected to follow differing standards for conduct. These important ethical and soteriological distinctions are erased when scholars attempt to forcibly reshape Paul and John's claims in order to accommodate the insertion of a foreign, third category, such as Christian.

Furthermore, the imposition of this new, third grouping of persons serves to reinforce a master narrative of Christian history in which Paul and John are important signposts on the inevitable and unidirectional path away from Judaism (an ethnic/particularistic religion) toward

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[3] Recently highlighted by a series of ten essays in *The Marginalia Review of Books*, the term *ioudaios* is a hotly contested term. Although the scholars debated whether and in what instances *ioudaios* would be more appropriately translated Judean as opposed to Jew, the idea that this term would reference *Christians in opposition to Jews* was never seriously considered. Thus, John of Patmos and Paul would be at the very least *aberrant* and/or *innovative* if they *did* radically transform *ioudaios* into a term for Christian self-designation as well as a source of *anti-Jewish* polemic (Shaye J.D. Cohen, *The Beginning of Jewishness: Boundaries, Varieties, Uncertainties* (Berkeley, et al: University of California Press, 1999), 25 – 27; 71n.5). This, as I will show, is unlikely; instead, like "Israel" (see further Peter Richardson, *Israel in the Apostolic Church* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1969), John and Paul both use *ioudaios* with *Jews/Judeans* in mind and not as part of a (later Christian creation of) rejection and replacement theology.

[4] See the language of a third race or third way used among second century Christian authors such as Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho* 138; *The Letter to Diognetus* 1.1; and *The Preaching of Peter* quoted by Clement in *Stromata* 6.39.4.

the universalism of Christianity.[5] As I will show below, this teleological hermeneutic not only closes off fruitful avenues for interpreting Paul's and John's social situations and motivations, but it also perpetuates supersessionist readings and Christian apologetics in the guise of objective historical research.

In contrast then, I will propose and defend the position that Paul and John both mean precisely what they say, i.e., they have Jews in mind when they use the term Jews (*ioudaioi*). Moreover, I will demonstrate that the term is a positive, self-designation for their authors, who consider themselves to be members of the ethnic people of Israel.[6] I will argue that the philological and historical gymnastics used to create a third category, Christian, alongside the existing categories of Jew and Gentile are unnecessary and obscure the social and theoretical worldviews of these two Jewish authors. As we saw in **Chapter 1**, there were multiple and competing portraits for how (if at all!) Gentiles would participate in the eschatological redemption of Israel. For their part, both John and Paul emphasized the centrality of the Christ, Jesus, for the redemption of both the Nations and Israel; however, Gentiles *qua* Gentiles, according to both John and Paul, will have a subordinate salvation, due to either its uncertainty and limited number (Paul) or ritual and thus topographical separation (John).

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[5] See Philippa Townsend, *Another Race? Ethnicity, Universalism, and the Emergence of Christianity* (Ph.D. Dissertation: Princeton University, 2009).

[6] Though perhaps not as radical in Pauline studies, this is far from the dominant position. In studies on the Apocalypse, however, there remains only a Princeton quartet of David Frankfurter, John Marshall, Martha Himmelfarb, and Elaine Pagels who have stressed John of Patmos' *Jewishness* and the inappropriateness of the labels of Jewish-Christian or solely Christian for the seer from Patmos. See David Frankfurter, "Jews or Not? Reconstructing the 'Other' in Rev 2:9 and 3:9," *HTR* 94 (2001): 403 – 25; John Marshall, *Parables of War: Reading John's Jewish Apocalypse* (Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2001); Martha Himmelfarb, *A Kingdom of Priests*: *Ancestry and Merit in Ancient Judaism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), 115 – 42; and Elaine Pagels, "The Social History of Satan III: John of Patmos and Ignatius of Antioch – Contrasting Visions of 'God's People,'" *Heresy and Identity in Late Antiquity* (ed. Eduard Iricinschi and Holger Zellentin; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 231 – 52.

## The Jewish Paul: Called to be the Apostle to the Gentiles

Gaining momentum in the second half of the last century, Pauline scholarship has shifted away from depicting Paul as radically divorced and separated from first century Judaism and towards situating the Apostle to the Gentiles within the diverse strands of ancient Judaism.[7] This trend in scholarship has come to be called the "New Perspective" on Paul.[8] An important and early voice at the epicenter of this tectonic shift in Pauline studies was Krister Stendahl. In a seminal article demonstrating the utility of situating Paul within Judaism, Stendahl argued that Paul's radical transformation in behavior and belief is best characterized as "called, not converted."[9] As Paul himself declares at the beginning of his Letter to the Galatians:

> Paul an apostle – sent neither by human commission nor from human authorities, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead…when God, who had set me apart before I was born and called me through his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son to me, so that I might proclaim him among the Gentiles, I did not confer with any human being. (Galatians 1:1; 1:15 – 16)

Paul was *called* to a special task or vocation: the mission to the Gentiles; he did not cease being Jewish in order to become a Christian.[10]

> If anyone has reason to be confident in the flesh, I have more: circumcised on the eighth day, a member of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew born of Hebrews… (Philippians 3:4 – 5)

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[7] No one scholar is more associated with this "New Perspective" on Paul than E. P. Sanders and his monumental work, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*; but Sanders was indebted to previous scholars who similarly worked hard to situate Paul in light of various patterns of Judaism, e.g., apocalyptic (Schweitzer) and Rabbinic (Davies) Judaism.

[8] James Dunn is credited with coining this phrase in his "The New Perspective on Paul and the Law," *BJRL* 65 (1983): 95 – 122. In recent years there have been a staggering number of developments within as well as responses to the New Perspective Paul with various camps forming around specific interests and emphases. Throughout this chapter, I will engage extensively with a specific sub-group of scholars (e.g., Stendahl, Gaston, Gager, and Stowers) who are perhaps best known (and often criticized) for devising an "ecumenical" interpretative lens for Paul that resists anti-Judaism conclusions, especially rejection-replacement readings. Although I will disagree with these scholars at various points, I believe, due to their coherence with one another, distinctiveness from many other approaches, and the overall persuasiveness of their arguments, that they provide the most economical orienting point in a field as massive and as diverse as Pauline studies.

[9] Krister Stendahl, "Call Rather Than Conversion," *Paul Among Jews and Gentiles* (Fortress: Minneapolis, 1976), 7 – 23.

[10] Luke (Acts 21:19 – 26) goes so far as to describe Paul as taking a Nazarite vow, involving sacrifice in the Temple, in order to demonstrate Paul's continued commitment to the Torah and Jewish ritual practices.

> But whatever anyone dares to boast of – I am speaking as though a fool – I also dare to boast of that! Are they Hebrews? So am I! Are they Israelites? So am I! Are they descendants of Abraham? So am I! Are they ministers of Christ? Though I babble as a madman, I am a better minister! (2 Corinthians 11:21 – 22)

Following Stendahl and noting Paul's deliberate invoking of Jeremiah in his self-construction of Galatians 1:15,[11] we can avoid importing later and anachronistic categories, such as Christian, to describe Paul's self-representation or motivation.[12] Moreover, we need not ascribe to Paul a supersessionist ideology, which posits that a new, true religion, Christianity, has replaced an old and failed one, Judaism.[13] Supersessionist readings of Paul inevitably become untenable due to their inability to explain Paul's repeated emphasis on Israel's continued covenant and the benefit of the Law. [14]

By emphasizing Paul's self-understanding as called on a special mission but still within the boundaries of Jewish custom and belief, scholars may interpret more accurately Paul's seemingly conflicting opinions.[15] How can circumcision "count for nothing" yet still be of "great value in every way"?[16] Similarly, why are "those who rely on the law under a curse"

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[11] Jeremiah 1:4 - 5: "Now the word of the Lord came to me saying, 'Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations;" cf. Isaiah 49:1.

[12] For an analysis on the neologism of "Christian" and its later (2nd century) development, see John Marshall, *Parables*, 68 – 87; see also Philippa Townsend who argues that the term emerges as a Gentile (not Jewish) designation for members of the Jesus movement in her "Who Were the First Christians? Jews, Gentiles, and the *Christianoi*," *Heresy and Identity in Late Antiquity* (ed. Eduard Iricinschi and Holger Zellentin; Tübingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 212 – 230.

[13] Thus the language of apostasy and conversion is not appropriate. *Pace* Alan Segal, *Paul the Convert* and Lloyd Gaston, "Galatians 2 and 3," *Paul and the Torah* (Eugene: OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1987), 76 – 79; cf. **PART II** for my discussion of second century concerns over apostasy.

[14] See Romans 9:4 – 5 for a list of the advantages of the Jews: "They are Israelites and to them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the Law, the worship, and the promises; to them belong the patriarchs, and from them, according to the flesh, comes the Messiah who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen."

[15] This is not a new complaint against Paul (cf. 2 Peter 3:15 – 17); see the excellent overview of these conflicting pro and anti-Israel sayings found in John Gager's brief but effective *Reinventing Paul* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

[16] "For neither circumcision counts for anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation." (Galatians 6:15) "What is the advantage of the Jew? Or what is the value of circumcision? Much in every way." (Romans 3:1)

when "the law is holy and the commandment is holy just and good"?[17] The short answer, always a risky proposition in Pauline studies, is that Paul devised and tailored different messages for different contexts and addresses, instead of a timeless or universal system applicable to all of humanity.

In 2 Corinthians 3, for example, Paul appears to reject the Law in favor of a new Spirit and covenant available through Christ.[18] In this specific context, however, Paul is *not* addressing the universal inadequacy of the Law; instead, he is drawing a contrast between his personal *revelatory* authority and the authority of his rivals, which derives from letters of recommendation. In the service of this dichotomy, Paul rhetorically sets up a contrast between his recent revelation and the less reliable *interpretative* efforts of his opponents who are trying to make sense of *ancient* revelation, i.e., Moses' Law.[19] Thus, as he was wont to do, Paul turns a perceived weakness (his lack of letters of recommendation) into a strength: his authority, stemming from personal revelation, is *spiritual* whereas his opponents, who so love their letters, are dependent on the writing or revelation of others for the content of their messages. The issue was not the Law itself but competing claims to authority.[20]

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[17] "For all who rely on works of the Law are under a curse…Now it is evident that no man is justified (made righteous) before God by the Law." (Galatians 3:10; 3:11)
"What shall we say? That the law is sin? By no means…Thus the law is holy, and the commandment is holy and just and good." (Romans 7:7; 7:12)

[18] For a persuasive source critical analysis of 2 Corinthians that divides this composite letter into 5 separate letters and situates them within the larger historical context of the Corinthian correspondences, see Margaret M. Mitchell, "Paul's Letters to Corinth: The Interpretative Intertwining of Literary and Historical Reconstruction." *Urban Religion in Roman Corinth: Interdisciplinary Approaches* (ed. Daniel N. Schowalter and Steven Friesen; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005), 305 – 338; according to Mitchell ("Paul's letters," 324, 334), 2 Cor. 3 was part of a Pauline letter dubbed a "self-dense of his ministry."

[19] Lloyd Gaston situates this exegetical project in its polemical context and notes that it was specifically written in opposition to Paul's (so-called "Super-apostle") opponents; see Gaston, "Paul and the Torah in 2 Corinthians 3" in *Paul and the Torah,* 151 – 68.

[20] Cf. W. D. Davies ("Paul and the People of Israel" in *New Testament Studies* 24 (1977): 4 – 39, citation from 11) who claims: "It is important to recognize that the in II Cor. iii Paul is concerned essentially with the contrast between two ministries, not with that between two covenants on which two distinct religions were founded."

As Stanley Stowers warns, it is precisely when scholars introduce the category of Christian that Pauline scholarship is led astray because the structural integrity of Paul's tailored messages to Israel and the Gentiles about their related but distinct paths to salvation become homogenized and thereby acquire supersessionist overtones:[21]

> The easy assumption among scholars that Paul had a clear-cut idea of the new religion or true religion of Christianity connects closely with the persistence of traditional Christian constructions of Judaism in New Testament studies. A picture of Judaism is, of course, an intrinsic part of Christian theology. Judaism is supposed to be the shadow to which Christianity is the reality. Judaism is the inadequate and often perverted prototype of the fully revealed true religion. Judaism was God's preparation for the gospel and predecessor of the Church.[22]

Instead, as part of his special vocation as a Jewish prophet, Paul self-consciously sought to become "all things to all people" – not as a rejection of Judaism – but in the service of spreading the Gospel of Christ crucified to all peoples, and to each group in its own terms:

> For though I am free with respect to all, I have made myself a slave to all in order to win more: to the Jews (*ioudaioi*), I became as a Jew (*ioudaios*) so that I could win Jews; to those under the Law, I became as one under the Law (although I myself am not under the Law) so that I might win those under the law…I have become all things to all people, that I might by all means save some. I do it all for the sake of the gospel, so that I may share in its blessings. (1 Corinthians 9:19 – 23)[23]

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[21] For a paradigmatic instance of recent responses to the "New Perspective" that defends the rejection and replacement model as the best interpretative lens for Paul, see Charles H. Talbert, "Paul, Judaism, and the Revisionists," *Catholic Bible Quarterly* 63 (2001):1–22. Talbert argues against E. P. Sanders that much of Second Temple (or "Middle") Judaism *was* in fact "legalistic" and that Paul was attempting to replace this old works-righteousness approach with a new covenant on the basis of Jeremiah 31; although, as Talbert himself notes ("Paul," 19 – 20), this does make Paul rather anomalous as a first century Jew and a unique interpreter of this passage in particular. Moreover, Talbert's loaded, theological terminology, especially legalism and grace, do little more than obscure ancient Jewish beliefs and practices. This same critique applies also to Simon Gathercole's *Where is Boasting? Early Jewish Soteriology and Paul's Response in Romans 1 – 5* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002), which similarly disputes Sanders' characterization of early Judaism as a religion of grace and election; in contrast, Gathercole argues that "boasting" – a thread he sees throughout early Judaism – requires a notion of merit, according to which "obedience" to the Law entitles one to be eschatologically saved. This argument, despite its caveats and claims to the contrary, still forges too close a link between obedience to the Law and salvation that abridges and obscures the various and diverse aims of the sources themselves. As we shall see in **Chapter 3**, Paul's soteriology does not fit neatly into this artificial and modern dichotomy of grace v. merit to which so many scholars remain irresistibly drawn.

[22] Stanley Stowers, *A Rereading of Romans: Justice, Jews, and Gentiles* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 25.

[23] Importantly, Paul considers himself to called to a special role and, while urging others to imitate him, he often boasts of his singular calling and gifts and thus the inability of others in the Jesus movement to be like him (e.g., 1

Here, as in Romans 2:28 – 29, *ioudaioi* refers to Jews, distinguishing them from Gentiles and thus not signifying a new category, Christian; moreover, this passage reveals that different groups, according to Paul, demanded different proselytizing approaches and not a one-size-fits-all (i.e., "Christian") message.

As Paul's autobiographical recounting of his own Christ-like sufferings in 2 Corinthians 11 reveals, Paul was not an apostate who irrevocably separated himself from other Jews; instead, this passage shows that Paul, even as the Apostle to the Gentiles, was still subject to Jewish authorities and punishment. This is made most clear when Paul recounts in 2 Corinthians 11:24 the sufferings he has undergone including receiving from his fellow Jews "five times the forty lashings minus one…" As E. P. Sanders notes, Paul submitted himself to the authority of those administering this punishment, continued to attend synagogue, and did not withdraw from Jewish society but remained within its conceptual and social boundaries.[24]

A second important point to keep in mind is that Paul expected the *parousia*, or return and reign of Christ, to occur in his lifetime:

> For this we declare to you by the word of the Lord, that *we who are alive*, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will by no means precede those who have died. For the Lord himself, with a cry of command, with the archangel's call and with the sound of God's trumpet, will descend from heaven, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then *we who are alive*, who are left, will be caught up in the clouds together with them to meet the Lord in the air; and so we will be with the Lord forever. (1 Thessalonians 4:15 – 17, emphasis added)[25]

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Corinthians 7, 2 Corinthians 11 – 12, and Romans 15). On 1 Corinthians 9 and its reception history, see further Margaret M. Mitchell, "Pauline Accommodation and 'Condescension' (*sugkatabasis*): 1 Cor. 9:19 – 23 and the History of Influence," *Paul Beyond the Judaism/ Hellenism Divide* (ed. Troels Engberg-Pedersen; Westminster John Knox Press: Louisville, 2001), 197 – 214.

[24] E. P. Sanders, *Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), 190 – 92; cf. Paula Fredriksen, "Judaism," 549.

[25] See also 1 Corinthians 7:29 – 31: "The appointed time has grown short…for the present form of this world is passing away." Cf. 1 Corinthians 10:11 and 15:51ff.

I will return to this point in **Chapter 3**, but it is important to keep in mind that *time* is a central concept and motivation for Paul.[26] Paul considers himself and others all to be living in a *Sonderzeit* or special epoch wherein all persons and the world itself are on the very cusp of the eschaton; the *parousia* is excruciatingly close, even if it is not quite here.[27] Paul extrapolates from this limited and ever-shrinking timeline to the conclusion that people ought to stay as they are.[28] This, I will argue, is fundamental to understanding why and how Paul has two different sets of ethical expectations as well as higher and lower levels of salvation, but still promotes a singular means (baptism into Christ) for salvation. There is an established and all-encompassing plan that is *currently* coming to fruition for the salvation of Jews and Gentiles, since God is the God of all (Romans 3). All peoples, therefore, should remain and excel in the state in which they were called since that is the state in which *God has called you* and the *Lord assigned you*.[29] In other words, who you *are* will determine the role you will play in the eschatological drama of the restoration of Israel and the secondary salvation of the Nations.[30]

In this way, events are (and *must* be) proceeding according to God's plan. From the teleological perspective of salvation history, even the widespread rejection of Paul's message by

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[26] See the thought-provoking treatment of Paul and especially interpretations of Pauline conception(s) of salvation history by John Marshall in his "Misunderstanding the New Paul: Marcion's Transformation of the *Sonderzeit* Paul," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 20.1 (2012): 1 – 29.

[27] Romans 13:11 – 12: "Besides this, you know what time it is, how it is now the moment for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we became believers; the night is far gone and the day is near."

[28] 1 Corinthians 7:17 – 20: "However that may be, let each of you lead the life that the Lord assigned, to which God called you. This is my rule in all the churches. Was anyone at the time of his call already circumcised? Let him not seek to remove the marks of circumcision. Was anyone at the time of his call uncircumcised? Let him not seek circumcision. Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing; but obeying the commandments of God is everything. Let each of you remain in the condition in which you were called."

[29] In contrast to Paul's *personal opinion* on the marriage of virgins (1 Corinthians 7:25ff), this is a commandment from God and the Lord.

[30] See **PART III** for my discussion of teleology and the ethical implications of playing a role in the drama of salvation history in Valentinian writings.

his Jewish kinsmen is providential insofar as it delays the *parousia*, thereby giving Paul a limited time to proselytize among the Nations.[31]

> Has [Israel] stumbled so as to fall? By no means! But through their stumbling salvation has come to the Gentiles, so as to make Israel jealous. Now if their stumbling means riches for the world, and if their defeat means riches for Gentiles, how much more will their full inclusion mean! (Romans 11:11 – 12)

Thus, Paul describes *two* interrelated timelines – one for Gentiles and one for Israel – each of which culminates in the image of shared salvation described in Romans 11.[32]

Of course, several questions remain: why is Paul so critical of the Law – does this not represent a rejection of Judaism? Who or what is the "new creation" mentioned above in Galatians 6:15 (cf. 2 Cor. 5:17ff.)? How do we interpret Paul's language of radical equality in Galatians 3:28 ("There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.")? And finally, what is the soteriological role of the Messiah, Jesus Christ?[33]

Lloyd Gaston, John Gager, and Stanley Stowers have all compellingly suggested that Paul's writings cannot be extracted from and understood outside of their situated context as *ad hoc* occasional letters written to *specific* and, in almost all cases, Gentile audience.[34] Thus, according to these scholars, Paul does *not* describe the *universal* inadequacy of the Law for all humankind, only how it relates to *Gentiles*. Thus, when Paul is critical about the Law or works,

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[31] See Gaston ("Paul and the Torah," 33) for the suggestion that Paul's message was simply *inclusion of the Gentiles* and not a message that Jesus Christ was the Messiah for all (i.e., for also Jews): "For Paul, Jesus is neither a new Moses or the Messiah, he is not the climax of the history of God's dealing with Israel, but he is the fulfillment of God's promises concerning the Gentiles, and this is what he accused the Jews of not recognizing."

[32] In a seminal article, Krister Stendahl persuasively argues that – among other brilliant observations – Romans 9 – 11 is the climax of the letter. See Stendahl, "The Apostle Paul and the Introspective Conscience of the West," in *Paul Among Jews and Gentiles*, 78 – 96.

[33] On this topic more generally, I am influenced by the recent book by Matthew Novenson, *Christ Among the Messiahs*: *Christ Language in Paul and Messiah Language in Ancient Judaism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

[34] Lloyd Gaston, "A Retrospective Introduction," 7 -11; Stanley Stowers, *Rereading*, 21 – 33; John Gager, *Reinventing,* 43 – 46, 78, 107.

he is only critical *vis-à-vis* its application to his Gentile audience: "For Gentiles, who do not have the Torah as covenant, Torah as law functions in an exclusively negative way, to condemn."[35]

Moreover, in addition to its epistolary genre, Paul's intended message to his Gentile audience was further obscured because of his deployment of sophisticated rhetorical devices.[36] For example, Stowers elucidates the ambiguous and challenging passage of Romans 2:17 – 29 by appealing to the ancient rhetorical convention of *prosôpopoiia* or impersonations of certain character types:

> "But if you call yourself a Jew and rely on the Law and boast of your relation to God and know his will and determine what is best because you are instructed in the Law, and if you are sure that you are a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness, a corrector of the foolish, a teacher of children, having in the law the embodiment of knowledge and truth, you, then, that teach others, will you not teach yourself? While you preach against stealing, do you steal? (Romans 2:17 – 21)

Dripping with venomous sarcasm, Paul, as Stowers notes, is not addressing a concrete or specific Jew; rather Paul is rhetorically constructing a "pretentious teacher" who is a hypocrite who arrogantly claims that he can *morally* transform Gentiles into "righteous Gentiles" in order to be saved, even though this pretentious teacher is himself terrible – so much so that he is undeserving of the name Jew, e.g., Romans 2:28 – 29.[37]

> [In opposition to this fictive Jewish teacher] Paul's approach was utterly different. Only God can make a person right with him, and he has chosen to justify the gentiles through Jesus Christ in a way analogous to Israel's becoming a righteous people through Abraham's faithfulness. Christ's coming fulfills the expectation that God would gratuitously save the gentile peoples at the end of the age when Israel will be restored."[38]

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[35] Lloyd Gaston, "Paul and the Torah," 28; cf. Stanley Stowers, *Rereading*, 191.
[36] In addition to *Rereading Romans*, see also Stanley Stowers, *The Diatribe and Paul's Letter to the Romans* (Chico, CA: Scholar's Press, 1981) and *Letter Writing in Greco-Roman Antiquity* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1986).
[37] On the hypocrisy of this Jewish teacher, see Epictetus who ridicules someone "who is not really a Jew but plays the part" (*diss*. 2.9. 20: οὐκ ἔστιν Ἰουδαῖος, ἀλλ' ὑποκρίνεται; cf. my discussion on Revelation 2:9 and 3:9 below). This provocative insult is part of a larger rhetorical argument found throughout the *Discourses* wherein Epictetus is castigating those who lay claim to a *name* (e.g., Stoic) for its reputation but are undeserving of it *in practice* (*diss.* 2.19 and 3.24). See further Stanley Stowers, *Rereading Romans*, 144 – 150.
[38] Stanley Stowers, *Rereading,* 151.

Consequently, so the argument goes, we can reconstruct Paul's intended message by parsing his highly rhetorical Gospel and considering exclusively how it relates to *Gentiles only*.[39]

It is at this point where I depart from the interpretation of Gaston and Gager.[40] Although, I am convinced that Paul differentiated between the soteriological timelines and statuses of Gentiles and Israel, I am not convinced that Paul thought Jesus Christ to be soteriologically effective and significant *only* for Gentiles, as Gaston famously argued:

> "Had all of Israel followed Paul's example, it may be that we could have had a Gentile church loyal to the righteousness of God expressed in Jesus Christ and his fulfillment to the promise of Abraham, alongside an Israel loyal to the righteousness of God expressed in the Torah.[41]

Although this is a compelling interpretation that explains a number of elusive problems,[42] it cannot account for the whole of Paul's thought and several cruxes remain.[43]

What could Paul mean, then, when he speaks of Peter's Gospel to the Jews ("circumcised"; cf. Romans 15:8), tantalizingly mentioned in Galatians 2?[44] What about Paul's

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[39] As John Gager (*Reinventing Paul*, 147) summarily restates this point: "[Jewish members of the Jesus movement, like Peter] play no positive role in Paul's thinking."

[40] Stanley Stowers (*Rereading,* 205 – 6) delicately evades part of this issue by arguing for separate but *interdependent* salvific destinies for Israel and the Gentiles.

[41] Lloyd Gaston, "Paul and the Torah," 33; *pace* also Gaston's claim (114 – 15; 139) that Paul does not view Jesus as the (Jewish) Messiah; see instead, Romans 9:4 -5: "They are Israelites, and to them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the Law, the worship, and the promises; to them belong the patriarchs, and from them, according to the flesh, comes the Messiah, *who is over all*, God blessed forever. Amen." Cf. Romans 1: 1 – 4.

[42] W.D. Davies ("People of Israel" 24 – 28) comes close to embracing this position of two covenants, one for Israel and one for the Nations, nearly forty years ago due to an extremely close and remarkably persuasive reading of Romans 11. Although Davies *ultimately* rejects this position, he does so in part because he believes faith in the Messiah has *replaced* the Torah as the *sine qua non* of inclusion in God's people (i.e., "Israel") and thus salvation ("Paul and the People of Israel," 5 and 31); as we have seen and shall see in further detail in **Chapter 3**, I dispute that Paul ever advocated that *Jews* (i.e., true members of Israel) should abandon the Torah; rather, in addition to Torah observance they must *also* be baptized into Christ.

[43]Terence Donaldson, "Jewish Christianity, Israel's Stumbling, and the *Sonderweg* Reading of Paul," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 29.1 (2006): 27 – 54.

[44] Galatians 2:7 – 9: "When [the Jerusalem leaders] saw that I had been entrusted with the gospel for the uncircumcised, just as Peter had been entrusted with the gospel for circumcised (for he who worked through Peter making him an apostle to the circumcised also worked through me in sending me to the Gentiles), and when James, Cephas (Peter), and John, who were acknowledged pillars, recognized the grace that had been given to me, they gave to me and to Barnabas the right hand of fellowship. They agreed that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised."

own efforts among the circumcised (cf. 1 Corinthians 9, cited above)? Moreover, why would Paul repeatedly emphasize (Romans 9; 1 Corinthians 15) that Jesus Christ is Lord over all? Elsewhere Paul similarly links God's oneness with the singular means "faithfulness" (πίστις) through which God apparently delivers both Jew and Gentile (Romans 3:29 – 30). Finally, as we shall see in **Chapter 3**, when describing the final soteriological ends of both Israel and the Nations (Romans 11), Paul speaks metaphorically of a *single* tree of salvation with, admittedly multiple timelines and greater and lesser honors, but the *same* mechanism for inclusion, i.e., baptism into Christ.[45] This brings to light a deep tension in Paul's writings between some of his statements about radical equality in Christ (Galatians 3) and his seemingly conflicting claims about social (1 Corinthians 7; 12; Romans 12) and soteriological distinctions (Romans 11). Much of this confusion will dissipate, however, when we dissolve a simple one-to-one correspondence between ethics and soteriology.[46]

In summary, I wish to reiterate that 1. Paul was and continued to be a Jew; 2. he considered himself called, akin to the prophets of ages past, to a special mission; 3. he divided humanity into two major categories: Jew and Gentile; 4. he wrote *ad hoc* letters that cannot be universalized or taken out of context; 5. Paul was an eschatological prophet who believed the world would imminently end; 6. Paul described two inter-related timelines of salvation; 7. the conduct of the majority of Jews was caused by God to allow Paul a limited window of time to spread his Gospel among the Gentiles; 8. thus, although Paul did address his message primarily

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[45] My argument on this point is similar to Mark Nanos and Terence Donaldson; however, as I will outline below in **Chapter 3**, I also differ from these two in significant ways. My views are also close to those of Krister Stendahl (*Final Account: Paul's Letter to the Romans* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 7) and Pinchas Lapide (*Paul: Rabbi and Apostle* (translated by Lawrence Denef; Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing, 1984), 37 – 43). I am in full agreement with Stendahl's colorful comment that the salvation of the Jews and Gentiles follow, according to Paul, God's preordained "traffic pattern" and with Lapide's pivotal contention that Paul did not preach a zero-sum scheme of salvific replacement, i.e., Christ has replaced the Law *as the means to be saved*. As Lapide notes, the Torah was never considered the *means* to be saved. Moreover, neither was the Law a problem for Jewish members of the Jesus movement; rather, Paul's assumes its continued validity for Jewish adherents to the Jesus movement.

[46] See **Chapter 3.**

to Gentiles, he also expected his fellow Jews *at some point* to embrace a different style of conduct – not, I will argue, a rejection of Torah but instead baptism into Christ *in addition to* Torah observance; 9. the Messiah, therefore, is soteriologically effective for Jews as well as Gentiles; 10. Paul's hierarchy of salvation, as we will see, castigates Gentile initiates for believing they were now superior to Jews, even if these Jews *currently* were not members of the Jesus movement; 11. Paul's hierarchy is one of number and relative certainty: *all* of Israel will *surely* be saved, but only a *full* number of Gentiles *may* be saved. 12. Paul's portrait of salvation is unitary and shared – like the oneness of God – however, Israel will enjoy greater honors and possesses a more secure salvific status. In the sectarian language of modern Pauline studies, I am advocating a modified two-paths (but not two covenant) approach with different ethical expectations for Gentiles and Jews that, nonetheless, sees a singular means for salvation (baptism into Christ), while all the while still preserving greater eschatological honors for Israel.

## John of Patmos: A Jewish Apocalyptic Prophet

Scholars often characterize John of Patmos, the enigmatic author of the final book (albeit not chronologically) of the New Testament, Revelation, as a Christian – or more specifically – a Jewish Christian, i.e., John grew up Jewish but later joined the Jesus movement. John's Jewishness, however, remained deeply ingrained – so much so that his version of Christianity was inextricably linked to his Jewish background and upbringing.[47] Yet what use are the

[47] David Aune's source critical argument epitomizes this portrait of John of Patmos. Aune divides Revelation into two editions: the first edition (1:7 – 12a and 4:1 – 22:5) is written soon after the destruction of Jerusalem (ca. 70) and contains the more Jewish elements (e.g., apocalyptic visions); the second edition (1:1 – 6; 1:12b – 3:22; 22: 6 – 21) was written much later (98 – 117 CE) and contains the more Christian elements (e.g., the seven pastoral letters and more elevated Christology). See David E. Aune, *Revelation* (3 vols.; WBC 52; Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1997-98), cxx – cxxxiv.

categories of "Christian" or even "Jewish Christian" as they relate to John of Patmos, and do they close off more fruitful avenues of interpretations?[48]

John was an ethnic Jew who also believed that the Messiah, Jesus Christ, had already come.[49] Despite the importance of Christ in John's Revelation,[50] there is no evidence that John felt compelled to break from and reject Jewish culture and practices,[51] or that a new category of humanity, Christian, had suddenly emerged to exist now alongside Jew and Gentile.[52] Instead, John of Patmos – insofar as he was concerned with proper Jewish ritual and ethical practices and viewed humanity as fundamentally divided into either Jews or Gentiles – is better understood as a Jewish author.[53] As we will see, scholars who import a third category, Christian, muddy John's already murky visions and predictions by shattering John's bipartite worldview of Jews and

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[48] For general critiques of "Jewish Christianity" as a category, see Robert A. Kraft, "In Search of 'Jewish Christianity' and its 'Theology': Problems of Definition and Methodology," Recherches de Sciences Religieuse 60 (1972): 81–96; Joan Taylor "The Phenomenon of Early Jewish-Christianity: Reality or Scholarly Invention?" *Vigilae Christianae* 44 (1990): 313–34; and David Frankfurter, "Beyond 'Jewish Christianity': Continuing Religious Sub-Cultures of the Second and Third Centuries and Their Documents," *The Ways That Never Parted: Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (ed. Adam Becker and Annette Yoshiko Reed; Tübingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), 131 – 43; for a special focus on the Book of Revelation, see John Marshall, "John's Jewish (Christian?) Apocalypse," *Jewish Christianity Reconsidered: Rethinking Texts and Groups* (ed. Matt Jackson-McCabe; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007), 233 – 256.

[49] On the basis of John's imperfect and semiticizing Greek, his familiarity with the Hebrew Bible and the genre of Jewish apocalyptic, and various other reasons (e.g., onomastics, appropriation of priestly and/or prophetic authority, or his animosity towards Rome), scholars have concluded that John was likely bilingual and ethnically Jewish. See further Adela Yarbo Collins, *Crisis and Catharsis*: *The Power of the Apocalypse* (Westminster Press: Philadelphia, 1984), 46 – 49; David E. Aune, *Revelation*,1: xlviii – liv.

[50] As we see from the very onset of Revelation (1:1): "The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants what must soon take place…"

[51] For a concise summary of the dangers of and a warning against Christian supersessionist readings of John, see Steven Friesen, "Sarcasm in Revelation 2 – 3: Churches, Christians, True Jews, and Satanic Synagogues," in *The Reality of the Apocalypse: Rhetoric and Politics in the Book of Revelation* (ed. David Barr; Leiden: Brill, 2006), 127 – 44, citation, with emphasis in original, from 142: "The most glaring example of our misbegotten conceptual framework is the ubiquitous use of the term 'Christian' by modern scholars to describe John, his text, and his congregations. This practice is inexcusable. Revelation is a lengthy text, with ample opportunity for John to call himself or his audience 'Christian.' He did not. From this I conclude that John either did not know the term, or did not like the term…our use of *Christian* to describe Revelation is a powerful and pervasive retrojection that warps our analysis of the first century by subtly redefining the churches as opposed to, and superior to, Judaism."

[52] For explicit articulations of this conception of Christian, see the *Epistle to Diognetus* 1.1 and Clement of Alexandria, e.g., "Do not worship . . . as the Hellenes . . . neither worship as the Jews. But we, who worship [God] in a new way, in the third way [*genei*], are Christians." (*Stromata* 6.39.4 citing the *Preaching of Peter* translated by Denise Kimber Buell in "Race and Universalism in Early Christianity," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 10.4 (2002): 429.

[53] See John Marshall (*Parables*, passim) who argues convincingly that the neologism of "Christian" was ideologically foreign and perhaps even completely unknown to John, as a first century Jew

everyone else with preformed expectations of what a Christian author must mean and assumptions about Christian, as opposed to Jewish, redemption.

A thought experiment may help illustrate how categories reshape and impact interpretations of John's Revelation: suppose the so-called Jewish Christian text of John's Apocalypse and the Jewish text of 4 Ezra had been lost to the sands of time and an archeologist suddenly discovers these two previously unknown texts.[54] Putting aside issues of transmission and preservation that have certainly impacted the form, content, and context of how each text survives today, how might scholars categorize these two texts, and on the basis of what criteria?[55] Both texts were likely written in the aftermath of the Roman destruction of Jerusalem and its Temple,[56] both make extensive use of exegesis of the Hebrew Bible and the genre of Jewish apocalyptic,[57] and both texts refer to a Messiah.[58]

In the case of one text, we find descriptions of the restoration of the twelve tribes of Israel, detailed Temple hymns and heavenly liturgies, Jewish angelology, injunctions to obey the commandments, and recurrent numerological plays on the sabbatical number seven and reference to the "Lord's Day," i.e., the Sabbath. In the other text, we find many similarly "Jewish"

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[54] Suppose also that we can be relatively certain that these two texts (not just these two surviving copies) were authored around the first or second century of the Common Era.

[55] For the sake of this thought experiment I am considering only the *Ezra Apocalypse* (chapters 3 – 14); for important caveats about the Christian transmission and preservation of the Apocrypha generally, see Robert A. Kraft, "The Multiform Jewish Heritage of Early Christianity," in *Christianity, Judaism and Other Greco-Roman Cults : Studies for Morton Smith* (ed. J. Neusner; Leiden: Brill, 1975), 3.174-199; idem, "The Pseudepigrapha in Christianity," *Tracing the Threads: Studies in the Vitality of Jewish Pseudepigrapha* (ed. J. C. Reeves; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1994), 55-86; idem, "Setting the Stage and Framing Some Central Questions," *JSJ* 32 (2001), 371-95; M.A. Knibb, "Christian Adoption and Transmission of Jewish Pseudepigrapha: The Case of 1 Enoch," *JSJ* 32 (2001): 396 – 415.

[56] See in contrast John Marshall (*Parables of War,* 88 – 97), who dates John's Revelation to before the sack of Jerusalem in 70 CE. For a number of reasons, I do not find this early date to be convincing. See below for my discussion in section III; see further Steven Friesen's helpful survey and introduction in *Imperial Cults and the Apocalypse of John* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 136 – 51.

[57] On the genre of apocalypse see John J. Collins ed. *Apocalypse: The Morphology of a Genre: Semeia* 14 (Scholars Press: Missoula, MT, 1979) and idem, *The Apocalyptic Imagination*: *An Introduction to Jewish Apocalyptic Literature* (2nd edition; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998).

[58] I will consider the issue of competing views of the Messiah briefly in **Chapter 3**.

elements, e.g., concern over obedience to the commandments of God, Jewish angelology, discussion of Israel's fate, the sacredness of the Law, and descriptions of the sacred topography of Jerusalem. Which text is (Jewish) Christian and which Jewish? In this particular instance, the criterion for distinguishing the Christian text from the Jewish one appears to be *which* Messiah is mentioned:

> And the angel said to me, "Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb." And he said to me, "These are the true words of God." Then I fell down at his feet to worship him, but he said to me, "You must not do that! I am a fellow servant with you and your comrades who hold the witness of Jesus (τὴν μαρτυρίαν Ἰησοῦ). Worship God! For the witness of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy. (Revelation 19:9 – 10)

> And everyone who has been delivered from the evils that I have foretold shall see my wonders. For my Messiah shall be revealed with those who are with him, and he shall make those who remain rejoice for four hundred years. After these years my son (or: servant) the Messiah shall die, and all who draw human breath. (4 Ezra 7:27 – 29; cf. 13:32, 37, 52; 14:9)[59]

Consequently, the first text, John's Revelation, is (Jewish) Christian insofar as his Messiah is Jesus, and the second text, 4 Ezra, is Jewish insofar as his Messiah is *not* Jesus.[60]

Does, however, this hybrid category "Jewish Christian" add any analytical clarity to scholars elucidating Revelation? Conversely, is anything gained by jettisoning it from scholarly discussions concerning John of Patmos? To both I answer yes, but much more emphatically to the latter. Scholars have had the tendency to use the category of Jewish Christian in such a way

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[59] Translated by Michael Edward Stone in *Fourth Ezra: A Commentary* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990), 202.

[60] See the excellent methodological criticism of John Marshall (John's Jewish (Christian?) Apocalypse," 248) who compares the "harvesting of theologoumena that Christians see as self-definitional," e.g., Jesus as Christ in Revelation 1:1, as comparable to Justin Martyr's analogous strategy of claiming that Socrates and Heraclitus were Christians (1 *Apology* 46), and Eusebius' claim that so too were Abraham and Adam (*EH* 1.4.6). Marshall's criticism is especially germane to scholars who point to the language of *ekklesia* as indicative of John's Christian identity since he was addressing congregations or "churches." As even a cursory overview of the range of the term *ekklesia* demonstrates, however, this is a tenuous deduction (see also David Frankfurter, "Jews or Not," 408ff.).

This interpretation also downplays the rhetorical efforts by John who, just like Paul, used the language of solidarity (e.g., *ekklesia*) to foster and maintain communities, and instead teleologically presumes the existence of *Christian Church* communities as a foregone conclusion. On Paul's rhetorical efforts to *create* communal solidarity, see further Margaret M. Mitchell's *Paul and the Rhetoric of Reconciliation: An Exegetical Investigation into the Language and Composition of 1 Corinthians* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1991) and Dale Martin's *The Corinthian Body* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995).

as to permit and promote teleologically reasoned arguments, i.e., John is made to resemble second century, Gentile Christians.[61] To return to our thought experiment, when 4 Ezra speaks of the commandments of God (e.g., 3:35f; 7:37; 7:45), scholars generally interpret this straightforwardly as referring to Jewish ethical and ritual injunctions. In contrast, when John of Patmos expresses the very same concerns (12:17; 14:12), the dominant view is that John has allegorized or transformed base Jewish ritual language into enlightened Christian, ethical language:

> In early Christianity, on the other hand, 'keep the commandments of God' (e.g., *Barnabas* 4:11) came to have a very particular meaning – that is, the *ethical* as opposed to ceremonial commands of the Torah. Thus while for early Judaism the Law included the entire Torah, for early Christian authors the central part of the law was the second table of the Decalogue, its ethical commandments, and the love command.[62]

Seemingly the logic is: how could a Christian (Jewish or otherwise) really mean that a follower of Jesus is supposed to observe and practice Jewish (ritual) commandments? Underlying and probably motivating such a presupposition is an antiquated interpretation of and extrapolation from *Paul* that Christianity has *replaced* and therefore rendered completely ineffective the observance of the Law and all Jewish ritual practices.[63]

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[61] See Elaine Pagels' observations ("Social History," 246 – 52) on this point, highlighting especially the role of Ignatius of Antioch in this retrospective reading of the seer of Patmos; cf. Adela Yarbo Collins, "Vilification and Self-Definition in the Book of Revelation" *Harvard Theological Review* 79.1 (1986): 311 – 12. On this issue more generally, see John Marshall, *Parables*, passim.

[62] David E. Aune, "Following the Lamb: Discipleship in the Apocalypse," *Apocalypticism, Prophecy, and Magic in Early Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2006), 75; idem, *Revelation*, 2: 710 – 13.

[63] See John Marshall's excellent critique of scholarly trends Christianizing the language of the commandments in Revelation (*Parables*, 16 – 18; 141 – 48, quote from 17): "Charles, like most commentators, ignores the social significance of Rev. 12:17 and 14:12, and the consequences are seen in one of his comments on the religious character of the Apocalypse of John. He writes that 'the Apocalypse exhibits a decidedly anti-legalistic. The Law is not mentioned in the New Testament Apocalypse" (1913: 35). While νομός does not occur in the Apocalypse, and while to ask whether a text is legalistic or anti-legalistic is itself a markedly Christian or even Protestant question, Charles culpably ignores the importance of the commandments (τὰς ἐντολὰς) in 12:17, 14:12, and perhaps 22:14. Only by allowing Paul – or his (mis) interpreters – to transform νομός into the pre-eminent mark of Judaism can Charles ignore the practical implications of 12:17 and 14:12. Here a a Christian coherence obscures a historical interpreation of the texts in question."

Thus, this use of the category of Jewish Christian forcibly imports a retrospective lens that distorts John's writings in light of what later *Gentile* Christians *eventually* will say.[64] In other words, once scholars categorize John as a (Jewish) Christian it becomes a foregone conclusion that John has also rejected traditional Jewish practices and beliefs because, as a Christian, he must subscribe to a rejection and replacement scheme in which a person is saved through faith in Christ and not through works of the Law.[65] On the basis of such an assumption, scholars dismiss and/or Christianize John's *Jewish* concerns.[66] For example, John draws upon the language of the holy war census to describe the 144,000 as virgins who are free from the defilement of women:

> Then I looked, and there was the Lamb, standing on Mount Zion! And with him were one hundred and forty-four thousand who had his name and his Father's name written on their foreheads…they sing a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and before the elders. No one could learn that song except the one hundred and forty-four thousand who had been redeemed from the earth. *It is those who have not defiled themselves with women, for they are virgins*; these follow the Lamb wherever he goes. They have been redeemed from humanity as first fruits for God and the Lamb, and in their mouth no lie was found; they are blameless. (Revelation 14:1 – 5, emphasis added)

Although scholars have long noted parallels between John's language and Jewish halakhic concerns for ritual purity,[67] David Frankfurter has persuasively suggested that these similarities

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[64] See, for example, the later attempts to create conceptual and social boundaries between Judaism and Christianity in Ignatius of Antioch, *Philadelphians* 6.1: "But if anyone should interpret Judaism to you (ἐὰν δέ τις Ἰουδαϊσμὸν ἑρμηνεύῃ ὑμῖν), do not listen to that one. For it is better to hear about Christianity (Χριστιανισμὸν) from a circumcised man than about Judaism from an uncircumcised man." Cf. Justin Martyr's supersessionist views on Jewish custom and practice (*Dialogue with Trypho*, 46 – 47).

[65] John Marshall, *Parables*, 141 – 48.

[66] See, for example, how arguments from *partial* silence can become forceful claims of rejection. Although John refers to the Lord's Day (Rev. 1:10), Adela Yarbo Collins ("Numerical Symbolism in Apocalyptic Literature," *ANRW* II.21.2, 1278) concludes John has *rejected* Sabbath practices. In contrast, Martha Himmelfarb (*Kingdom of Priests*, 139) more plausibly suggests that John, as a devout Jew, simply *assumed* the validity of Sabbath practices and thus his silence on Sabbath practices does not indicate he *rejected* its observance. Cf. James D.G. Dunn, "How Controversial Was Paul's Christology?" *The Christ and the Spirit: Collected Essays* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 221: "What is characteristic and central to someone's theology need not be distinctive; what is fundamental can also be shared, and as shared, little referred to; what is axiomatic is often taken for granted."

[67] See, for example, Richard Bauckham, *The Climax of Prophecy: Studies on the Book of Revelation* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1993), 230 – 31.

were not superficial or the vestigial remains of John's abandoned Jewishness; instead, they were part of John's efforts to respect and maintain social and ritual boundaries.[68]

In contrast, many scholars have severed John's concern for purity from Jewish halakhic principles and boundary drawing, and they have posited instead that John's real interest is political protest against Roman imperialism, especially its manifestation in pagan cult. Steven Friesen's pithy rebuttal to Frankfurter is emblematic for how many scholars view John's social situation, motivation, and general disinterest or rejection of Jewish practices: "…it is highly unlikely that John was scrupulously concerned with purity or Jewish halakhic practice. In fact, John seems completely unconcerned by Sabbath observation, food regulations (beyond the topic of sacrificial meat),[69] ablutions, or circumcision."[70] As I will argue in **Chapter 3**, this is a misreading of John that overlooks the ethical and social implications of the complex exegetical and theoretical commitments that John synthesizes in his construction of a new Jerusalem and heavenly temple into which "nothing κοινόν (profane) shall enter" (Revelation 21:27).

In the above instance and in others, scholars frequently have interpreted John's Revelation primarily or even *solely* through the lens of Christian protest against (the Roman) Empire.[71] Although many may provide incisive and compelling insights, especially into the rhetorical elements of John's Revelation,[72] they are incomplete representations insofar as they

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[68] David Frankfurter, "Jews or Not," 410 – 416.

[69] Cf. John's Letter to the Pergamum Congregation (Revelation 2:14, emphasis added): "But I hold a few things against you: you have some here who hold to the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the *sons of Israel* so that they eat food sacrificed to idols and practice fornication."

[70] Steven Friesen, "Sarcasm in Revelation," 135; cf. with John Marshall's (*Parables,* 54) provocative methodological question: "even if one grants that other Jews in town would not have agreed with the book that John wrote, would they not still have eaten in his kitchen?"

[71] For a recent collection of articles critiquing and qualifying the sense and degree to which New Testament texts are "anti-empire," see further *Jesus is Lord, Caesar is Not: Evaluating Empire in New Testament Studies* (ed. Scot McKnight and Joseph B. Modica; IVP Academic: Downers Grove IL, 2013).

[72] For a useful summary of previous scholarly approaches to the issue of the "crisis" (Imperial or otherwise) motivating John, see further Paul Duff, *Who Rides the Beast? Prophetic Rivalry and the Rhetoric of Crisis in the Churches of the Apocalypse* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), chapter 1.

omit and thereby distort many of John's Jewish theological, ritual, and ethical commitments. For example, Revelation contains numerous liturgical interludes, in which John recounts the hymns to be sung in the throne room of God.[73] Rather than framing these passages as a continuation of ongoing Jewish liturgical practice and theological speculation – found in Isaiah and continuing through medieval Hekhalot literature and beyond[74] – of envisioning and reenacting heavenly worship, some scholars go so far as to claim these passages are *exclusively* symbols of political protest and resistance towards Rome.[75] John, as a Jew writing after the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple by Roman forces, is understandably rather anti-Rome; political protest, however, is only one aspect of these liturgical passages and his evocative end-time imagery.[76]

Finally, and perhaps most obfuscating, scholars who use the category of "Jewish Christian" assume that there are now *three* peoples in the world: Christians, Gentiles, and Jews. This interjection of a third category, however, strains the coherence of Revelation. Suddenly, the story of Israel's redemption has been effectively removed from this Jewish apocalyptic text.

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[73] "After this I heard what seemed to be the loud voice of a great multitude in heaven saying, "Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power to our God, for his judgments are true and just…" and the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God who is seated on the throne saying, "Amen. Hallelujah!" And from the throne came a voice saying, "Praise our God all you servants, and all who fear him, small and great." Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the sound of many waters and like the sound of mighty thunder-peals, crying out, "Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready; to her it has been granted to be clothed with fine linen, bright and pure" for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints." (Revelation 19:1 – 8).

[74] For a chronological survey of "mysticism" and related passages from Ezekiel up through the Hekhalot, see Peter Schäfer, *The Origins of Jewish Mysticism* (Princeton University: Princeton, 2011).

[75] Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Revelation: Vision for a Just World* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 122 – 23: "The heavenly liturgies and celestial hymnody of Revelation serve rhetorically to elaborate God's power and empire. They do not have liturgical but political-theological functions. Since Roman political power was ratified in cultic terms, the symbolic universe of Revelation must appropriate cultic-religious symbols in order to draw its audience away from the magnificent symbols and cultic drama of the imperial cult. Yet such an appeal to cultic imagination was difficult, since Christians had no cultic institutions – neither priests, nor sacrifices, nor temples. John, therefore, had to derive his cultic language and symbolism not only from the traditional temple cult of Israel, but also from the cultic celebrations which were popular in Asia Minor."

[76] See the imitation of these heavenly liturgies enacted by those "who had conquered the Beast" in Revelation 15:3 – 4: "And they sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb: Great and amazing are your deeds, Lord God the Almighty! Just and true are your ways, King of the ages (or Nations)! Lord, who will not fear and glorify your name? For you alone are holy. All nations will come and worship before you, for your judgments have been revealed."

Now all positive references to Jews, the twelve tribes, and saints refer to the elect (i.e., *Christians*), thereby erasing Jewish presence from a text narrating the story of Jewish redemption, as predicted by Jewish prophets and enacted by the Jewish God and his Messiah for the benefit of Israel and secondarily for the Nations.[77]

> I saw another angel ascending from the rising sun, having the seal of the living God, and he called with a loud voice to the four angels who had been given power to damage the earth and sea, saying "Do not damage the earth or sea or trees until we have marked the servants of our God with a seal on their foreheads." And I heard the number of those who were sealed, one hundred and forty-four thousand sealed out of every tribe of the people of Israel: From the tribe of Judah twelve thousand sealed; from the tribe of Reuben twelve thousand; from the tribe of Gad twelve thousand; from the tribe of Asher twelve thousand; from the tribe of Naphtali twelve thousand; from the tribe of Manasseh twelve thousand; from the tribe of Simeon twelve thousand; from the tribe of Levi twelve thousand; from the tribe of Issachar twelve thousand; from the tribe of Zebulun twelve thousand; from the tribe of Joseph twelve thousand; from the tribe of Benjamin twelve thousand sealed. After this I looked, and there was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, robed in white, with palm branches in their hands. They cried out in a loud voice, saying: Salvation belongs to our God who is seated on the throne, and to the Lamb!" (Revelation 7:2 – 10)

Although a relatively straightforward (especially for John of Patmos) description of the impending redemption of Israel and the secondary salvation for Gentiles, scholars struggle to insert Christians into this bipartite story of salvation history.[78]

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[77] See, for example, Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorezna (*Revelation: Vision of a Just World*, 67) who on the basis on an incorrect reading of Galatians 6:16 compounds her misreading by (mis) appropriating the title of Israel for Christians in order to claim that the 144,000 of Revelation 7 refer to the elect, i.e., Christians: "The author of Revelation might utilize Jewish traditions in order to express the conviction that the fate of those Christians experiencing God's judgment day is 'sealed' for salvation. Like 1 Peter 2, Revelation applies Exodus 19:5 – 6 to the Christian community and thereby stresses its continuity with Israel as the elect 'people of God.' It is likely that in Rev. 7:1 – 7 the twelve tribes signify the restored Israel of which the church is a significant part…the 144,000 probably represent those Christians alive at the "Day of the Lord" who have no connection with idolatry or the Antichrist."
*Pace* Steven Friesen who ecumenically attempts ("Sarcasm in Revelation," 137, 141 – 44) to remove all categories, e.g., Christian, Jew, Israel; although this interpretation may be appealing to modern readers, it is not a persuasive reading of the text of Revelation nor does it, as we have seen in **Chapter 1**, make good historical sense to import such a modernistic notion of universalism into the first century.
[78] See also Revelation 14:1 – 7, emphasis added: "Then I looked, and there was the Lamb, standing on Mount Zion! And with him were one hundred and forty-four thousand who had his name and his Father's name written on their foreheads. And I heard a voice from heaven like the sound of many waters and like the sound of loud thunder; the

> Ultimately none of the three ways of interpreting the 144,000 survey above (i.e., the 144,000 as the remnant of Jews or Jewish Christians, as all Christians, or as Christian martyrs) proves to be entirely convincing…few scholars have drawn appropriate conclusions in considering which Jewish eschatological traditions provided a model for the author of Rev. 7:4 – 8 and 14:1 – 5. In my view, *the 144,000 of Rev. 7:4 – 8 represent the particular group of Christians (including all ages and both genders) who have been specifically protected by God from both divine plagues and human persecution just before the final tribulation begins and who consequently survive that tribulation and the great eschatological battle that is the culmination of that tribulation*.[79]

In this way, John's bipartite worldview is rewritten: Jews have faded from the picture and, instead, we have a false dichotomy between saved (Christians) and damned (Gentiles and non-Christian Jews) that is both anachronistic and obscures John's own expectation for social, ethical, and soteriological boundary-lines.

The irony underlying how some scholars have completely reversed John's Jewish apocalypse is that now the only living Jews John explicitly mentions are those whom he castigates for *not* being true Jews, i.e., Christians, in Revelation 2:9 and 3:9.[80]

> The name "Jews" is denied to the Jewish community in Smyrna. There is no good reason to think here of Judaizers rather than actual Jews of the local synagogues. Jewish hostility to the early Christian missionary effort is well attested for both the first and second century. The name "Jews" is denied them because the followers of Jesus are held to be the true Jews.[81]

Which ancient texts form the basis of this supposedly well-attested phenomenon of Jewish hostility of Christian missionary efforts? A previous generation of scholars would have pointed

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voice I heard was like the sound of harpists playing on their harps, and they sing a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and before the elders. No one could learn that song except the one hundred and forty-four thousand who had been redeemed from the earth. It is those who have not defiled themselves with women, for they are virgins; these follow the Lamb wherever he goes. *They have been redeemed from humanity as first fruits for God and the Lamb*, and in their mouth no lie was found; they are blameless. Then I saw *another angel flying in mid-heaven, with an eternal gospel to proclaim to those who live on earth – to every nation and tribe and language and people*. He said in a loud voice, "Fear God and give him glory, for the hour of his judgment has come; and worship him who made heaven and earth, the sea and the springs of water."

[79] David E. Aune, *Revelation*, 2:443, emphasis in original.

[80] See John Marshall's criticism (*Parables*, 62) of Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, in which Marshall censures Schüssler Fiorenza with highly polemical language for her overarching argument that Revelation posits a hierarchical dualism between the "poor," (and oppressed) "good Christians" by the "rich" (and oppressive) "bad Jews."

[81] Adela Yarbo Collins, *Crisis*, 85.

to the Gospels of Matthew and John; however, increasingly scholars have – in a similar vein to the New Perspective on Paul – moved away from interpreting these two authors as Christians, but rather as Jews engaged in intra-Jewish sectarian disputes.[82] Although both Gospels contain polemics against rival Jewish factions, we should not presume concrete boundaries or unequal power relationships between the (relatively speaking) mighty Jews and the oppressed, fledging Christian church. Rather, we have one Jewish sect – the Jesus movement – in active contestation with another (or perhaps several) other Jewish sects or movements; thus, we find instead the relatively common phenomenon of intra-Jewish sectarian dispute and debate.

Nonetheless, to justify what they read as John's sudden and vitriolic interjection of *Christian* anti-Jewish sentiment, some scholars have gone to great lengths to fabricate a feasible social scenario of Jewish persecution of Christians in Asia Minor, often drawing on the later and clichéd portrait of the evil Jews in the *Martyrdom of Polycarp*.

> When the herald said this, the whole crowd of Gentiles and Jews from Smyrna cried out with uncontrollable rage and called in a loud voice: this is the teacher of impiety, the father of the Christians, the destroyer of our gods…having said these things, they called out to Philip, the Asiarch, asking him to release a lion on Polycarp. (*Martyrdom of Polycarp* 12.2; cf. 13:1; 17.2; 18.1)

John's *assumed* social situation as a persecuted minority (Christian) of a larger and more powerful group (Jews) is simply one instance, so the argument goes, of a supposedly widespread phenomenon of Jewish anti-Christian persecution and collaboration with Roman authorities, exemplified, for example, throughout the narrative of the *Martyrdom of Polycarp*.[83]

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[82] For a sampling of the massive bibliography, see David Frankfurter, "Jews or Not," 406.

[83] Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *The Book of Revelation: Justice and Judgment 2nd Edition* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Press, 1998), 118: "An example of this bitter hostility of some Jews against Christians in Asia Minor can be seen in the decisive role that Jews in Smyrna played in the martyrdom of Polycarp. Furthermore, the author of Rev. thinks that the churches of Smyrna and Philadelphia have to expect further difficulties and persecutions from the Jewish citizenship in the future (2:10 – 11)."

The genre and propagandist agenda of the *Martyrdom of Polycarp* should caution us against using it as firsthand testimony to second-century realities.[84] As such, I agree with the rhetorically oriented approach of scholars who have studied the trope of *Polycarp*'s mob of evil Jews as an ideologically motivated cliché rather than as concrete proof of a prevalent and active Jewish persecution of second-century Christians.[85] Similarly, the supposed evidence undergirding this alleged consensus that Jews widely and systematically persecuted Christians in the first two centuries of the Common Era has increasingly eroded.[86] In light of this lack of evidence, most scholars have now concluded that there was no widespread anti-Christian Jewish persecution (or collaboration with Roman persecution) motivating John's "anti-Jewish" vitriol.[87] So then, what did motivate it?

Even if it was not in response to *active* persecution, some scholars still maintain that antipathy towards local *Jews* motivates John's vitriol in 2:9 and 3:9. See, for example, the views of Paul Duff and Steven Friesen respectively:

> If John's response to his faithful communities could create (or exacerbate) tensions between the churches and synagogues of Smyrna and Philadelphia, he could possibly shut off that option [i.e., defection] to his supporters. Accordingly, in his Apocalypse, he could subtly suggest that those who might otherwise have been seen as the most sympathetic to the point of view of his "faithful" were (at least for the present) trapped in the great Satanic conspiracy against the people of God. Hemmed in on all sides, therefore, the "faithful" might feel that their only viable option was to recommit themselves to their communities, pull together, and persevere with John at their head.[88]

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[84] See, for example, the recent work of Candida Moss who parlays this historical observation into a modern-day criticism of what she sees as a martyrdom complex among conservative Christians. Moss, *The Myth of Persecution: How Early Christians Invented a Story of Martyrdom* (New York: Harper Collins, 2013).

[85] Judith Lieu, "Accusations of Jewish Persecution in Early Christian Sources, with Particular Reference to Justin Martyr and the *Martyrdom of Polycarp*," *Tolerance and Intolerance in Early Judaism and Christianity* (ed. Graham Stanton and Guy Stroumsa; Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 279 – 95.

[86] David Frankfurter, "Jews or Not," 406: "Jews were not, as was once believed, ritually cursing Jesus believing heretics in synagogues in the late first century; indeed, as most commentators now admit, little external evidence exists for systematic or widespread persecution of Jesus believers in Asia Minor at all."

[87] See the excellent summary of this trend in scholarship by Paul Duff, "The 'Synagogue of Satan': Crisis Mongering and the Apocalypse of John," in *The Reality of the Apocalypse: Rhetoric and Politics in the Book of Revelation* (ed. David Barr; Leiden: Brill, 2006), 148 – 51, 161 – 2; cf. *Who Rides the Beast*, 31 – 47.

[88] Paul Duff, "Synagogue of Satan," 166; cf. idem, *Who Rides the Beast* 43 – 47; 49 - 51

> It is much easier to accept the majority opinion on this matter: the synagogue of Satan references were directed at some members of the Jewish communities in Smyrna and Philadelphia. The message to the Smyrniote church suggests that the synagogue of Satan would be responsible for tension with the authorities…the ironic context makes it unnecessary to suppose that John's use of the phrase "synagogue of Satan implied that someone else deserved the title of Jew…thus, the sarcastic phrase "synagogue of Satan" did not question who could claim to be Jewish; it denied the opponent's allegiance to God."[89]

Although I agree with Duff that John's polemical rhetoric aims to carve out and create social and theoretical distance between possibly porous groups, and with Friesen that John is *sarcastic* insofar as he is "caustic and personal,"[90] I see no compelling reason to assume, as Friesen and Duff do, that John directs his venom against "the mainstream Jewish communities of Smyrna and Philadelphia."[91]

Instead, and agreeing with Marshall and Frankfurter, John's acerbic insults seem to be rather straightforward.[92] John sees a dangerous group of outsiders purporting to be Jews and perhaps even claiming Jewish salvific priority without *really* – according to John – being Jews.[93] John responds by cleverly subverting his opponents' claims: you are wrong when you presume to be Jews; but if you want to be called Jews, then I shall call you a synagogue…a synagogue of Satan![94] Furthermore, John's description (Revelation 3:9) of the fate of "those who say they are

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[89] Steven Friesen, "Sarcasm in Revelation," 136; 138.
[90] Steven Friesen, "Sarcasm in Revelation," 132.
[91] Steven Friesen, "Sarcasm in Revelation," 134; cf. Paul Duff, "The Synagogue of Satan," 148.
[92] John Marshall, *Parables*,13 – 16, 133 - 34; cf. David Frankfurter, "Jews or Not," passim. See, in contrast, Steven Friesen, ("Sarcasm in Revelation," 135 – 36 n.32) who summarily rejects Marshall's "referential understanding" of John with his programmatic assertion: "we are [not] dealing with referential language here because the general and immediate contexts are full of irony, satire, and sarcasm.
[93] Cf. Paul's Judaizing opponents in his Letter to the Galatians who claim that Gentiles must become "righteous Gentiles" by embracing specific practices but not the whole of the Torah in order to be included among the descendants of Abraham and God's people. John, similarly, may be addressing a group of Gentiles who are, for some reason, claiming Jewish identity without – in John's mind – an authentic right to such a title and its honors (see the following note).
[94] Steven Friesen's response ("Sarcasm in Revelation," 135) to Frankfurter ("Jews or Not?") that Pauline churches did not deploy "*Ioudaios"* or "synagogue" in their self-definitions is an important critique; however, I would quibble with it for two reasons. First, Friesen appears to overlook the range and function of *Ioudaios* throughout Paul's writings, especially in instances when Paul must lay claim to *Ioudaios* to dispute the claims of rival Jewish

Jews but are not" is strikingly similar to other Jewish accounts of the eschatological fate of the Nations: "I will make those who say they are Jews and are not, but are lying – I will make them come and bow before you and they will learn that I have loved you."[95] In so jealously policing who can authentically lay claim to Jewish identity, John, again, is quintessentially Jewish insofar as he maintains and reinforces this essentializing binary between us (Jews) and them (Gentiles).[96]

Therefore, insofar as the terms "Christian" or "Jewish Christian" contribute to distorted interpretations of Revelation, they do more harm than good in our efforts to understand John's social and soteriological expectations.[97] Certainly John believes the Messiah, Jesus Christ, has already come, but this does *not* entail that he has rejected Jewish ritual practice, or abandoned traditional prophetic expectations for the restoration of Israel. Furthermore, it does not mean that he envisions a new, third category of humanity called "Christian."

For John as well as for Paul, it is better to construe these two as Jewish rather than Christian authors. Yet they were both Jews who believed that Jesus Christ, the Messiah, had

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missionaries who are preaching incorrect or even "Judaizing" instructions to Gentile members of the Jesus movement (e.g., Galatians 2:15ff. and Romans 2:17 - 29). And secondly, although Frankfurter does unnecessarily homogenize John's Letters to the Seven Congregations in order to frame John's opponents in Smyrna and Philadelphia as similar or even analogous to his Neo-Pauline opponents of Pergamum and Thyatira (See **note 101**), John, nonetheless, may be writing against a faction who – similarly to some of Paul's opponents in Galatians and Romans – have misappropriated for themselves titles from the Hebrew Bible and contemporary Jewish literature, e.g., the congregation of God. Thus, John may be responding to (or pre-emptively undercutting) his opponent's illicit appropriation of the language of the "synagogue of the saints" and the "synagogue of the Lord" from Numbers 16:3 LXX. See also Adela Yarbo Collins ("Insiders and Outsiders in the Book of Revelation and its Social Context," in *"To See Ourselves as Others See Us": Christians, Jews, "Others" in Late Antiquity* (ed. Jacob Neusenr and Ernest S. Frerichs; Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1985), 209), who provides a list of similar phrases, e.g., "congregation of God," "assembly of God," and "congregation of Belial," found in the writings of the Qumran community, e.g., the War Scroll IQM 1:1, IQM 4: 9 – 10, and the *Hodayot* IQH 2:22.

[95] Paul Duff ("Synagogue of Satan," 158 – 59 n.48) unintentionally strengthens this reading by noting that the eschatological destiny for the "synagogue of Satan" from Revelation 3:9 is they will be forced to "learn from their mistakes." As Duff notes, a similar eschatological fate appears in Wisdom 5, 1 Enoch 62, and 4 Ezra 7:83 – 87; what Duff fails to note, however, is that these passages describe the eschatological fate of the *Gentile Nations* who will be forced to endure extreme humiliation (and sometimes torment) for their former oppression of Israel.

[96] Shaye J. D. Cohen, *Beginnings of Jewishness*, 1: "Jews see the world in bipolar terms: Jews versus gentiles, "us" versus "them."

[97] See John Marshall (*Parables*, 29 – 30): "My contention, of course, is that an understanding of the Apocalypse as Christian poses nearly insurmountable problems within the context of the academic study of religion, whereas an understanding of the Apocalypse as Jewish offers singular advantages in addressing the problems that plague current interpretations of the document."

come.[98] To avoid the difficulty of the anachronistic and revisionist category of "Christian," but still incorporate this essential belief, I refer to both John and Paul as Jewish followers of Jesus.[99] In so doing, I am attempting to create a protean category that indicates both that neither Paul nor John have *become* Christian but also that their Jewishness belonged to a distinctive and historically aborted strand of Judaism that many later and prominent Jewish and Christian intellectuals sought to eradicate.[100]

In contrast, therefore, to the dominant scholarly paradigm on John of Patmos, I contend that the author of Revelation was a first century apocalyptic Jew and follower of Jesus writing in the aftermath of the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 CE. Not only was John a Jewish follower of Jesus like Paul, he was in some ways ritually more conservative than Paul and for this reason may have written in direct opposition to certain followers of Paul.[101] Furthermore, John's

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[98] A growing numbers of scholars have concluded that the boundary-lines between "Christianity" and "Judaism" are not so easily recognizable in the first several centuries of the Common Era. In contrast to the "parting of the ways model," in which Judaism and Christianity are two distinct offshoots of a single road and that once they diverge in the first or early second century they are fully formed and do not significantly interact or influence one another again, these scholars rightly argue that there continue to be important sites of interaction and interchange between Christians and Jews up through the early Middle Ages. See, for example, Judith Lieu, "'The Parting of the Ways': Theological Construct or Historical Reality?" *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 56 (1994): 101 – 119; Israel Yuval, *Two Nations in Your Womb: Perceptions of Jews and Christians in the Middle Ages* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003); Daniel Boyarin, *Borderlines: The Partition of Judaeo-Christianity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2004); and the essays collected in *The Ways that Never Parted: Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (eds. Adam Becker and Annette Yoshiko Reed; Tübingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 2003).

[99] This *sine qua non* of the category Christianity is necessary but not sufficient, especially as the category Christian/Christianity tends to assume a rejection and replacement model vis-à-vis Judaism. See John Gager's (*Reinventing Paul*, viii) similar rhetorical shift to "Jesus movement" from "Christianity."

[100] Karen King, *What is Gnosticism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003; eadem, Which Early Christianity," in *The Oxford Handbook of Early Christian Studies* (ed. Susan Ashbrook Harvey and David G. Hunter; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 66 – 84.

[101] David Frankfurter, "Jews or Not," 416 – 22. I disagree with the interpretative implications, however, of Frankfurter's (and Pagels ("Social History," 245) and Himmelfarb (*Kingdom of Priests*, 136 – 37) who follow Frankfurter) contention that John was writing against *Paul* or *Pauline views* directly in his letters to Smyrna and Philadelphia. As Paul Duff rightly notes ("Synagogue of Satan," 154 and 159 n.49) there is no indication that John's issue with the congregations at Smyrna and Philadelphia are the same "Neo-Pauline" problems he addressed in his letters to Pergamum and Thyatira, e.g., *porneia* and eating food sacrificed to idols. Thus, John opposed multiple views and groups and perhaps some originated as interpretations/interpreters of Paul. Moreover, although Paul did teach that Gentile Jesus followers need not follow the law, there is no indication that he would have claimed they had become the new Israel or could claim to be Jews (cf. Rev. 2:9; 3:9); in fact, Paul vehemently disputed just this sort of Gentile arrogance (Romans 11). Thus, while John may be addressing "Neo-Pauline"

evocative visions of judgment and salvation divided humans in fundamentally two camps: Gentile and Jew; within these two camps, however, John acknowledged ethical and social difference.[102] As we shall see in **Chapter 3**, John's apocalyptic visions reflect and reinforce his own social and ethical ideals. Among the various evocative images of Revelation, John describes the heavenly throne room and the privileged few who worship and serve God therein. In this way, John rhetorically highlights specific values, practices, and people, most especially the sanctity of Jewish priests and their temple worship as well as the "purified" martyrs who were killed in the Jewish revolt against Rome.[103]

Resisting easy categorization, the division between Israel and the Nations, according to John, is both permanent and fluid. Permanent insofar as this division will continue to divide and determine conduct in the eschaton when a new earth and a new Jerusalem appear (Revelation 21). But also fluid insofar as John imports Isaiah's expectations that priests shall come from the various Nations to worship the one true God (Isaiah 66); thus, John, as opposed to Paul, *imagines* (but does not promote!) greater sociological flexibility insofar as Gentiles can – and likely should – become Jewish proselytes. To illuminate John's layered soteriological and ethical expectations, I will concentrate on his description of five specific groupings of persons: Jewish martyrs and the priestly elect; Gentile converts serving as priests; the saved but non-elite from Israel; righteous Gentiles; and finally the damned. Notably, none of these categories requires or is further clarified by the neologism of "Christian."

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interpretations in his letters to Pergamum and Thyatira, the views and practices of the opponents that John is opposing in Smyrna and Philadelphia *are* significantly different from Paul's (*pace* Frankfurter "Jews or Not," 418 – 19).

[102] I agree with Martha Himmelfarb (*Kingdom of Priests*, 138), *pace* Marshall (*Parables of War*), that John did not posit universal salvation for all of Israel; instead, as we will see, John of Patmos rhetorically privileges certain identities and types of conduct. As Himmelfarb notes, those from the 144,000 who are sealed in Revelation are a *minority* of Israel, just as in Ezekiel 9:4.

[103] See Martha Himmelfarb's study of priestly language in Revelation and throughout ancient Judaism generally in her *Kingdom of Priests*, in particular 135 – 42 for her views on Revelation.

## Conclusion

One might ask: am I not equally guilty of the scholarly sin of supersessionism insofar as my reconstruction of John and Paul maintains that both expected saved Jews to be saved – in some way – *through* or as a *result* of Christ? No. If nothing else, the takeaway from this chapter should be that there was no third way or "race" in John and Paul that could have superseded existing social and/or ethnic categories.[104] Both Jewish authors described how a Jewish messiah came as part of God's plan to save Jews and certain Gentiles. Although both agreed the messiah plays a role in God's plan,[105] this shared soteriological feature did *not* erase for *either* author the biblical framework of prophecies tailored to the Nations and Israel respectively.[106] Their teleological tales of salvation history *require* the continued existence and activities of Israel and the Nations. To erase this distinction is to lose sight of how each author was creatively implementing these biblical prophecies into rhetoric and practice.

In the following **Chapter**, I will argue that both John and Paul were committed to faithfully making sense of and reconciling their expectations for the salvation of Israel and the Nations – drawn from various strands within Judaism – in light of their own circumstances and situated concerns. Moreover, although both John and Paul constructed higher and lower levels of salvation, they differed from each other greatly on timelines, groups described, and the sorts of ethical conduct privileged. Consequently, although both Paul and John sought to solve the

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[104] On the issue of "race" and its relative elasticity in antiquity, see Denise Kimber Buell, *Why This New Race? Ethnic Reasoning in Early Christianity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005).

[105] This role, however, is very different in John and Paul. See **Chapter 3.**

[106] See the excellent statement by W.D. Davies ("People of Israel," 23): "Pre-Christian Jewish eschatology itself had anticipated the final incoming of the Gentiles into the worship of the true God. But this was not regarded as a subtle means of annihilating the ethnic diversity of Gentile life. Over against the Stoics, for example, who contemplated the disappearance of ethnic differences as desirable, Philo and the Palestinian sages anticipated that ethnic and linguistic distinctions would continue into the messianic age - a position rooted in the Old Testament. We might expect Paul to have shared this view. His insistence that 'in Christ' there is neither Jew nor Greek (Gal. iii. 28, Col. iii. 11) would seem at first sight to exclude it. However, it is clear that unity 'in Christ' did not undo ethnic differences. In Christ Jews remain Jews and Greeks remain Greeks. Ethnic peculiarities are honoured (I Cor. ix. 22, x. 32)."

theoretical and social problem differing expectations for the Nations and Israel through higher and lower levels of salvation, these two early followers of Jesus disagreed over many of the specifics. What they shared, however, were complex ethical and soteriological expectations that avoid easy essentialization into binaries between merit and grace or Christian morality and Jewish ritualism.

# Chapter 3
# A Heavenly City and an Olive Tree:
## Higher and Lower Levels of Salvation and Different Ethical Standards for Israel and the Nations in John and Paul

As he approached the climax of his rebuttal to arrogant Gentile followers of Jesus who believed themselves to be now *superior* to Jews (Romans 9 – 11),[1] Paul slammed his fist down, at least rhetorically: it is not *you*, o Gentiles, who have done something incredible and praiseworthy, but God! He has in-grafted you, a wild olive-shoot (ἀγριέλαιος), into the metaphorical tree of Israel's redemption.[2] In so doing, God has offered you a *special* but also *limited* opportunity to be saved. It is his promise to *all* of Israel, i.e., the natural branches, that is irrevocable; God has made no such promise to save *all* of you. Show some humility and appreciation for those Jews who have delayed in joining *in* Christ; but for this, you might never have been saved!

Using elaborate, sensory-rich language, John also subordinated Gentile salvation to Israel's.[3] 144,000, 12,000 from each tribe of Israel, will be sealed and protected from the

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[1] On the interpretation of Romans 9 – 11 as a response to arrogant Gentile followers of Jesus, see Stanley Stowers, *Rereading Romans: Justice, Jews, and Gentiles* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), chapter 10.

[2] Romans 11: 17 – 26: But if some of the branches were broken off, and you, a wild olive shoot, were grafted in their place to share the rich root of the olive tree, do not boast over the branches. If you do boast, remember that it is not you that support the root, but the root that supports you. You will say, "Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in." That is true. They were broken off because of their unbelief, but you stand only through faith. So do not become proud, but stand in awe. For if God did not spare the natural branches, perhaps he will not spare you. Note then the kindness and the severity of God: severity toward those who have fallen, but God's kindness toward you, provided you continue in his kindness; otherwise you also will be cut off. And even those of Israel, if they do not persist in unbelief, will be grafted in, for God has the power to graft them in again… For if you have been cut from what is by nature a wild olive tree and grafted, contrary to nature, into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these natural branches be grafted back into their own olive tree. I want you to understand this mystery: a hardening has come upon part of Israel, until the full number of Gentiles has come in. And thus all Israel will be saved…"

[3] See, for example, Revelation 14: 1 – 7: "Then I looked, and there was the Lamb, standing on Mount Zion! And with him were one hundred and forty-four thousand who had his name and his Father's name written on their foreheads. And I heard a voice from heaven like the sound of many waters and like the sound of loud thunder; the voice I heard was like the sound of harpists playing on their harps, and they sing a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and before the elders. No one could learn that song except the one hundred and forty-four thousand who had been redeemed from the earth. It is those who have not defiled themselves with women, for they are virgins; these follow the Lamb wherever he goes. They have been redeemed from humanity as first fruits for God and the Lamb, and in their mouth no lie was found; they are blameless. Then I saw another angel

coming tribulations; afterwards, they will reign with Christ for a thousand years; o*nly after all of this*, i.e., the tribulations and thousand-year reign, do Gentiles *qua* Gentiles appear to enjoy some modicum of salvation in the book of Revelation. Realizing their previous errors, these saved Gentiles will penitently bring "the glory and honor" of the Nations to the heavenly and new Jerusalem (Rev. 21:26)[4] as part of Israel's eschatological celebration and restoration.[5]

For both Paul and John, it was a *given* that God has a special interest in the salvation of Israel over and above any who might be saved from the Nations. What remains to be elaborated are how all the puzzle pieces culled from biblical prophecies fit together and what their final pictures meant for John and Paul.[6] What is God's plan to save Israel and the Nations, and what role(s) must each group play as the drama of salvation history enters its final stage(s)?

John of Patmos and Paul the Apostle believed they were living in *the* special epoch in which God's promises to Israel had begun to be fulfilled (e.g., 1 Corinthians 7:29 – 31; Revelation 1:3). For both authors, Jesus Christ has initiated the eschaton, and the "first-fruits" of what will soon happen on a full scale have already begun to appear (1 Corinthians 15:20 – 23; Revelation 14:1 – 5).[7] Jesus' *parousia*, however, has not yet arrived and God's enemies seem to be prospering. Consequently, both Paul and John improvised and dialectically reinterpreted

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flying in mid-heaven, with an eternal gospel to proclaim to those who live on earth – to every nation and tribe and language and people. He said in a loud voice, "Fear God and give him glory, for the hour of his judgment has come."

[4] Revelation 21:26: καὶ οἴσουσιν τὴν δόξαν καὶ τὴν τιμὴν τῶν ἐθνῶν εἰς αὐτήν.

[5] There is an interpretative dispute over how to best render "glory and honor." As we will see below, one of John's major inter-texts here is Isaiah 60's expectation of the Nations coming to Jerusalem to pay financial restitution. John, however, has modified this language to highlight the liturgical and cultic resonances of "glory" and "honor" rather than financial reparations; this observation, as shall see, has important implications.

[6] For two excellent studies that deal effectively with the subtlety while still stressing the paramount importance of exegesis in Paul and John, see further Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989) and Richard Bauckham, *The Climax of Prophecy: Studies on the Book of Revelation* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1993).

[7] Although fascinating, it is unfortunately beyond the scope of my current project to examine just how Paul and John construct the function and significance of Jesus as their Messiah. For an excellent survey of the relevant issues and texts relating especially to Paul's deployment of the title "Christ," see Matthew Novenson, *Christ*; on Christology generally in the book of Revelation, see further Loren Stuckenbruck, *Angel Veneration and Christology: A Study in Early Judaism and in the Christology of the Apocalypse of John* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1995).

prophetic expectations to account for this unexpected turbulence.[8] Nonetheless, John and Paul both *know* that the final chapter of salvation history is unfolding all around, and what's more, they *know* how each member or group from the cast of characters is supposed to behave and what their end(s) will be.[9]

In this **Chapter**, I will consider John and Paul's ethical expectations as they dialectically fashioned them in light of their biblically inspired visions for the eschaton as well as their respective social circumstances. Both John and Paul used spatial and temporal hierarchies to distinguish between the different salvific ends and ethical expectations of Gentiles and Jews. As we shall see, both John and Paul constructed their ethical expectations based on the roles and conduct expected of Gentiles who have the opportunity to participate in the eschatological restoration of Israel.

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[8] See Paula Fredriksen's ("Judaism, Circumcision of the Gentiles, and Apocalyptic Hope: Another Look at Galatians 1 – 2," *Journal of Theological Studies* 42.2 (1991): 532 – 64, citation from 562) poignant phrasing of this in relation to Paul: "Ingeniously, tortuously, Paul integrates biblical history and his religious convictions as a Jew with precisely those discouraging facts of the Christian movement mid-century – too many Gentiles, too few Jews, and no End in sight – to formulate a solution to both dilemmas." Thus, we should not force Paul into the bind of being a *systematic* thinker, building from the ground up (or from creation to the eschaton); instead, Paul is a dialectic and dynamic thinker creatively improvising for rhetorical emphasis and situational need."

[9] I use "know" here for rhetorical emphasis to highlight the certainty of John and Paul's beliefs; John and Paul *know* they are right and, if pressed, both could offer rational (to their minds and in light of their commitments) defenses and justifications for these beliefs. In addition to Jeffrey Stout and Alasdair MacIntyre on situated rationality (**Chapter 1 note 17**), see also the statements by Richard Hays and Richard Bauckham who both note that Paul and John have *prophetic* authority and *certainty* insofar as they *know* how things will turn out.

Hays, *Echoes*, 171: "Paul stands, however presumptuous it may be for him to do so, directly in Israel's prophetic biblical tradition. He does experience present time as a time of God–dominated events; he does see his own ministry as part of the consequential flow of time from Abraham to the present. He does believe that God is speaking through him. Hence, the freedom of his intertextual tropes. The circumspect sense of temporal estrangement from Bible time is completely lacking from his readings of the text. Also lacking, therefore, is the dutiful desire to preserve and repeat the precise words of a holy 'once upon a time' when God was present and spoke to his people; God speaks now."

Cf. Richard Bauckham, *The Theology of the Book of Revelation* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 7: "John's work is a prophetic apocalypse in that it communicates a disclosure of transcendent perspective on this world…John (and thereby his readers with him) is taken up into heaven in order to see the world from the heavenly perspective. He is given a glimpse behind the scenes of history so that he can see what is really going on in the events of his time and place. He is also transported in vision into the final future of the world, so that he can see the present from the perspective of what its final outcome must be, in God's ultimate purpose for human history."

Although Paul and John both drew upon many of the same biblical passages for details regarding appropriate Gentile conduct, each constructed the conduct and role of a saved Gentile differently due to the constraints of their social contexts, idiosyncrasies, and ideological commitments.[10] Nonetheless, John and Paul were both emphatic that *some* Gentiles would have an eschatological role to play *as Gentiles*. Where they differ is that Paul sought to enact the opening scenes of the eschatological redemption of Israel and the ingathering of the Nations by including Gentiles and expecting them to excel in those ethical expectations enjoined on those saved from among the Nations; John, in contrast, likely addressed only Jews (and possibly a small number of Jewish converts) and used the eschatological and imagined actions of Gentiles as a foil to reinforce current social and ethical boundaries between his Jewish community and Gentile outsiders.

## John of Patmos: Re-envisioning Redemption

Although I shall endeavor to make sense of *some* of John's visions and their place in his overall narrative, I do not want to be mistaken for presenting a systematic or comprehensive account of all the threads running throughout Revelation. John was not a systematic thinker, and

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[10] These ethical expectations should not, moreover, be conflated and homogenized with the rabbinic notion of the Noahide Commandments. Although the Noahide Commandments and Paul and John's expectations are all genealogically dependent upon *some* of the same biblical passages describing ethical expectations for the Nations/Gentiles/sojourner, John and Paul differ from the rabbinic context and aim; not the least insofar as they both think this world is ending and their ethics reflect this eschatological focus. For a useful introduction and discussion of the conceptual framework and content of the Noahide Commandments, see further Alan Segal, *Paul the Convert: The Apostolate and Apostasy of Saul the Pharisee* (Yale University Press: New Haven, 1990), 187 – 223; and idem, "Universalism in Judaism and Christianity," *Paul in His Hellenistic Context* (ed. Troels Engberg-Pedersen; T & T Clark: Edinburgh, 1994), 1 – 29; see also **Chapter 1**.

*Pace* Mark Nanos (*The Mystery of Romans: The Jewish Context of Paul's Letters* (Fortress Press: Minneapolis, 1996), 166 – 238) who claims that Paul's interest in righteous Gentiles reflects the same framework and codes of conduct expressed in Luke's Apostolic Decree (Acts 15:19 – 21, 28 – 29; 21:24 – 25). Aside from the fact that Paul explicitly *disagreed* with elements of the Apostolic Decree (see below), I am not persuaded that we should strive to read Paul in light of Luke's later formulation (i.e., his Apostolic Decree); instead, we can more readily explain that any conceptual overlaps between Paul and Luke's Apostolic Decree arose due to their emerging from shared, biblical source materials.

there are any number of *lacunae* in the account I am offering.[11] As Helmut Koester rightly noted, John's narrative is propelled by *images* and *metaphors*, not "rational sequences, logical progression, and judicious conclusions."[12] Consequently and building on **Chapters 1** and **2**, this **Chapter** will elucidate John's image-based language of difference and priority. In particular, we shall consider not only how John, drawing upon but also redeploying biblical visions of the eschaton,[13] has constructed hierarchical images meant to console and consolidate his own community but also how he was seeking to reinforce specific ethical ideals.

**Temporal and Spatial Hierarchies**

As we saw in **Chapter 2**, John twice (Revelation 7 and 14) differentiated between the 144,000 who were sealed from Israel and the secondary ingathering of the Nations, both times emphasizing the primacy of the restored twelve tribes of Israel.

> After this I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth…I saw another angel ascending from the rising of the sun, having the seal of the living God, and he called with a loud voice to the four angels who had been given power to damage earth and sea, saying "do not damage the earth or sea or the trees, until we have marked the servants of our God with a seal on their foreheads." And I heard the number of those who were sealed, one hundred forty-four thousand, sealed out of every tribe of the people of Israel…After this I looked and there was

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[11] For an admirably succinct and accessible overview and commentary of the whole of John's Revelation, see David Barr, *Tales of The End: A Narrative Commentary on the Book of Revelation* (Santa Rose, CA: Polebridge Press, 1998).

[12] Helmut Koester, *History and Literature of Early Christianity 2nd Edition*; *Volume 2* (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1982, 2000), 257.

[13] In contrast to scholars who, in discussions of John's use of the Hebrew Bible, focus only on verbatim citation or his ("Christian") repurposing of specific imagery, I whole-heartedly agree and follow Richard Bauckham's approach to John's exegesis, which seeks to recover how John's visions are shaped by and subtly allude to his biblical precedents but also are best interpreted within the context of ancient Jewish exegesis; see Bauckham, *Climax*, 297 – 98: "The literary connection [between Exodus and Revelation], as we shall see, is made, as it were, beneath the surface of the text by John's expert and subtle use of current Jewish exegetical method. Schüssler Fiorenza is typical of many scholars who, instead of studying John's allusions to the Old Testament in light of the way the Old Testament was read and used in the learned Jewish exegesis of his time, assume that John 'does not interpret the OT but [merely] uses its words, images, phrases, and patterns as a language arsenal in order to make his own theological statement or express his own prophetic vision.' Nothing could be further from the truth. This failure to recognize that John conveys meaning by means of very precise allusions to the Old Testament is the root of a great deal of contemporary scholarly misunderstanding of his book. Even when it does not lead to misinterpretation, it leads to a shallow form of interpretation, which ignores the remarkable wealth of meaning John has packed into his dense text."

> a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and the Lamb, robed in white, with palm branches in their hands. They cried out in a loud voice, saying: "Salvation belongs to our God who is seated on the throne, and to the Lamb!" (Revelation 7:1 – 10)

In so doing, John has deliberately evoked Isaiah 56's account[14] of the secondary ingathering of foreigners who convert[15] and then join those already gathered.[16] Who are these Gentile converts stationed in the heavenly throne room and worshipping the one true God? These converts, according to John, are the priests and Levites drawn from among the Nations who, according to Isaiah 66:21, will participate in the cultic worship of God.[17]

Yet these priestly converts are not the *only* saved Gentiles in the Book of Revelation. When we compare these liturgical scenes with other passages from Revelation, e.g., Revelation 21 – 22, an interesting tension arises; namely, there are *two* paths towards salvation for Gentiles. There are those Gentiles mentioned in these liturgical interludes who *convert* and *become priests*,[18] thereby drawing upon Isaiah 56 and 66's expectations of the Nations; on the other

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[14] "And the foreigners who join themselves to the Lord, to minister to him, to love the name of the Lord, and to be his servants, all who keep the Sabbath and do not profane it, and hold fast my covenant – these I will bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer; their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be acceptable on my altar; for my house shall be called a house of prayer for all Nations. Thus says the Lord God, who gathers the outcasts of Israel, I will gather others to them besides those already gathered." (Isaiah 56:6 – 8; cf. Isaiah 2: 2 – 4)

[15] See Paula Fredriksen ("Judaism," 545) who emphasizes that these Gentiles converts are not a quotidian reality for ancient Jews; rather, Isaiah expects that if some Gentiles do "convert," they will do so at some time in the *future*.

[16] Thus, even in sections that highlight the participation and worship of God by the Nations, even as converts, their temporal subordination to Israel is clear. Revelation 14:1 – 7 (italics added) emphasizes both the temporal and spatial subordination of the Nations to Israel: "Then I looked, and there was the lamb, standing on Mount Zion! And with him were one hundred forty-four thousand who had his name and his Father's name written on their foreheads…no one could learn that song except the one hundred and forty-four thousand who had been redeemed from the earth…They have been redeemed from humankind as *first fruits* (ἀπαρχὴ) for God and the Lamb…then I saw another angel flying *in mid heaven* (μεσουρανήματι), with an eternal gospel to proclaim to proclaim to those who dwell on the earth – to every nation and tribe and language and people (ἐπὶ πᾶν ἔθνος καὶ φυλὴν καὶ γλῶσσαν καὶ λαόν). He said in a loud voice, "Fear God and give him glory, for the hour of his judgment has come; and worship him who made heaven and earth, the sea and the springs of water.

[17] See Martha Himmelfarb, *A Kingdom of Priests*: *Ancestry and Merit in Ancient Judaism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), 135 – 42.

[18] Revelation 5:9 – 10: "They sing a new song: 'You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slaughtered and by your blood you have ransomed to God every tribe, tongue, people, and nation (ἐκ πάσης φυλῆς

hand, there are Gentiles who, fulfilling Isaiah 60, will repent (but not convert!) and will penitently bring the "glory and honor" of the Nations to Jerusalem (Rev. 21:24 – 27). John preserves both eschatological expectations but deploys them for *differing* purposes. In order to parse these varying roles and their rhetorical imports, we must first consider how John has fashioned a staggered account of salvation history through temporal and spatial hierarchies.[19]

Revelation's story of salvation history has multiple stages, including two resurrections; what stage(s) a person participates in and how depends upon the role he or she plays in the overall drama of salvation. In the first resurrection, those who had died for the witness of Jesus and the Word of God are raised.[20]

> Then I saw thrones and those seated on them were given authority to judge. I also saw the souls of those who have been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshipped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their forehead or hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years. (The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended.) This is the first resurrection. (Revelation 20:4 – 5)

Martyrs, throughout Revelation, enjoy salvific and temporal priority. In chapter eleven, John described two prophets, who, though killed, have already been raised and ascended to heaven

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καὶ γλώσσης καὶ λαοῦ καὶ ἔθνους); you have made them a kingdom of priests for our God (καὶ ἐποίησας αὐτοὺς τῷ θεῷ ἡμῶν βασιλείαν καὶ ἱερεῖς).'" Cf. Rev. 7:9ff.

[19] Steven Friesen, *Imperial Cults and the Apocalypse of John* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), Chapter 9.

[20] *Pace* Michael Labahn, "The Resurrection of the Followers of the Lamb: Between Heavenly 'Reality' and the Hope for the Future," *Resurrection of the Dead: Biblical Traditions in Dialogue* (ed. Geert Van Oyen and Tom Shepherd; Peeters: Leuven, 2012), 338 – 39, who views Revelation 20:4 as referring to two groups: the beheaded martyrs and "those who had not worshipped the beast or received his mark." See, however, David Aune (*Revelation* (3 vols.; WBC 52; Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1997-98), III, 1088), who notes that the (καὶ οἵτινες**)** introduces an analeptic relative clause (i.e., a "back reference") and does not refer to a new group of individuals: "the author uses [this back reference] to link this section with the same motifs found earlier in the narrative in Rev 13:4, 8, 12, 15; similar analeptic interpolations occur in 14:11 and 16:2…It is more natural to construe the text as referring to a single group of martyrs, who had been executed for both positive reasons (v 4b: their obedience to the commands of God and their witness to Christ) and negative reasons (v 4c: their refusal to worship the beast or its image and to receive its brand on their foreheads and their right hands)."

(11:3 – 12). Here as elsewhere, John has underscored the soteriological and moral importance of martyrdom.[21]

After the thousand-year reign of the martyrs with Christ, there will be a general resurrection and judgment for those who were not worthy of the first resurrection:

> Then I saw a great white throne and the one who sat on it; the earth and the heaven fled from his presence, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Also another book was opened, the book of life. And the dead were judged according to their works, as recorded in the books….then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire; and anyone whose name was not found written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire. (Revelation 20:11 – 15)

After this second resurrection, there is a general judgment of all, wherein those less praiseworthy than the martyrs but still deserving of a place in the book of life are saved; all others are thrown into the lake of fire. It is important to note that, apart from the idealistic expectation of Gentile converts who become priests and Levites, Gentiles *qua* Gentiles do not appear again until after this secondary resurrection, i.e., after the thousand-year reign of Christ with the 144,000 of restored Israel and the resurrected martyrs.

To paint the picture of *who* deserves the highest salvific rewards and *what* those rewards entail, John similarly deployed *spatial* distinctions to subdivide and hierarchically categorize the saved.[22] For example, John has placed into the throne room and heavenly temple of God his

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[21] See, for example, his description of the martyr Antipas (2:12 – 13), who is the model for upright conduct, in particular endurance, for the congregation in Pergamum; cf. **Chapter 5** for an analysis of the rhetorical use of martyrs in the *Shepherd of Hermas*.

[22] As I argued in **Chapter 2**, scholars often "Christianize" Revelation; and in so doing, they overwrite *modern* Christian concerns onto John's *ancient* Jewish preoccupations over righteousness and proper conduct. My approach will be to prioritize the first-century Jewish context for the book of Revelation. This is not to say, however, that this is the *only* way to read Revelation. See, for example, Dean Flemming's largely successful attempt to highlight Revelation's relevance, especially for Christian ethics today; Flemming accomplishes his task by dehistoricizing and then universalizing all of Revelation's Jewish elements. Thus, Flemming mines Revelation for resources and examples for how the modern Christian Church can remain holy in the world today. See Flemming, "'On Earth as It Is in Heaven': Holiness and the People of God in Revelation" *Holiness and Ecclesiology in the New Testament* (eds. Kent Brower and Andy Johnson; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007), 343 – 62.

saintly ethical exemplars, i.e., priests and martyrs.[23] As Martha Himmelfarb has persuasively argued, John repeatedly portrayed the righteous as a "priesthood of the saved" and illustrated their priestly priority through spatial proximity to God and his holy places.[24] We glimpse an instantiation of this priestly priority during the heavenly liturgies unfolding before the throne of God in heaven. In addition to four living creatures, the twenty-four elders, and the Lamb, John explicitly described those present in attendance before the heavenly throne as "a kingdom of priests serving God the Father" (Rev. 5:9 – 10; 1:6).

Furthermore, in a passage reminiscent of 20:4, Revelation 6:9 grants priority seating to the martyrs, who reside near the altar of God.[25] In both cases, John has envisioned the spatial layout of the heavenly throne room and the accouterments of the heavenly temple respectively to heighten the importance of the certain types of persons and their representative *types* of conduct. In so doing, John has provided ethical exemplars for his fellow Jews to imitate.

Some of the most stunning and best-known images of the Book of Revelation are the sudden appearances of the new *spaces* of a new heaven, new earth, and new Jerusalem in chapter 21.

> Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. (Revelation 21:1 – 2)

Scholars rightly have interpreted this passage as a synthesis of the poetic parallelism of Isaiah 65:17 (cf. 66:22) "For I am about to create new heavens and a new earth" with 65:18b's promise of the (re)creation of Jerusalem: "…for I am about to create Jerusalem as a joy and its people as

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[23] For an interpretation of this scene that focuses instead on the parody of Roman imperial imagery in play here, see David Aune, "The Influence of Roman Imperial Court Ceremonial on the Apocalypse of John," in *Apocalypticism, Prophecy, and Magic in Early Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2006; 2008), 99 – 119.
[24] Martha Himmelfarb, *Kingdom*, 135 – 36.
[25] Revelation 6:9: "When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slaughtered for the word of God and the testimony they had given." For more on the relationship between Revelation 20:4 and 6:9, see David Aune, *Revelation*, III, 1085 – 88.

a delight."[26] Thus, the triad of the new heaven, new earth, and new Jerusalem are the hallmarks of God's future promise to restore and redeem creation.[27] As such, this triad forms a coherent unit (and *not* discrete or individual spaces) and symbolizes the idealized community of the saints.[28]

This interpretation, however, homogenizes these distinctive places, especially the new earth and the new Jerusalem, and the *types* of people that will dwell within each space. This view assumes two questionable, interpretative moves. First, that John deployed the triad of new earth, heaven, and Jerusalem due to exegetical constraints, i.e., due to their inclusion in Isaiah's prophetic vision; consequently, the new earth and heaven are treated as vestigial products of John's exegesis of Isaiah and, as such, are functionally superfluous to his narrative.[29] The saved, insofar as they *are* saved, will *all* dwell within the new Jerusalem.[30] Secondly, once the new Jerusalem becomes synonymous and/or coterminous with the new earth, the *physicality* of John's imagery is treated as *purely* metaphorical.[31] Thus, even though this triad and the context in

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[26] For a fuller discussion of the relationship between Revelation 21's new earth, new heaven, and new Jerusalem to Isaiah as well as some other Biblical and Second Temple authors, see further Jan Fekkes III, *Isaiah and the Prophetic Traditions in the Book of Revelation: Visionary Antecedents and their Development* (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994); Pilchan Lee, *The New Jerusalem in the Book of Revelation: A Study of Revelation 21 – 22 in the Light of its Background in Jewish Tradition* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001); and David Mathewson, *A New Heaven and a New Earth: The Meaning and Function of the Old Testament in Revelation 21.1 – 22.5* (London: Sheffield Press, 2003).

[27] There is some debate about whether God has renewed creation or whether he has destroyed the old world and has now created a wholly new earth, heaven, and Jerusalem. See Jan Fekkes III, *Isaiah*, 228 – 30; 253 – 60.

[28] See, for example, Robert H. Gundry, "The New Jerusalem People as Place, Not Place for People," *Novum Testamentum* 29 (1987): 254 – 64.

[29] See, for example, G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 1999), 1043 – 44: "The new world that v 1 has portrayed as replacing the old is now called 'the holy city, new Jerusalem.' Not surprisingly, the language comes from another Isaiah passage…the commencement of the replacement of the temporary cosmos with the permanent is expressed in the visionary words 'I saw [the city] descending from heaven from God.' This is the consummate irruption of the new creation to replace the old creation."

[30] See David Matthewson, *New Heaven*, Chapter 6; Richard Bauckham, *Climax*, Chapter 9.

[31] See the critical remarks of Robert Royalty on this trend in his *The Streets of Heaven: The Ideology of Wealth in the Apocalypse of John* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1997), 215 – 18.

which it appears uses the spatiality of the new Jerusalem's cityscape, this, so it has been argued, is a narrative convention that is actually meant "to convey a nonspatial notion."[32]

While it is certainly true that John has drawn upon a great deal of metaphorical language (e.g., a city adorned as a bride) to describe the new Jerusalem, this does not entail that the spatial contours of the new Jerusalem and the new earth are *merely* metaphorical. According to John, *where* certain people will end up and *wha*t they will do there *matters.*[33] By preserving the distinctiveness and the physicality of these places, I will show that John has seized upon Isaiah's multi-tiered eschatological landscape and has used this hierarchical map to differentiate between specific eschatological roles and salvific privileges.

Consequently, when we examine this famous passage more closely, John – drawing upon and applying Isaiah's eschatological promises – has devised a hierarchical, sacred landscape of *two* levels of salvation that differentiates between the larger, less prestigious new earth and the center of this new earth, the new and heavenly Jerusalem. As a result, the new Jerusalem is the *axis mundi* of this new earth and is its point of contact with the new heaven.[34] Further enhancing its sacrality and importance, this new Jerusalem will not include a specific place for the Temple; instead, the whole city will serve as the dwelling place of God (21:22; cf. 21:3).[35] As a result, the city *radiates* with the presence of God, shining "with God as its light and its lamp is the lamb" (21:23). S*urrounding* and *separating* this new Jerusalem from the new earth are its "great

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[32] G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation,* 1098 – 99.

[33] Cf. the *New Jerusalem* and the *Temple Scroll* from Qumran, which both similarly construct *places* of elevated sacrality and significance (e.g., the new Jerusalem or the eschatological Temple) and aver that only the right sorts of people can dwell or practice therein. See further David Aune, "Qumran and the Book of Revelation," *Apocalypticism, Prophecy, and Magic in Early Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2006; 2008), 79 – 98.

[34] In so doing, John has woven together several biblical passages that portray Jerusalem or Zion as the navel or center of the world (e.g., Ezekiel 5:5; Micah 4:1 – 5; Psalms 48 and 99).

[35] For a compendious treatment of John's allusions to biblical and Near Eastern conceptions of the Temple, see further Robert A. Briggs, *Jewish Temple Imagery in the Book of Revelation* (New York: Peter Lang, 1999).

and high" city walls.[36] In his description of these walls, John has evoked Ezekiel's description of the Temple (40 – 42) and the walls of the city (48: 30 – 35).[37] Finally, those meant to dwell within the heavenly city walls are "those who conquer" and are therefore counted among the "children of God" (21:7). We will return shortly to flesh out who and what sort of conduct John has evoked here.

After describing the radiance of the heavenly city and its elaborate walls, John detailed the eschatological presence and role of Gentiles *qua* Gentiles:

> The nations will walk by its light [i.e., the glory of God], and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it. Its gates will never be shut by day – and there will be no night there. People will bring into it the glory and the honor of the nations. But nothing *profane* (κοινόν) will enter it, nor anyone who practices abomination or falsehood, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life. (Revelation 21:24 – 27)

David Aune has shown that Revelation 21:24 – 27 is paraphrasing and expanding upon Isaiah's description of captive foreign kings led in procession to pay homage to Jerusalem in chapter 60: 3 – 5, 11.[38] Thus, according to Isaiah, *even* the Kings of the earth shall penitently come to offer financial restitutions to Israel and walk in her light as part of its eschatological celebration.

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[36] This continued interest in difference may help to explain John's emphasis on the "great and high wall" separating the new Jerusalem from the new earth even *after* the second resurrection (Revelation 21:12 – 14). In light of John's eschatological timeline, it is clear that this wall is not meant to protect and defend Jerusalem from potential attack from external, evil forces since only the saved remain; this does not mean, however, that we should abridge and smooth over John's language of spatial hierarchy so that the saved are an undifferentiated mass who enjoy equal salvific honors and access to the new Jerusalem.

*Pace* Pilchan Lee (*New Jerusalem*, 278), who concludes that John's elaborate and high walls are exegetical remainders that should not be interpreted as separating two distinct terrains and peoples: "Above all, if the New Jerusalem rightly symbolizes the church, the total number of God's people, then the walls should be understood symbolically…the safety of the new Jerusalem is one of the most important issues in the Old Testament (Isa. 26:1; 33:16; Ezek. 36:12b – 15; 38:8…) and early Jewish literature… John must utilize this idea of the Zion-tradition in order to emphasize the New Jerusalem is the ultimate fulfillment of the tradition. Therefore, R.H. Mounce rightly insists that the 'wall is simply part of the description of an ideal city as conceived by ancient people accustomed to the security of strong outer walls.'"

[37] Furthermore, the imagery and numbers (especially the number 12) signal the impending the restoration of the twelve tribes of Israel; see further David Aune, *Revelation*, III, 1155; George Beasley-Murray, *The Book of Revelation: Based on the Revised Standard Version* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1974; 1981), 320 – 21.

[38] Aune, *Revelation* III, 1170 – 71; Isaiah 60:3 – 5, 11: "Nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn. Lift up your eyes and look around; they all gather together, they come to you; your sons shall come from far away and your daughters shall be carried on their nurses' arms. Then you shall see and be radiant; your

Yet, John has deftly modified Isaiah's account as well; unlike in Isaiah 60:5, 11, where the captive kings of the earth bring only financial restitutions (e.g., 60:5's abundance or "wealth": πλοῦτος) to Jerusalem, John has employed the more wide-ranging terms "glory" (δόξα) and "honor" (τιμή). Elsewhere in Revelation (4:9; 4:11; 5:12 – 13; and 7:12), glory and honor are paired in liturgical scenes wherein the Nations praise and venerate the one true God of Israel. Moreover, δόξα is frequently used in the same manner throughout the *LXX* insofar as it appears in the context of non-Israelites recognizing and worshiping the one, true God of the whole universe.[39] Thus, John, although staying remarkably close to some elements of Isaiah's narrative, has shifted the tenor of the scene from financial restitution[40] to Israel to pious veneration of the God of Israel.[41]

John's complex pastiche of biblical prophecies, however, raises several interpretative difficulties. Do these Gentiles, insofar as they *finally* recognize the sovereignty of God, also convert and *become* Jews? If they remain Gentiles, which I argue they do, do they ever *physically* enter into the new Jerusalem? What is the referent for πᾶν κοινόν? How should it best be translated? And finally, in *what way*, if at all, did John expect his description of the new earth and new Jerusalem to affect the behavior of his readers?

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heart shall thrill and rejoice, because the abundance of the sea shall be brought to you, the wealth of the nations shall come to you…Your gates shall always be open; day and night they shall not be shut, so that that nations shall bring you their wealth, with their kings led in procession."

[39] Richard Bauckham, *Climax* 278 – 9: "'To give glory to God' always in Revelation refers positively to giving God the worship which is due to him (4:9; 14:7; 16:9; 19:7). It is used in the Old Testament in this sense, and can be used in connexion with repentance…or in contexts which anticipate the universal worship of God…In the Old Testament it occurs almost exclusively in non-Israelite contexts (Gen. 24:7; Ps. 136:26 are the only exceptions). It is used by Jews speaking to non-Jews or non-Jews acknowledging the God of Israel as the universal God…"

[40] As Zechariah 14: 16 – 19 makes clear, however, financial restitution to Israel and veneration of the God of Israel can coexist alongside each other in Jewish eschatological speculation.

[41] *Pace* Jan Fekkes III (*Isaiah and Prophetic*, 272 – 3), who concludes that John is purposefully ambiguous as to whether "glory" and "honor" should be interpreted as "physical offerings" or "spiritual worship." In contrast, see Robert Royalty (*Streets of Heaven*, 232 – 3) and Richard Bauckham (*Climax*, 315 – 16) who emphatically argue, albeit for differing reasons, that John has deliberately signaled liturgical and not monetary offerings.

John has repurposed the spatial hierarchy of a new earth and new Jerusalem to differentiate and privilege different eschatological and ethical roles, namely Israel's priestly worship of God and the Nations *secondary* support and imitation of this piety.[42] By way of analogy, John has expanded and topographically reassigned the Temple's hierarchical, sacred spaces such that the whole city is now the sanctuary and the new earth is the *de facto* courtyard for the Nations.[43]

Consequently, despite the dominant interpretation of this passage, according to which all the saved have "converted,"[44] this passage does *not* entail the total conversion of Nations;[45] nor is it even addressed to them.[46] John has constructed an idealistic vision of how Israel, as a nation of priests, should comport itself. The inclusion of some saved Gentiles on the new earth is a demonstration of God's *universal sovereignty*;[47] it is not consolation for or exhortation to any Gentile who might stumble upon and read John's text. Instead, John has used the eschatological

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[42] See **Chapter 1** for various examples of this notion of higher and lower levels of salvation; cf. Psalms of Solomon 17:28, 30 – 31 for analogous spatial hierarchy, differing dwelling places, and differing expectations for conduct: "He will distribute [the children of God] on the land according to their tribes; the alien and the foreigner will no longer live near them…And [the Lord] will have gentile nations serving him under his yoke, and he will glorify the Lord in (a place) prominent (above) the whole earth. And he will purge Jerusalem (and make it) holy as it was even from the beginning, (for) nations to come from the ends of the earth to see his glory, to bring as gifts her children who had been driven out, and to see the glory of the Lord…" (translated by R. B. Wright in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha: Volume 2* (ed. James Charlesworth; Doubleday: New York et al., 1985)).

[43] See Richard Bauckham (*Climax,* 266 – 73), who examines a comparable spatial hierarchy underlying Revelation 11:1 – 2's differentiation between the sanctuary and the court outside; Bauckham, however, contends that the "outer court" refers not to the court of the Gentiles but rather to the court of the priests. Whatever the correct referent is, it is clear that John has employed a spatial hierarchy of differing levels of sacrality to differentiate among the spaces that Gentiles are allowed and denied entry.

[44] This imagined conversion, importantly and problematically, was *not* to Judaism but to *Christianity*. See further **Chapter 2** for my argument against importing this anachronistic category to interpret the book of Revelation.

[45] *Pace* David Matthewson (*New Heaven*, 165) who argues that all the saved will reside in the new Jerusalem: "The primary difference between Rev. 21:24 – 26 and Zech. 14 is that, while in the latter the nations go the city year after year, in John's scenario the nations take up permanent residence in the city." As we shall see below, this is not the best interpretation of Revelation 21:24 – 27.

[46] Drawing upon the language of encoded and empirical readers (Stanley Stowers, *Rereading Romans,* 21 – 29), it does not appear that John had Gentiles in mind for either. For example, he constructed his *encoded* audience such that the Gentiles were clearly outsiders (e.g., the tree for the healing of the Nations in 22:2 treats Gentiles as outsiders who must depend upon the encoded audience, Israel, for healing; see below **note 82**). In terms of an empirical audience, we can only speculate; however, on the basis of the vitriol of 2:9 and 3:9, it is clear that John expected boundaries between his Jewish insiders and Gentile outsiders to be well maintained; consequently, it is unlikely that the *first* readers of Revelation included many Gentiles.

[47] See **Chapter 1** for a fuller discussion of this claim.

role of *some* saved Gentiles as a usable foil both to articulate and impress upon his Jewish audience certain ethical ideals (e.g., priestly conduct and steadfast endurance).

**Inclusion and Exclusion from the New Jerusalem**

In order to clarify the ethical dimensions of John's salvific hierarchy, we must look specifically at both his *inclusive* (e.g., what are the ethical requirements to enter into the New Jerusalem?) and *exclusive* language (e.g., who and what sort of conduct is specifically forbidden from the New Jerusalem?). When considering Revelation, as noted above, it is important to keep in mind that John is an impressionistic and not systematic author. Furthermore, although I shall offer an explanation for why John has employed certain language and images, this explanation can only skim the surface of the layers upon layers of John's sensory-rich and exegetically thick portrait of the new Jerusalem.[48]

Who, according to John, is worthy to enter into the new Jerusalem? "The one who conquers" (ὁ νικῶν) will be a child of God and thus among his beneficiaries (21:7), and "those who wash their robes" (οἱ πλύνοντες τὰς στολὰς) will be able to enter the city by the gates (22:14).[49] What these two phrases have in common is that John has associated both with steadfast endurance in the face of persecution and martyrdom.[50] Throughout the Book of Revelation, "those who conquer" are moral exemplars that were able to withstand persecution

[48] See **note 26** above for a sampling of bibliography.
[49] 21:27 also states that "those who are written in book of life" are able to enter as well; we shall return to this verse in much greater depth below.
[50] On the importance of martyrdom to John's "ecclesiology," see further Stephen Pattemore, *The People of God in the Apocalypse: Discourse, Structure, and Exegesis* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2004), chapter 4.

and even endure bloody martyrdom (e.g., 2:7; 2:11; 2:26; 3:5; 3:11; 3:21; 11:7; 13:7; 15:2).[51] As such, Christ is the paradigmatic example of someone who "has conquered."

> See, the lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered (ἐνίκησεν), so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals. Then I saw between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders a Lamb standing as if it had been slaughtered…" (Revelation 5:5 – 6)

Similarly, the phrase "those who wash their robes"' evokes not only successful endurance of "the great ordeal" but also the bloody sacrifice and death of Christ.[52]

> Then one of the elders addressed me, saying, "Who are those, robed in white, and where have they come from?" I said to him, "Sir, you are the one who knows." Then he said to me, "These are they who have come out of the great ordeal; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the lamb." (Revelation 7:13 – 14; cf. 3:4 and 9:14)

In this way, the martyrdom of Christ, according to John, was both the means and the moral standard for those wishing to enter into the new Jerusalem.

John's encouragement towards martyrdom raises a long-standing scholarly dispute about the social context of Revelation: were John and his audience *really* experiencing persecution or did John use this language for psychological and social consolation and consolidation? In this way, the general shape of the argument has become: since we have no evidence apart from John of Romans systematically persecuting Christians in the second half of the first century in Asia Minor,[53] obviously there was not any *actual* persecution; but perhaps there was a *perceived* crisis,[54] *or* John has deployed the most powerful rhetoric available – persecution and martyrdom

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[51] As David Aune (*Revelation*, I, 152 – 3) suggests, the background to the term νικάω is likely an athletic metaphor wherein someone successfully finishes a race or "wins" a contest. See below for comparable athletic metaphors in Paul.

[52] In addition to entering into the new Jerusalem, "those who wash their robes" (22:14) and "one who conquers" (2:7) both receive the same salvific honor insofar as both are explicitly said to be able to eat from the tree of life in paradise.

[53] See further **Chapter 2** for my discussion of this issue and the bibliography provided there.

[54] For perhaps the most influential study of this sort, see Adela Yarbo Collins, *Crisis and Catharsis: The Power of the Apocalypse* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1984).

– as part of his own boundary-drawing and solidarity-infusing social program.[55] While some of these arguments are quite sophisticated, they start from – as I outline in **Chapter 2** – a faulty assumption: that John and his audience were Christians, not Jews. As opposed to searching for external, first-century evidence of Roman persecution of Christians in Asia Minor, we should ask instead: was there a catastrophic event in the second half of the first century carried out by the Romans that would create a high number of Jewish martyrs and leave an indelible psychological scar and fear over personal safety?[56]

Consequently, John's interest in martyrdom is best understood in light of the destruction of the Temple and the sack of Jerusalem in 70 CE.[57] In much the same way, the sealing and protection of the 144,000 of the restored Israel against the impending eschatological travails and divine retaliation against hostile outsiders offers emotional consolation and social cohesion for John and his community. In short, God's retribution to the Romans is coming, and John and his community will be protected insofar as they successfully enact the role of the 144,000 sealed from Israel. Consequently, whether to encourage solidarity and resistance in the face of the future Roman persecution, or to provide a theological justification of greater salvific rewards after the fact, John of Patmos used his salvific hierarchy to differentiate among different types of Jews and privilege above all those who *have* or *will* steadfastly endure.

In typical fashion, however, for the author of Revelation, the righteous dwelling in the new Jerusalem are not *simply* those who have steadfastly endured; instead, John has woven together *several* ethical ideals for the righteous. Notably, John has synthesized three ethical

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[55] For a paradigmatic example, see Paul Duff, *Who Rides the Beast? Prophetic Rivalry and the Rhetoric of Crisis in the Churches of the Apocalypse* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).
[56] Elaine Pagels, *Revelations: Visions, Prophecy, and Politics in the Book of Revelation* (New York: Viking, 2012).
[57] In terms of a precise date for John's Apocalypse, I follow David Barr's more cautious approach that maintains that Revelation was likely written over an extended period (perhaps over several decades). Barr, *Tales of the End*, 21.

ideals or profiles: 1. the heavenly martyrs; 2. the 144,000 with its echoes of a military census and requirements of celibacy;[58] and 3. the priestly elect.[59] Consequently, those who will dwell in the new Jerusalem are an army of the righteous, who have steadfastly endured, and who will also be the priestly elect living *in* the sanctuary of God itself (Rev. 21).[60] As a result, John has fashioned an amalgam of heroic ethical actions (e.g., martyrdom, asceticism, and priestly worship) to describe those deserving to dwell in the new Jerusalem.[61]

Turning to John's *exclusive* language, we must resolve how best to interpret John's language of exclusion and difference from Revelation 21 – 22. As we saw above, Revelation 21:27 declares "nothing κοινόν shall enter [the new Jerusalem]; nor anyone who practices abominations or falsehood, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life." David Aune is emblematic of an apparent scholarly consensus on this passage:

> The term *koinos,* used only here in Revelation, means 'profane' or 'ritually unclean'; a close synonym is *akathartos*, "unclean, defiled," which occurs in Revelation 16:13; 17:4; and 18:2. *Koinos* and *akathartos* denote ritual impurity, a central religious category in early Judaism [that was] carried over into early Christianity and transformed into an exclusively moral category.[62]

Aune then connects the prohibition on anything *profane* (κοινόν) from Revelation 21:27 to a short list of those who are excluded from the new Jerusalem at Revelation 22:15 and argues that this list of excluded persons, i.e., "dogs, sorcerers, fornicators, murders, idolators, and everyone

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[58] Richard Bauckham, "The Book of Revelation as a Christian War Scroll," *Neotestamentica* 22.1 (1988): 17 – 40.
[59] Although John never explicitly conflated all three into a single ethical injunction, these three profiles bleed into one another throughout the text. See, for example, Revelation 14:1 – 13.
[60] As we have seen, included among these priests are Gentile priests and Levites. Although the inclusion of Gentile priests and Levites could be interpreted as an exhortation to missionizing practices (i.e., Jews must make converts of the Nations), this is an unlikely interpretation; see, in contrast, my discussion of Paul the Apostle below. Instead, what is more likely is that, similar to some passages we examined in **Chapter 1**, this is a testament to God's all-encompassing power. Nothing is impossible for God – even transforming some from among the Nations into priests and Levites. Consequently, the *reality* of Gentile converts and priests is not John's concern; rather, he has, for the benefit of his Jewish audience, made a theological claim *demonstrating* the omnipotence of Israel's God.
[61] Although John's description of those dwelling in the new Jerusalem is idealistic (i.e., the best possible and thus an *extremely* rigorous ethical standard), we should not – especially in light of John's exclusive language – minimize or soften John' ethical standards. In John's mind, this is what is required for entrance into the new Jerusalem.
[62] David Aune, *Revelation III*, 1174.

who loves and practices falsehood,"[63] demonstrates that John has transformed the inherited notion of ritual impurity into a *Christian* concern over moral impurity.[64] According to Aune, Revelation 21:27 is a prohibition against and blanket claim that *morally impure* persons cannot enter into the New Jerusalem.

In contrast, however, to Aune's interpretation, I would caution against too readily conflating impurity and profaneness. What is more likely is that John has excluded both the profane and the morally impure from the New Jerusalem. When we consider John's ideological context as a first-century Jew writing for other Jews, the exclusion of the *profane* and the *morally impure* evokes different groups. Although these categories are not mutually exclusive – Gentiles could become *morally* impure – I will suggest that John had two specific groups in mind: Gentiles who *are* profane and his fellow Jews whom he was concerned might *return* to moral impurity. In this way, John's caveat about profanity was meant to assure his fellow Jews of the sacrality of the new Jerusalem; whereas his prohibition against moral transgressions was meant to reinforce the high stakes required for inclusion among Israel as a nation of priests and entrance into the new Jerusalem as the new sanctuary of God.

In order to unpack these claims, we must consider the resonances of profane and impure among first-century Jews. Jonathan Klawans and Christine Hayes have shown that prior to the

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63 Cf. Revelation 21:8: "But for the cowardly, those practicing abominations, the murderers, the fornicators, the sorcerers, the idolaters, and all liars, their place will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death."

64 David Aune, "Qumran and the Book of Revelation," 90 – 92: "Impurity is barred from the city, according to 21:27…[and] at the conclusion of Revelation there is a short list of those who are excluded from the city (22:15): 'outside are the dogs, the sorcerers, the fornicators, murders, and idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices falsehood.' Despite the brevity of these two lists, they exhibit a strikingly common pattern. Both begin with what appears to be a ritual category, which is the followed by a list of *moral* transgressors. Given the unlikelihood that a Christian author would regard ritual and moral impurity as equally defiling, we are left with two possibilities: 1. The author understands the ritual prescriptions metaphorically in moral terms; or 2. The author incorporates a source in which ritual impurity and moral transgression are equally defiling. It is not easy to choose between these two possibilities, for both may be valid [but] while the generic category of *koinos* might be expected to subsume various other categories of ritual impurity, the author appears to shift gears and provides rather a list of those people who excluded from the city because of their immoral behavior."

rabbis, biblical and Second Temple authors did not consider Gentiles to be susceptible to the forms of ritual impurity detailed in Leviticus 12 through 15; instead, Gentiles were best classified as being *inherently profane*.[65] In support of this claim, Klawans sets up *two* different dueling pairs: purity and impurity and sacred and profane. Klawans cites Leviticus 10:10 to support these two different dichotomies: "You are to distinguish between the sacred and the profane; between the impure and the pure." According to Klawans' reading of the Torah, ritual impurity was a temporary state and could be transmitted; profaneness, in contrast, was non-transmittable and "referred to some violation of the sacred not connected to purity laws per se."[66]

Expanding upon Klawans, Hayes notes that profaneness and sacredness are not binaries, but rather opposite ends of a spectrum:

> Within the Israelite community, a divinely ordained hierarchy extends from the most profane members to the most holy. Lay Israelites, being profane, have the least access to (and responsibility toward) the realm of the sacred; Levites have some access; holy priests have greater access; and the most holy high priest has the most complete and intimate access to the realm of the holy.[67]

Gentiles, according to Hayes, stand even lower on this spectrum of relative sacredness, below lay Israelites, and thus cannot enter into the sacred precincts of the Temple because of their profane status. Josephus, John of Patmos' first century contemporary, mapped out the relative hierarchy of various persons in terms of the ascending and concentric levels of sanctity in the Temple compound, with Gentiles, due to their profane status, standing below ritually impure Jewish males.

> [The temple] had four surrounding courts, each with its special restrictions. The outer court was open to all, foreigners included; women during their impurity

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[65] Jonathan Klawans, "Notions of Gentile Impurity in Ancient Judaism," *Association for Jewish Studies* 20.2 (1995): 285 – 312; idem, *Impurity and Sin in Ancient Judaism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); and Christine Hayes, *Gentile Impurities and Jewish Identities: Intermarriage and Conversion from the Bible to the Talmud* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).
[66] Jonathan Klawans, "Gentile Impurity," 291-2.
[67] Christine Hayes, *Gentile Impurities*, 34.

> were alone refused admission. To the second court all Jews were admitted and, when uncontaminated by any defilement, their wives; to the third, male Jews, if clean and purified; to the fourth the priests robed in their priestly vestments. The sanctuary was entered only by the high-priests, clad in the raiment particular to themselves. (*Against Apion* 2:103)[68]

As I mentioned above, John has transformed and reapplied the spatial and sacred hierarchy of the Temple complex into a topographic dichotomy between the new Jerusalem as the inner sanctuary and the dwelling place of the priestly elect and martyrs in contrast to the new earth as the outer courtyard reserved for the Nations.[69]

Despite this spatial hierarchy, could saved Gentiles, bearing the "glory and honor of the Nations," *enter* into the new Jerusalem? Could John both prohibit profanity (i.e., Gentiles) from the new Jerusalem while at the time emphatically and dramatically predicting the ingathering of Nations and kings to eschatologically pay homage to Israel and her God? Perhaps John, similar to what we will see below with Paul, considered saved Gentiles to be no longer inherently profane.[70] In other words, all saved Gentiles *must* have been resurrected; and if they were resurrected, then their names were in the book of life because "anyone whose name was not found written in the book was thrown into the lake of fire." (Revelation 20:15)

Consequently, insofar as their names were written in the book of life, these saved Gentiles would no longer be excluded from the sacred precincts of the new Jerusalem as profane. "They will bring into [the city] the glory and honor of the Nations. But nothing profane shall enter it, nor anyone who practices abomination or falsehood, but *only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life*" (Revelation 21:26 – 27, italics added). According to this argument, John has described the reality of the eschatological era through proscriptive language, i.e., since

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[68] Translated by Christine Hayes, *Gentile Impurities*, 60.
[69] See further E. P. Sanders, *Judaism: Practice and Belief 63 BCE – 66 CE* (London: SCM Press, 1992), 51 – 76.
[70] See Paula Fredriksen, "Judaizing the Nations: The Ritual Demands of Paul's Gospel," *New Testament Studies* 56 (2010): 232 – 52, especially 247 – 49.

these Gentiles no longer practice abomination or falsehood *and* they have been resurrected (thus included in the book of life),[71] they are no longer profane; therefore, they can enter into the new Jerusalem.[72]

While the entrance of Gentiles into the new Jerusalem may appear feasible, I do not think it the best interpretation. John's eschatological scenario is an *idealistic* vision of how things should be; this idealistic picture is not, however, entirely discontinuous from the past or present. The content and shape of John's eschatological vision are determined by biblical expectations, which assume a binary of Jew and Gentile. As a result, John, as we saw in **Chapter 2**, has no *tertium quid*; his saved Gentiles are *still* Gentiles.[73]

How does this affect John's narrative? In addition to building on Ezekiel's motif of measuring the eschatological temple, John's concern over the holiness of the Temple[74] echoed Ezekiel's language of Gentile exclusion where no Gentiles, even converts and resident aliens, were allowed to cross into the sacred space of the Temple:

> Say to the rebellious house, say to the house of Israel, Thus says the Lord God: O house of Israel, let there be an end to all your abominations in admitting foreigners (ἀλλογενεῖς) uncircumcised in heart and flesh, to be in my sanctuary, *profaning* my temple when you offer to me my food, the fat, and the blood…Thus says the Lord God: No foreigner, uncircumcised in heart and flesh, of all the foreigners who are among the people of Israel, shall enter my sanctuary. (Ezekiel, 44:6-7, 9; cf. Isa. 52:1)

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[71] As we see elsewhere, the sacrifice of the Lamb has global, salvific implications, even for those who do not belong to John's putative Jesus community; cf. Revelation 5:9, 7:14, and 12:11.

[72] It is important to note, however, that even if these Gentiles were named in the book of life and offered glory and honor to God, there is no evidence that they *ritually converted* and became Jews; this was a prerequisite, according to John (2:9; 3:9), for belonging to his putative community of *Jewish* Jesus followers.

[73] As Hayes (*Gentiles Impurities*, 36) and Klawans ("Gentile Impurity," 292) show, Gentiles are analogous to a deformed priest (Lev. 21:23) who, though not ritually impure, cannot enter into the sacred precincts of the Temple because he is *profane*.

[74] See the contrast between the sanctuary and the courtyard in Revelation 11:1 – 2: "Then I was given a measuring rod like a staff, and I was told, 'Come and measure the temple of God and the altar and those who worship there, but do not measure the court outside the temple; leave that out for it is given over to the nations, and they will trample over the holy city for forty-two months…" cf. **note 43** above.

Epigraphic warning signs that survive from the Herodian period repeat Ezekiel's prohibitions against Gentiles: "No alien (ἀλλογενῆ) may enter within the balustrade around the sanctuary and the enclosure. Whoever is caught, on himself shall he put the blame for the death which will ensue."[75] Yet John has not excluded *all* aliens; instead, John has forged a middle ground position, accepting Isaiah 56 and 66's inclusion of Gentile converts as eschatological priests and Levites but still prohibiting *profanity* (i.e., Gentiles *qua* Gentiles) from entry into the sanctuary of the new Jerusalem.

Consequently, rather than evidencing a universalizing program of radical conversion, John's eschatological vision, in particular his prohibition against κοινόν, demonstrates his discomfort with Isaiah's expectation that the Nations will physically enter into the new Jerusalem.[76] As such, it will not be foreign kings lead in procession to bring restitution, but the *honor* and *glory* of the Nations that will be brought into the new Jerusalem. As we noted above, this language evokes scenes from the *LXX* of non-Israelites offering praise and worshiping the one true God of Israel.[77] Thus, John's shift away from Isaiah's expectation of financial restitution signifies more than just a possible avoidance of the contamination of commercial activity;[78] rather, John has ingeniously fashioned an eschatological scenario that underscores the universal sovereignty of God but still subordinates the worship of the Nations and places it

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[75] Elias Bickerman, "The Warning Inscriptions of Herod's Temple," *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 37.4 (1947): 387 – 405, citation from 388.
[76] *Pace* Richard Bauckham, *Climax*, chapter 9.
[77] For a list of examples, see further Richard Bauckham, *Climax*, 278 – 79.
[78] On this point, see Robert Royalty, *Streets of Heaven*, 232 – 3: "The wealth of the nations or kings of the earth will not come in to taint the pure gold of the New Jerusalem, for this was the sort of commercial wealth associated with the destroyed city of Babylon."

*outside* the new Jerusalem where God's nation of priests will dwell.[79] It is not the Nations, therefore, who will enter into God's presence, but their prayers and offerings of glory.

What are the implications of this? In allowing Gentile prayers but not their physical presence, John was able to reconcile certain prophetic expectations for the pilgrimage of the Nations while still preserving the sanctity of the new Jerusalem from their profanity. Furthermore, if we concentrate upon John's intended audience, there may be ethical implications as well. Foreshadowed in Revelation 15's Song of Moses, these saved Gentiles will act as secondary and penitent pilgrims paying homage to God and offering worshipful glory and honor;[80] in so doing, they will *mirror* what will be transpiring *inside* the new Jerusalem.[81] In this way, John has used the *future* role of saved Gentiles as a foil to underscore again both the universal sovereignty of God and the importance of proper conduct (i.e., Jewish priestly practices and veneration of God). The impact of this subtle, rhetorical contrast may have been to remind his Jewish audience of what is expected of them. That is, as the elect, they should embrace and emulate righteous conduct – epitomized by Jewish priestly piety – because some from among the Nations *eventually* – in as much as they can – will imitate this righteous behavior.[82]

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[79] This portrait of Gentiles resembles Shaye J. D. Cohen's description (*The Beginnings of Jewishness: Boundaries, Varieties, Uncertainties* (Berkeley et al: University of California, 1999), 150 – 54) of Gentiles who "venerate the God of the Jews and deny or ignore all other Gods.

[80] Revelation 15:3 – 4: "And they [the slaves of God, i.e., those who conquered the beast and its image] will sing the song of Moses and the song of the Lamb: "…Lord who will not fear and glorify your name? For you alone are holy. All nations will come and worship before you, for your judgments have been revealed.'"

[81] In light of this, I would modify slightly Martha Himmelfarb's claim (*Kingdom of Priests*, 141) that "all of the redeemed gentiles are priests – just as all of the redeemed Jews are." Those Gentiles who are saved *qua* Gentiles, are *not* priests but do *imperfectly* resemble priests insofar as their actions are incomplete imitations of the venerations of the true priests of Israel (and converted Gentiles) who dwell within the new Jerusalem.

[82] John further articulated the subordination to and possibly even dependence of the Nations on Israel through paradisiacal features of the new Jerusalem; see, for example, Revelation 22:2's tree of life, which represents the restoration of the twelve tribes and the secondary salvation of the Nations – a salvation that depends upon *healing*, possibly from Israel (cf. Romans 11): "On either side of the river is tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, producing its fruit each month; and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the Nations (εἰς θεραπείαν τῶν ἐθνῶν)."

If Revelation 21:26 – 27 reflects John's discomfort over the possible entry of Gentiles into the new Jerusalem, what is the rhetorical function of John's list of excluded and morally depraved individuals in Revelation 22:15 ("dogs, sorcerers, fornicators, murders, idolators, and everyone who loves and practices falsehood")? As we have noted, this proscription is distinct from John's prohibition on the profane, i.e., Gentiles.[83] Furthermore, it is nearly identical to the list of vices of those who will be suffer the second death of the lake of fire (Revelation 21:8): "But for the cowardly, those practicing abominations, the murderers, the fornicators, the sorcerers, the idolaters, and all liars, their place will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death." Who are these sinners and *why* do they still exist in the era of eschatological celebration and restoration?

Returning to the specifics of Revelation 21:27, John has excluded both the profane *as well as* those who may be morally impure, i.e., members of his Jewish audience who may fall short of John's high ethical standards. In this way, Revelation 21:27 is a paraphrase of Isaiah 52:1: "Put on your beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy (ἁγία) city; for the uncircumcised and the *impure* (ἀκάθαρτος) shall enter you no more."[84] As Christine Hayes has argued, Isaiah is referring to two distinct sorts of people: the uncircumcised/profane and the impure/unclean.[85] Thus, similar to Isaiah's prohibition against Gentiles and the impure, John (21:27) has also prohibited Gentiles but he has further elaborated what sources of impurity were especially illicit (i.e., blasphemers and liars). The rhetorical impact of this is that John has warned his Jewish brethren of some of the *moral* expectations for those who wish to dwell within the holy city of the new Jerusalem.

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[83] *Pace* David Aune, "Qumran and the Book of Revelation," 90 – 92; idem, *Revelation III*, 1174 – 75.
[84] I thank Naphtali Meshel for pointing out the importance of this passage to me.
[85] Christian Hayes, *Gentile Impurities*, 232 – 33 n.50: "In fact, grammatical evidence suggests that the phrase "uncircumcised and unclean" is disjunctive and supports a reading of Isa. 52:1 as referring to two distinct types of people. 'Neither the uncircumcised nor the alien shall enter you again.'"

Consequently, although Revelation 22:14 – 15 introduces another list of excluded individuals through the disjunction of those "inside" and those "outside," I think it incorrect to deduce that John conceived of those "outside" to mean those *dwelling* on the new earth; instead, it appears that John was deploying the hortatory rhetoric of "two ways" (a way of life vs. a way of death) to reinforce ethical uprightness among his putative community of Jewish readers.[86] In this way, there is no remedial salvation for those Jews who might morally err from time to time.[87] John has reminded his audience of the dire consequences awaiting those who might fall short of the moral uprightness required to belong "inside" the heavenly new Jerusalem: those Jews who are outside John's community are destined for the lake of fire and the second death.[88]

Ultimately, Revelation tells the ethical and soteriological story of five groups of people: Jewish martyrs and the priestly elect, Gentile converts and priests, remedially saved Jews, saved Gentiles, and all the rest who are destroyed. For John these groups were established characters in the drama of salvation history, with some (e.g., Gentile converts) holding a more theoretical than practical place in John's conception of the end times. Thus, John reconciled expectations for Gentile salvific inclusion with complex spatial and temporal subordination while all the while underscoring that Gentile salvation is not primarily about saving the Nations but was rather *part* of Israel's restoration. In this way, according to John, salvation history will conclude with higher and lower levels of salvation and different roles for different types of the saved.

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[86] For example, see *Didache* 1.1: There are two ways, one to life and one to death, but the difference between the two ways is great." Cf. the "two ways" found in other texts, e.g., (1QS 3.18 – 4.26) and the *Letter to Barnabas* 18 – 20. See also Margaret Mary McKenna, *'The Two Ways' in Jewish and Christian Writings of the Greco-Roman Period: A Study of the Form of Repentance Parenesis* (PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1981); see also Kurt Niederwimmer's extensive discussion of the existence and transmission of a hypothetical "'two ways' tractate," *The Didache*: *A Commentary* (translated by Linda Maloney; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998), 30 – 52. I return to this construct again in **PART II**.

[87] See, in contrast, my discussion in **PART II** of my dissertation for ideas of remedial or purgative salvation.

[88] See Martha Himmelfarb, *Kingdom of Priests*, 139.

## Paul the Apostle: Ethics as This World Ends

Paul saw his mission to the Gentiles as transpiring in the limited and ever-diminishing time left between the raising of Christ and his second coming. Oscar Cullmann famously characterized Paul's "between times" by analogue to the period between "D-Day" and "Victory Day" during WWII, i.e., the decisive battle has already been won and the imminent, final victory was a foregone conclusion.[89] Perplexingly for Paul, however, Christ's *parousia still* had not yet arrived. As time continued to elapse without the *parousia*, we see doubts began to grow within Pauline communities (1 Thessalonians 4 – 5; 1 Cor. 15; Galatians 3).[90] Did this unexpected delay contradict Paul's preaching and therefore disprove his Christ-centric soteriology?

In response to these concerns, Paul, in a typically Pauline fashion, adapted and modified his message to bring it into conformity with his deepest held convictions.[91] This delay, likely a surprise to Paul himself,[92] *must*, nonetheless, be providential. What is important, therefore, according to Paul, is to understand God's *reason* for the delay. Paul concluded, as we shall see below, that this delay was to facilitate the "full" inclusion of the Gentiles. As soon as this "full" number of Gentiles was baptized *into* Christ, Christ would return. Paul's successes in his mission to the Nations, consequently, would *hasten* Christ's return.

What about the salvation of Israel? Were God's promises to redeem his own people still trustworthy? Of course they were – "the gifts and call of God are irrevocable!"[93] Despite the *current* fact that Israel has not *en masse* accepted Paul's Christ-centric gospel and soteriology,

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[89]Cullmann, *On Christ and Time: The Primitive Christian Conception of Time and History* trans. F.V. Filson (London: SCM Press, 2nd ed., 1962): 84.

[90] See below for my discussion of all three passages.

[91] Despite Paul's situational adaptations, the coherence of many of his overarching themes and convictions remained consistent over his seven authentic letters and are, therefore, largely recoverable. On the dialectic between coherence and contingency, see further J. Christiaan Beker, *Paul the Apostle: The Triumph of God in Life and Thought* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980).

[92] As we see throughout his letters, Paul thought Christ's *parousia* would happen in his own lifetime; cf. 1 Thess. 1:10, 4:15 – 17; 1 Cor. 7:26 – 31, 15:51, 16:22; Romans 13:11; Phil. 4:5.

[93] Romans 11:29.

they *will* do so because otherwise God's promises would be broken; this, according to Paul, would be simply impossible. So, what was God's reason for *making* Israel delay?[94] Paul reasoned that this must also be so that a "full" number of Gentiles might be saved. Further demonstrating his endearing egoism,[95] Paul claimed that own his successes among the Nations would also *spur* his fellow Jews into joining *in* Christ out of jealousy (Romans 11:13 – 16). In so doing, Paul has modified and reordered Isaiah's arc of salvation history. What in Isaiah was an eschatological promise (i.e., the in-gathering of the Nations)[96] that would follow Israel's redemption was, according to Paul, occurring *now* and would help *cause* Israel's ultimate redemption.[97]

In the remainder of this **Chapter**, we shall consider how Paul hierarchically differentiated between and described Gentile and Jewish salvation, and what the ethical implications of this hierarchical language were. Unlike John's shift away from financial restitution, Paul expected saved Gentiles to offer reparations to Israel and her God.[98] As we shall see, Paul has fashioned an end-time ethic informed by biblical expectations for the conduct of

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[94] As Stanley Stowers astutely observes (*Rereading Romans*, 298 ff.), Paul *repeatedly* states that God can save and/or use people however *he* chooses (e.g., 8:28 – 30; 9:16 – 25; 11:25 – 26); this is God's *modus operandi.* Attempts to soften Paul's theological determinism inevitably shatter the coherence of his thought. On various types of determinism, see further Alexander Kocar, "Determinism," in *The Routledge Encyclopedia of Ancient Mediterranean Religions* (ed. Eric Orlin, et al.; Routledge, forthcoming December 2015).

[95] See Krister Stendahl's colorful description (*Final Account: Paul's Letter to the Romans* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 3) of the Apostle to the Gentiles: "Paul was arrogant. But he was so blatantly arrogant that one can somehow cope with it. He was always the greatest: the greatest of sinners, the greatest of apostles, the greatest when it came to speaking in tongues, the greatest at having been persecuted…the Messiah, Jesus Christ, chose this apostle for a specific task, and therefore all his writings are expressions of his ministry, and not diaries or journal notes about his inner struggles…Paul was a Jew, hand-picked to be the apostle of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles.

[96] See, for example, Isaiah 2:2 – 4.

[97] As E. P. Sanders observed (*Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), 185), Paul would revise biblical history and "rearrange the eschatological sequence so that it accords with the facts." Cf. Paula Fredriksen, Judaism, the Circumcision of Gentiles, and Apocalyptic Hope: Another Look at Galatians 1 and 2," *Journal of Theological Studies* 42.2 (1991): 532 – 64.

[98] This reparation takes the form of the collection for the saints in Jerusalem (Romans 15; 1 Corinthians 16; 2 Corinthians 8 – 9; Galatians 2).

saved Gentiles but also has tailored these expectations in response to problems that arose in his individual communities as they awaited the imminent *parousia* of Jesus Christ.

As I noted above in my introduction to John of Patmos, this is not a systematic or all-encompassing treatment. My focus here is specifically the phenomenon of salvific difference and its impact on ethics. To this end, therefore, I will concentrate on the following four contentions regarding the Apostle to the Gentiles: Paul 1. prioritized Israel's salvation over and above that of the Nations;[99] 2. maintained the continued importance of Torah observance for Jews;[100] 3. constructed *different* ethical standards for those Gentiles who might be saved;[101] and 4. claimed that all, both Jews and Gentiles, who were saved, were saved *in* Christ.[102]

**Temporal, Quantitative, and Spatial Hierarchies**

As 1 Thessalonians – likely Paul's earliest surviving letter[103] – demonstrates, Paul could deploy the notion of time to address specific pastoral concerns and signal priority among members of the *ekklesia* in response to situational concerns. In 1 Thessalonians 4:13 – 5:11, Paul declared that on the day of the Lord, those in Christ who have already died will rise first, prior to those who are still alive. Reading between the lines, it is probable that Paul had been

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[99] J. C. Beker, "The Faithfulness of God and the Priority of Israel in Paul's Letter to the Romans," in *Christians Among Jews and Gentiles: Essays in Honor of Krister Stendahl on His Sixty-Fifth Birthday* (ed. George W. E. Nickelsburg and George W. MacRae; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), 10 – 16.

[100] As we shall see (e.g., 1 Cor. 7), Paul expected all individuals – whether Jew or Gentile – to excel in the state in which they were called.

[101] Although Paul's tailored ethic for Gentiles is structurally similar to the Rabbinic Noahide commandments insofar as they are guidelines for acceptable Gentile conduct, they differ in content as well as purpose; for a thorough introduction and discussion of the Noahide Commandments and their differences from Paul's tailored Gentile ethic, see further below.

[102] *Contra* N.T. Wright, James D.G. Dunn, Daniel Boyarin, et al. who conclude that because Jews and Gentiles are both saved *in* Christ that Paul has abolished all *ethnic* difference. As we shall see in my discussion of Pauline soteriology (especially Galatians 3) below, these two, distinct issues ought not to be homogenized. On the continued important of ethnic categories, even *in Christ*, see Caroline Johnson Hodge, *If Sons, Then Heirs: A Study of Kinship and Ethnicity in the Letters of Paul* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).

[103] *The Writings of Saint Paul: A Norton Critical Edition 2nd Edition* (ed. Wayne A. Meeks and John T. Fitzgerald; W. W. Norton & Company: New York, 2007), 3.

preaching that the eschaton and Christ's *parousia* were so radically close that his Gentile converts in Thessalonike were shocked when members of the community had died prior to Christ's return. To alleviate these concerns Paul emphasized the temporal priority of those who have already died as well as the imminence of Christ's return.[104]

Similarly, in 1 Corinthians Paul again deployed temporal priority in response to another pastoral problem; in this case, Paul was addressing concerns over Christ's resurrection.[105] In defense of both the veracity as well as the salvific importance of Christ's resurrection, Paul outlines the chronology of resurrections: Christ first and then all of humanity.

> But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have died. For since death came through a human being, the resurrection of the dead has also come through a human being; for as all die in Adam, so all will be made alive in Christ. But each in his own order: Christ the first fruit, then at his coming those who belong to Christ. Then comes the end, when he will hand over the kingdom to God the Father, after he has destroyed every ruler and every authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet… (1 Corinthians 15:20 – 26)

Christ's *past* resurrection was not only the guarantee of the *future* resurrection of those in Christ, but it also signaled the *means* for this future resurrection, i.e., being *in* Christ. Furthermore, according to Paul, God has a plan, and it follows a deliberately sequential order.

We find another, albeit far less clear, instance of temporal priority when we consider the issue of when, i.e., in what order, Jews and Gentiles will be saved. As noted in **Chapter 2**, Paul programmatically highlighted the priority of Israel over that of the Nations by stating salvation

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[104] 1 Thessalonians 4:13 – 18: "But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers and sisters, about those who have died, so that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have died. For this we declare to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will by no means precede those who have died. For the Lord himself, with a cry of command, with the archangel's call and with the sound of God's trumpet, will descend from heaven, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up in the clouds together with them to meet the Lord in the air; and so we will be with the Lord forever. Therefore, encourage each other with these words."

[105] As John Gager observed nearly fifty years ago, Paul could deploy the same language or concepts (e.g., "end-time language") for various reasons and in support of a multitude of contextual concerns. See Gager, "Functional Diversity in Paul's Use of End-Time Language," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 89.3 (1970): 325 – 37.

(σωτηρία) comes *first* to the Jew and then to the Greek (Romans 1:16: "Ἰουδαίῳ τε πρῶτον καὶ Ἕλληνι"). During his account of salvation history in Romans 9 – 11, however, Paul has modified this sequence.

> Lest you may claim to be wiser than you are, brothers and sisters, I want you to understand this mystery: a hardening has come upon part of Israel, until the full number of the Gentiles has come in. And thus all of Israel will be saved, as it is written, 'Out of Zion will come the Deliverer; he will banish ungodliness from Jacob.' (Romans 11:25 – 26)

What prompted Paul to characterize salvation history in this way, and what are the implications?

Traditionally, scholars have taken Romans 9 – 11 to be evidence for Paul's *Christian supersessionism*.[106] Paul, so the argument goes, believed that non-Christian Jews have "forfeit" salvation,[107] and Christians have now become the "true Israel," thereby replacing Jews (i.e., "carnal Israel") as God's chosen people.[108] According to this interpretation, salvation *did* first come to the Jews; however, because they rejected Christ they could no longer be considered God's elect.[109] This rejection of Christ, therefore, explains Paul's "grief over his kindred" (Romans 9:2 – 3) and is the unstated source of "Israel's stumble" (Romans 10:32 – 33; 11:11 - 12). Thus, the "all of Israel" who will be saved in Romans 11:26 is actually a cipher for all *Christian* believers, who are the "inwardly Jews" (Romans 2:28 – 29) and the "Israel of God" (Galatians 6:16).

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[106] For an exceptionally readable and useful summary of the "Old Paul," see John Gager, *Reinventing Paul* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), chapter one; on this section in particular, see Caroline Johnson Hodge, *If Sons*, 100 – 3.

[107] Räisänen, Heikki, "Paul, God, Israel: Romans 9 – 11 in Recent Scholarship," in *The Social World of Formative Christianity* (ed. J. Neusner et al.; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988), 178 – 206, citation from 180; cf. Terence Donaldson, who presents the strongest defense of some traditional elements of the "Old Paul" in response to "radical" new Paul scholars (e.g., Stanley Stowers, John Gager, and Lloyd Gaston). See Donaldson, "Jewish Christianity, Israel's Stumbling, and the *Sonderweg* Reading of Paul," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 29.1 (2006): 27 – 54.

[108] See the recent study by Love L Sechrest, which attempts to revive and defend, albeit without great success, this traditional view against recent scholarship, especially Caroline Johnson Hodge. See Sechrest, *A Former Jew: Paul and the Dialectics of Race* (London: T & T Clark, 2009).

[109] See **Chapter 2** for my treatment of this interpretation of Romans 2.

As a number of scholars have recognized, however, this supersessionist interpretation depends upon a facile reading of a number of passages, especially Romans 9 and its criticisms of Israel, Paul's "kindred according to the flesh" (Romans 9:3 – 4):

> "It is not as though the word of God has failed; for not all those from Israel belong to Israel, nor is it that all children are Abraham's *seed* (σπέρμα)…" (Romans 9:6 – 7)
>
> "And indeed, [God] says in Hosea, 'Those who were not my people, I will call 'my people,' and her who was not beloved I will call 'beloved.'" (Romans 9:25)

While Paul certainly has rebuked the conduct of his Jewish brethren here, this does not entail the presumed and radical rejection of Judaism and/or Israel; instead, Paul, again in the vein of a Jewish prophet, has censured incorrect behavior and belief.[110] For Paul, the Jewish prophet, Israel was behaving (or *misbehaving*) as Israel has *always* behaved,[111] *but* so will God insofar as he will steer Israel to redemption. In short, I agree with the "broad consensus among contemporary exegetes" that Paul's "Israel" refers to the ethnic people of Israel.[112]

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[110] See **Chapter 2**, especially Paul's self-construction of a new Jeremiah; it may be that Jeremiah 31 is motivating Paul here to create these rhetorical binaries. Furthermore, the lack of clarity on Paul's part likely reflects that he did not expect any non-Jesus following Jews to have read his Letter to the Romans. According to my interpretation, therefore, the "community ethics" section of Romans (chapters 12 – 15) does *not*, as some commentators have suggested, assume a mix of Gentiles ("strong in faith") and Jews ("weak in faith"), who may or may not be followers of Jesus. Instead, on the basis of parallels with 1 Corinthians, it is far more likely that these two categories were two types of Gentiles, where the "weak in faith" are analogous to those Gentile believers distressed over members of the community eating meat sacrificed to idols (1 Cor. 8 and 10). *Pace* Mark Nanos, *Mystery*, chapter 3; cf. William S. Campbell who comes to a similar conclusion, albeit for different reasons, i.e., Gentiles making accommodations to Jewish dietary and ritual concerns: "This reconstruction (of the "weak" and "strong") leaves us with Paul directly addressing Christ-followers, all of whom are of Gentile origin, but who are severely divided in their attitudes toward Jews and Judaism and who label each other with reference to perceived preferences for and against association with Jewish groups…" Campbell, "The Addressees of Paul's Letter to the Romans: Assemblies of God in House Churches or Synagogues?" in *Between Gospel and Election: Explorations in the Interpretation of Romans 9 – 11* (ed. Florian Wilk and J. Ross Wagner; Tübingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 171 – 195, citation from 187.

[111] Romans 11:1 – 3: "I ask then, has God rejected his people? By no means! I myself am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, a member of the tribe of Benjamin. God has not rejected his people whom he foreknew. Do you not know what the scripture says of Elijah, how he pleads with God against Israel? 'Lord they have killed your prophets, they have demolished your altars; I alone am left, and they are seeking my life.'"

[112] Robert Jewett, *Romans: A Commentary* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007), 701 – 2.

As opposed to erasing or transferring God's promises away from Israel, Paul has reminded his *Gentile* audience that it is *God* who is in charge and thus responsible for Israel's apparent stumble:

> For the scripture says to Pharaoh, "I have raised you up for the very purpose of showing my power in you, so that my name may be proclaimed in all the earth." So then, [God] has mercy on whomever he chooses, and he hardens the heart of whomever he chooses. You will say to me, "Why, then, does he still find fault? For who can resist his will?" But who indeed are you, a human being, to argue with God? Will what is molded say to the one who molds it, "why have you made me like this?" Has the potter no right over the clay, to make out of the same clay one vessel for honor and another for dishonor? (Romans 9:17 – 21)

Israel's stumble, therefore, does not and *cannot* eliminate God's promises. Israel *was, is,* and *will always be* God's chosen people to whom belong "the adoption, glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises." (Romans 9:4) It would be extremely presumptuous, according to Paul, to think that current Jewish obstinacy could somehow change God's plans.[113] Yet, just what was this obstinacy that lead to Israel's stumble?

Although the traditional (see: supersessionist) interpretation of Paul is certainly a misreading, we ought not swing our hermeneutical pendulum so far away from it that we lose sight of the fact that Paul was grieved over his Jewish compatriots and expressed concern over their salvation.[114] Gaston's suggestion that Israel's stumble or "misstep" refers to the rejection by many Jews of *Paul's message to Gentiles*, while ingenious and ecumenical, is not the most compelling solution.[115] Aside from its distortion of Paul's soteriology,[116] it eliminates the

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[113] Stanley Stowers, *Rereading Romans*, 300.

[114] Even if this concern was largely rhetorical and aimed to set up the powerful conclusion that God will not reject his people and that all of Israel will be saved (Romans 11), Paul's grief over his Jewish brethren must have been intelligible to the Gentile recipients of his Letter to the Romans who *were* concerned about the salvation of Israel and the Nations.

[115] Lloyd Gaston, "Israel's Misstep in the Eyes of Paul," in *Paul and the Torah* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1987), 135 – 50, citation from 146: "Israel, or more precisely the vast majority of the 'rest,' have **rejected Paul's gospel, or better their missionary task** (presumably that is what is mean and not the rejection of Israel by God), and that opens the way for the reconciliation of the world (2 Cor.5:18f). Because Israel did not accept the task of being the "light for the Gentiles" that has opened the way **for Christ to be that light**." I have

rhetorical impact and obscures the logic of Paul's *inversion* of the expected temporal sequence of Jewish and Gentile salvation.

> So I ask, have they stumbled so as to fall? By no means! But through their stumbling salvation has come to the Gentiles, so as to make them jealous. Now if their stumbling means riches for the world, and if their defeat means riches for Gentiles, how much more will their inclusion mean! (Romans 11:11 – 12)

The ingathering of the Nations, according to Paul, no longer follows Israel's redemption. Instead, Israel's providential stumble has *delayed them* and thereby made the salvation of the Nations possible; yet this stumble is only temporary, and Israel – all of Israel – will be saved.

In its most simple form: Israel's yes has turned to a no *so that* the no of the Nations (Romans 1) can become a yes; this, in turn, will lead to Israel's future yes such that "all of Israel will be saved" (Romans 11). Gaston's suggestion that Israel's "no" was in response to being a "light to the Nations" is unconvincing for historical and literary reasons. Not only does it disrupt the coherence of Romans 9 – 11 by importing a foreign idea, i.e., Israel was (or was supposed to be) a missionizing nation,[117] but it also does not match the chronology that Paul has established, e.g., why would Israel have to reject Paul's Gospel to the Gentiles *before* and *so that* Paul could spread his Gospel among the Gentiles?[118]

In addition to begging the question, Gaston's argument, as we shall see below, overlooks the participatory logic underlying Pauline soteriology. Instead, and to paraphrase Krister Stendahl's evocative "traffic pattern" metaphor,[119] what Paul has constructed is a staggered traffic pattern *on the same road*, i.e., baptism *in* Christ.[120] Currently, Israel has stopped to allow

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bolded what appears to be a contradiction in Gaston's argument; see below for additional criticisms of Gaston's argument on this point, i.e., Israel's misstep.

[116] See below my section on **Pauline Soteriology: Salvation *in* Christ.**

[117] See below for my criticism of this prevalent interpretation of ancient Judaism as a "missionizing religion."

[118] See further Terence Donaldson, "Jewish Christianity," especially 34 – 35.

[119] Krister Stendahl, *Final Account*, 7.

[120] What is shared here is the *road* (soteriological means); how one traverses the road (ethical comportment) is different for Jews and Gentiles.

a "full number of Gentiles" to merge; once this happens, however, this merge lane will be closed, and Israel – *all* of Israel – will again traverse this path and arrive at the final destination shared by all the saved.[121]

Despite Israel's temporary stumbling and current holding pattern, her special status (*Sonderplatz*), according to Paul, was never at risk. Romans 11:24 – 26 reasserts Israel's priority by demonstrating that 1. *All* of Israel will be saved as opposed to only a *full* number of Gentiles (τὸ πλήρωμα τῶν ἐθνῶν) and 2. Salvation history culminates with the full inclusion of Israel.[122] In this way, the inclusion of a full number of the Gentiles, i.e., a representative number of the various Nations of the world,[123] is instrumentalized and subordinated to the redemption of Israel, which is the climax of salvation history.[124] Elsewhere Paul similarly affirmed Israel's special status (e.g., Romans 3:1; 9:4; 11:1) in God's eyes. Consequently, even if Israel's redemption is no longer temporally prior to that of the Nations, Paul, nonetheless, maintained the salvific hierarchy of Israel over the Nations.[125]

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[121] Paul has expressed this somewhat contorted logic by means of his famous athletic metaphor of Israel and the Nations running a race; see further Stanley Stowers (*Rereading Romans,* 305) who emphasizes that, according to Paul, the race is *fixed*: "Paul entirely subverts the logic of his own [athletic] metaphor. Races are about will, effort, achievement, and well-earned rewards. But 9:16 says, 'so it depends not on a person's will or a person's running but on God who shows mercy.' The race is fixed. God has predestined the outcome…"

[122] Cf. Mark Nanos, *Mystery of Romans*, chapter 5.

[123] See Roger Aus, "Paul's Travel Plans to Spain and the "Full Number of the Gentiles" of Romans 11:25," *Novum Testamentum* 21.3 (1979): 232 – 62; cf. Reidar Hvalvik, "A Sonderweg for Israel: A Critical Examination of a Current Interpretation of Romans 11:25 – 27," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 38 (1990): 87 – 107, especially 100 – 1.

[124] Stanley Stowers, *Rereading Romans*, 300 – 301: "It is not a question of ecclesiology. Who belongs to the saved group? Paul's point is not that Ishmael and Esau were damned. They were not. Rather, Isaac and Jacob were made instruments "so that God's purpose of election might continue" (9:11). God chose one particular lineage for a special task. Paul's logic parallels what anthropologists and natives alike know about unilineal descent groups and to some extent all societies based on lineage."

[125] The importance of Israel's *Sonderplatz* cannot be overstated; it permeates all of Paul's thinking about the salvation of Israel and the Nations. Attempts to universalize Paul (erase all ethnic and ethical differences) will inevitably collapse under the stress of these eisegetical readings due to their inability to account for Paul's *tailored messages* to Israel and the Nations (1 Cor. 9:19 – 23); of which, only his messages to the Nations survive. See further Stanley Stowers (*Rereading Romans, passim*) and his thorough treatment of how the *situatedness* of Paul's letters (with their rhetorically created audience(s) and author(s)) affects their interpretation.

For further evidence of this point, we need look no farther than a few verses prior to 11:24 – 26 where Paul subordinated Gentile salvation to Israel's via the spatial metaphor of a single olive tree (Romans 11:16 – 24).[126] Capitalizing on the rich imagery of this metaphor, Paul emphasized the *spatial* priority of Israel and the dependence of Gentiles upon Israel insofar as the wild shoots (Gentiles) must depend upon the root (Israel) for support (Romans 11:17 – 18). Scholars have long puzzled over Paul's inversion of ancient horticultural practices,[127] i.e., the common practice was to graft a *domesticated* shoot onto a wild tree rather than Paul's description of grafting a wild shoot onto a domesticated tree.[128] Philip Esler, however, has persuasively argued that Paul has rhetorically reversed and subverted expectations in order to emphasize Israel's elevated status and the dependence and subordination of the Nations.[129]

Therefore, Paul has not only castigated Gentile Jesus followers for undeserved arrogance but also underscored Israel's *natural* (i.e., *privileged*) status in salvation history.[130] Despite the fact that the "natural branches" of Israel have been broken away to make room for the Gentile "wild shoots," this is only temporary. In fact, the inclusion of these wild shoots was far more remarkable than the eventual *re*-inclusion of its natural branches will be:[131]

> And even those [of Israel], if they do not persist in unbelief, will be grafted in, for God has the power to graft them in again… For if you have been cut from what is by nature a wild olive tree and grafted, contrary to nature, into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these natural branches be grafted back into their own olive tree. (Romans 11: 23 – 24)

Consequently, according to Paul, the "natural branches" of Israel will certainly be saved (i.e., "grafted in,") because "the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable" (Romans 11:29); in

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126 See the excellent article by Philip F. Esler, "Ancient Oleiculture and Ethnic Differentiation: The Meaning of the Olive Tree in Romans 11," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 26.1 (2003): 103 – 24; see also Jeremiah 11:16 and Hosea 14:6 for this evocative image of Israel as an olive tree.
127 In his commentary, Origen goes so far as to claim that what Paul has described is impossible (*Comm. Rom.* 8.10).
128 Philip Esler, "Ancient Oleiculture," 115.
129 Philip Esler, "Ancient Oleiculture," 122
130 Stanley Stowers, *Rereading*, chapter 10; Caroline Johnson Hodge, *If Sons,* chapter 8.
131 W. D. Davies, "Paul and the People of Israel," *New Testament Studies* 24.1 (1977): 4 – 39, see especially 30.

contrast, Gentile salvation is precarious insofar as God has deviated from the *natural* course of things in order to include the "wild branches" of the Nations and attach them to Israel's well-cultivated root.[132] Thus, Gentile salvation should prompt expressions of gratitude from the Nations, not boasting.[133]

Through the evocative imagery of this salvific olive tree, Paul has described the multiple but inter-dependent timelines for Gentile and Jewish salvation, their differing natural affinities to this tree of salvation (natural v. wild), the dependence of the new shoots of the Gentiles on the root of Israel, and, ultimately, that they both share the *same mechanism* for inclusion or re-inclusion into this salvific olive tree, i.e., some sort of engrafting. In so doing, Paul has again underscored that 1. Jews and Gentiles are both saved *as they are*, i.e., Jews *qua* Jews and Gentiles *qua* Gentiles; 2. Jewish salvation holds a *Sonderplatz* or special place in God's plan for the redemption of Israel and the Nations; and 3. Despite *remaining* distinct, Jews and Gentiles are saved through the same means. What is this grafting technique? To answer this, we turn now to examine Paul's soteriology of baptism *into* Christ.

**Pauline Soteriology: Salvation *in* Christ**

The richness of Paul's olive tree, in addition to repudiating Gentile arrogance, also embodies his complex and interrelated soteriological expectations for the Nations and Israel. Paul's metaphor of the olive tree facilitates expressions of difference and hierarchy (natural v. wild branches) while still emphasizing that all of the saved are part of the same, single organism.

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[132] See Philip Esler's conclusion ("Ancient Oleiculture," 123 – 4.): "Moreover, by situating this image within its ancient oleicultural context and attending closely to how Paul blatantly subverts the prevailing practice among olive cultivators, we are left with a rather negative picture of the non-Israelite members of the Christ movement. They are attached to the olive tree in a way that is παρά φύσιν. Not only do they not contribute to it, since they will not produce fruit, but they are actually parasitic upon its richness."

[133] *Pace* A. G. Baxter and J. A. Ziesler who contend that the engrafting of the wild branches (Gentiles) will revive and rejuvenate the withered and sick tree of Israel. Baxter and Ziesler, "Paul and Arboriculture: Romans 11.17 – 24," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 24 (1985): 25 – 32.

Hierarchy among shared salvation epitomizes Paul's soteriology. Furthermore, as we shall see, not only was salvation shared, but Jews and Gentiles were saved via the same means: by participating ritually *in* the seed of Abraham (Christ) and thus receiving the share of the promises made to Abraham.[134] As Stanley Stowers clarifies, this language of participation *in* Christ is not bland metaphor; it conveys the ontological reality that both Jews and Gentiles are co-heirs to Abraham insofar as they both share in the same *substance*.[135]

Perhaps the best-known soteriological statement from all of Paul's letters is the "baptismal formula" from Galatians 3:26 – 29 in which all the saved, Jew or Gentile, are saved *in Christ*:

> For in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faithfulness in Christ. For as many of you have been baptized, you have clothed yourself in Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, neither slave nor free, neither man nor woman; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus. And if you are of Christ, then you are the seed of Abraham, i.e., heirs according to the promise.

Although this passage has often been and continues to be interpreted as Paul's great universalizing proclamation that all ethnic, social, and gender differences have been erased *in* Christ;[136] this is a mischaracterization of the scope and effect of Pauline soteriology.[137] Instead,

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[134] See further Caroline Johnson Hodge's excellent treatment (*If Sons, then Heirs*, *passim*) of the issues of Gentile inclusion *into* the lineage of Abraham through Christ with the result that Gentiles can now become "co-heirs."

[135] Stanley Stowers, "What is Pauline Participation in Christ?" in *Redefining First-Century Jewish and Christian Identities: Essays in Honor of Ed Parish Sanders* (ed. Fabian E. Udoh; Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2008), 359 – 60: "As Christ participated in Abraham and shared his stuff, so Gentiles who come to share the pneuma of Christ in baptism shared in the contiguity back to Abraham and are thus the seed of Abraham and coheirs as they participate in the stuff of Christ. But Christ's spirit is not any normal human pneuma: it is the divine pneuma that brought him back to life on a new level of existence after he allowed himself to die in faithfulness to God's promises."

[136] See Daniel Boyarin (*A Radical Jew: Paul and the Politics of Identity* (Berkeley et al: University of California, 1994), 3 – 4), who states that this passage is his hermenutical key for all of Paul's letters; perhaps it would be more accurate, however, to say that Boyarin's hermeneutical key is not this passage (Galatians 3:26 – 28) *per se* but rather a very *specific* interpretation that is not, as we shall see, the best available.

[137] As we shall see below, Paul did *not* propose a one-to-one correspondence between soteriology and ethics. Alan Segal (*Paul the Convert: The Apostolate and Apostasy of Saul the Pharisee* (Yale University Press: New Haven, 1990), 169 italics added) touches upon this important recognition: "Paul thus appears occasionally to approve of the commandments of Judaism and to recommend them as ethical models for Christian behavior, *if the issue is ethical behavior rather than the salvation process*."

Paul's global statement reflects two important implications of his monotheism,[138] embodied best in programmatic claims such as what we find in Romans 3:29 – 31, where Paul has stated that God will justify all, the circumcised and uncircumcised, by means of the same faithfulness. First, just as God is singular so too is the means for saving both Jews and Gentiles singular and the same (cf. Romans 10:12). Second, since God is the God of both Jews and Gentiles, they will not and *should not* change *what they are* in order to be saved;[139] God's plan of salvation assumes the continued existence of Jews and Gentiles, and as such they are both expected to *stay as they are* (1 Corinthians 7).[140] If Gentiles, in order to be saved, had to convert and become Torah observant Jews, then God *would* be the God of Jews only and not of both Jews and Gentiles (Romans 3:29 – 31).

As the Apostle to the Gentiles, Paul's attention was directed towards clarifying how Gentiles could become heirs to Abraham. Thus, the crux and motivation for Galatians 3 – and the letter as a whole – was to explain exactly why Gentiles need not convert to some modified form of Jewish ritual practices in order to be considered heirs to Abraham. In her compelling monograph *If Sons, then Heirs*, Caroline Johnson-Hodge has outlined precisely how Paul was able to construct a new myth of ethnic descent in order to connect Gentiles with Abraham *so that* they could become co-heirs to promises made to him (e.g., Galatians 3; Romans 4).[141] By reinterpreting a number of biblical passages, especially Genesis 12, 18, 22, Paul retold the story

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[138] See further Mark Nanos (*Mystery,* 179 – 201) who rightly emphasizes the significance of the Shema (Deut 6:4 "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one") upon Paul's soteriology.
[139] See W.D. Davies ("Paul," 23) who noted that even *in Christ* ethnic distinctions will remain.
[140] Similarly for those scholars who have advocated a *tertium quid* or universalizing third race for all the saved, this too would undercut Paul's monotheistic claims, i.e., could God not save Gentiles *qua* Gentiles and Jews *qua* Jews? *Pace* Caroline Johnson Hodge (*If Sons, the Heirs,* chapter 7) who argues that Gentiles "in" Christ have joined Israel; although her point that people can have more than one identity-marker is certainly correct, in this case I see no compelling reason for why a Gentile in Christ would also become part of Israel. In short, being a part of Israel is not coterminous with being an heir to Abraham.
[141] For an accessible overview of the exceptionally rich historiography on this issue, see further Caroline Johnson Hodge, *If Sons, then Heirs*.

of God's first covenant with Abraham;[142] according to Paul's version in Galatians,[143] however, by *participating in* Abraham's *seed*, i.e., Christ, Gentiles become *heirs* to Abraham and thus receive a share of the promises made to him and his offspring (Galatians 3:16). In order to participate in Christ and become the beneficiary of God's promises to Abraham, a Gentile must be *baptized* and receive the Holy Spirit (*pneuma*) or Spirit of Christ (e.g., 2 Cor. 1:21 – 2).[144]

There are two consequences of Paul's participatory soteriology that deserve further attention, i.e., it *sanctifies* (makes holy) Gentiles and it transforms them into something *Christ-like*. As we saw above in my discussion of John of Patmos, Gentiles, according to most first-century Jews, were considered to be on the profane side of the sacred and profane spectrum; yet, following baptism, they were sanctified (1 Thessalonians 4:7) and thereby became a temple for God (1 Cor. 3:16, 6:19; 2 Cor. 6:16).[145] *Unlike* John of Patmos, therefore, Gentiles who have been baptized *into* Christ, according to Paul, have been transformed by the infusion of Christ's *pneuma* so that they are no longer profane. This participation, moreover, was a two-way street so that just as people could enter *into* Christ (1 Cor. 12:12 – 13), so too would the Holy Spirit or Spirit of Christ enter into and *dwell* in that person (Romans 8: 9 – 11; Galatians 2:19 – 20).[146] In this way, those baptized into Christ became *Christ-like*. As a result, Christ's death and resurrection belong to a *pattern* that each person in Christ could now replicate (e.g., 1 Cor. 15).

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142 Sam K. Williams, "Promise in Galatians: Paul's Reading of Scripture," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 107.4 (1988): 709 – 20.

143 A comparison of Paul's differing versions of the story of Abraham in Galatians and Romans, unfortunately, falls outside the scope of this dissertation.

144 As Stanley Stowers ("Pauline Participation," 356) has rightly emphasized, this *pneuma* or spirit is rarified yet still *physical* "stuff": "Humans participate in Adam because they share bodies consisting of the same stuff as Adam (1 Cor. 15:42 – 49). Those in Christ participate in him because they share with him the most sublime kind of pneuma, divine pneuma, that he received in being resurrected from the dead."

145 In addition to the works by Klawans and Hayes cited above, see also Paula Fredriksen, "Paul, Purity, and the *Ekklesia* of the Gentiles," in *The Beginnings of Christianity* (ed. Jack Pastor and Menachem Mor; Jerusalem: Yad Ben-Zvi Press, 2005), 205 – 17, see especially 212 – 3; and eadem, "Judaizing the Nations," 244 ff.

146 As Caroline Johnson Hodge suggests (*If Sons, then Heirs*, 73), Ezekiel 36:26 – 28 is likely an intertext here. Ezekiel 36:26 – 28: "A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will remove from your body the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. I will put my spirit within you, and make you follow my statutes and be careful to observe my ordinances." Cf. Romans 8: 3 – 4.

Yet, it is not just Gentiles who were *in* Christ; as Galatians 3:26 – 29 makes clear, Jews *also* participated *in Christ* through baptism. Moreover, *all*, i.e., both Jew and Gentile, are "called through Christ,"[147] "made righteous through Christ,"[148] and baptized into the corporate "body of Christ."[149] Frustrating as it may be, however, we cannot settle exactly *why* Paul believed Jews *must* be baptized into Christ to receive the promises made to Abraham and his descendants.[150] Although he referred at times to a "Gospel for the circumcised" (Galatians 2:7 – 9) and the *differing* strategies he adopted when preaching to Jews (1 Cor. 9:19 – 24), this version of a Gospel addressed to the Jews does not survive. Reading between the lines, Paul did, nonetheless, expect some sort of benefit to be gained by his Jewish brethren from baptism into Christ. Based on what we have seen above regarding participation in Christ, a possible benefit that I tentatively suggest is that in order to participate in the resurrection, everyone, Gentiles *and* Jews, need to participate in Christ's unique *pneuma*. In this way, a person will put on the imperishable and be transformed into something *Christ-like* because ordinary flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom (1 Cor. 15:50 – 57).

Furthermore, as I noted above, this shared participation in Christ parallels Paul's metaphor of the olive tree with its two distinct ethnicities belonging to the same organism.

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147 1 Corinthians 1:22 – 24: "For Jews demand signs and Greeks desire wisdom, but we proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those who are called, both Jew and Greek, Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God."

148 Galatians 2:15 – 16, italics added: "We ourselves are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners; yet we know that a person (ἄνθρωπος) is not made righteous by the works of the law *except through* (ἐὰν μὴ διά) the faithfulness of Jesus Christ." On the use of the subjective genitive (faithfulness *of* Christ) as opposed to the objective genitive (faith *in* Christ), see further Richard Hays, *The Faith of Jesus Christ: An Investigation of the Narrative Structure of Galatians 3:1 – 4:11* (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1983).

149 1 Corinthians 12:12 – 13: "For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body – Jews or Greeks, slaves or free – and we were all made to drink of one Spirit."

150 It is unpersuasive to conclude that Christ was, in Paul's eyes, soteriologically effective exclusively for Gentiles. Proponents of this view depend upon an argument from silence in Romans 9 – 11 as well as rather idiosyncratic readings of a number of other passages; see, for example, John Gager's (*Reinventing Paul*, 84 – 87) interpretation, which follows Lloyd Gaston, of the inclusive ἄνθρωπος of Galatians 2:15 – 16 as referring *exclusively* to Gentiles, despite it following Paul's first person plural declaration that "we who are Jews by birth…" See below for my interpretation of Galatians 2:15 – 16.

Although it was a foregone conclusion for Paul that all of Israel would be saved, this will occur only after they are engrafted again through "the power of God," a phrase we see elsewhere applied to Christ (e.g., 1 Cor. 1:24).[151] Finally, Paul concluded his overview of salvation history with the programmatic epitome, all people, Jews and Gentiles, must be engrafted, i.e., baptized into Christ, so that "God may have mercy on all" (Romans 11:32). Consequently, even if we do not know precisely why, we can conclude with relative certainty that Jews *qua* Jews and Gentiles *qua* Gentiles are both saved, according to Paul, by participating in Christ; ethical requirements specific to each ethnic group (e.g., Jewish Torah observance), therefore, were not the catalyst (i.e., principle cause) for salvation.[152]

This recognition cuts two ways. It entails that the rejection-replacement model, according to which Paul rejected salvation through works of the Torah for salvation through faith in Jesus, is patently false.[153] It also means that the two-covenant or *Sonderweg* approach to Paul cannot stand either.[154] As we read in Galatians 2:16, "a person is not made righteous through the law except (ἐὰν μὴ διά) through the faithfulness of Christ." Paul's point here and throughout Galatians is that the Torah is not the *means* for salvation; rather, it is participating in Christ. Interpreters, however, who have translated ἐὰν μὴ διά as a strong disjunction, i.e., a person is not

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151 Rediar Hvalvik, "Sonderweg for Israel," 89 – 91.

152 As we have seen, Paul never rejected Torah practice among Jewish followers of Jesus. Torah was never the *means* for salvation; what it was and continues to be is a God-given gift entrusted to his special people as a symbol of his enduring promises to their ancestors. See Pinchas Lapide's (*Paul: Rabbi and Apostle* (translated by Lawrence Denef; Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing, 1984), 37) claim on exactly this point: "Even more significant is the contrast of Christ and Torah, in which Christ is said to have replaced the Torah as the way to Salvation, as Paul writes, 'if justification were through the Law, then Christ died for no purpose" (Gal 2:21). Here a faithful Jew can only shake his head in bewilderment. The rabbinate has never even considered the Torah as a way to salvation to God. The Torah is absolutely *not* a means of achieving salvation, for Judaism knows no such means."

153 A number of recent studies that purport to problematize Sanders' contributions and/or seek to move us "beyond the New Perspective" have done little else besides returning to and championing theologically motivated (namely superssessionist) arguments. Two of the more recent and rather acerbic examples are Simon Gathercoles' *Where is Boasting? Early Jewish Soteriology and Paul's Response in Romans 1 – 5* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002) and Francis Watson's *Paul, Judaism, and the Gentiles: Beyond the New Perspective* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007).

154 See **Chapter 2** for my discussion of such scholars, most notably Lloyd Gaston and John Gager.

saved through the law but through (ἐὰν μὴ διά)..." have forcefully imported a rejection/replacement reading that obscures Paul's logic. For a Jew, Torah observance and participation in the faithfulness of Christ are not mutually exclusive. Although it is certainly a *mystery* for when, how, and why all of Israel will *en masse* participate in Christ (Romans 11:25 – 26), Paul has *repeatedly* stated that it is *in* Christ that *both* Jews and Gentiles will be saved (e.g., Galatians 2 – 3). Despite advocating this single *means* to salvation, however, Paul did not preach an all-encompassing and universalizing ethical standard; rather, he constructed different ethical standards for Israel and the Nations.

**Differing Codes of Conduct for Israel and the Nations**

Therefore, since Jews are saved as Jews and Gentiles saved as Gentiles,[155] Paul expects each to *excel* in the normative standards associated with being a Gentile or a Jew.

> However that may be, let each of you lead the life that the Lord assigned, to which God called you. This is my rule in all the churches. Was anyone at the time of his call already circumcised? Let him not seek to remove the marks of circumcision. Was anyone at the time of his call uncircumcised? Let him not seek circumcision. Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing; but obeying the commandments of God is everything. Let each of you remain in the condition in which you were called. (1 Corinthians 7:17 – 20)

Consequently, if Paul, like John, expects people to play the role they were assigned in the drama of salvation history, what are the specific, normative duties that each *dramatis personae* (i.e., Gentile and Jew) must observe? [156] Insofar as Jews were supposed to stay as they are, they

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[155] Mark Nanos, *Mystery*, 183: "Both Jew and Gentile were saved as Jew and Gentile, as children of Abraham according to promise. For Paul, as for any Jew, 'the gifts (i.e., the Torah) and 'the calling" (i.e., Israel) are "irrevocable" (11:29)." *Contra* the dominant strand of scholarship, most often associated with N.T. Wright, James Dunn, Daniel Boyarin, et al. who contend that Paul has abolished or transcended ethnic differences.

[156] This, I believe, is the greatest shortcoming of Terence Donaldson's otherwise excellent work, i.e., his failure to recognize that God, in Paul's eyes, has assigned *different* people to *different* roles. Instead, Donaldson universalizes the *condemnation* of the Law in order to argue for a single solution, i.e., Gentile conversion to a "redefined" people of Israel. This, however, falsely conflates soteriology with ethics, in particular the *Gentile negative obligation* to not practice a modified form of Torah observance. The Law is not in itself negative; it should, quite simply, not be a

should continue to excel in what was expected of a good Jew, i.e., proper Torah observance.[157] As the Apostle to the Gentiles, however, Paul wrote a great deal more about his expectations for Gentiles. Let us conclude our analysis of Paul by examining just how his commitments to community-minded ethics[158] and his eschatologically-orienting belief that the current age is fading away[159] affected his construction of an ethical standard tailored to the Nations.

Due to the *ad hoc* and pastoral nature of Paul's letter, we, unfortunately, never find a systematic or complete description of Paul's expectations for Gentile ethics; however, we can piece together some important elements. Paul enigmatically claimed that Gentiles can "naturally do what is required of the Law without possessing the Law" (Romans 2:14). What was required of Gentiles included both negative and positive duties. In terms of negative duties, Paul frequently exhorted his Gentile readers to avoid biblical vices such as idolatry, *porneia*, and other forms of immorality (e.g., 1 Cor. 6:9 - 11; Gal. 5:19 – 21). Furthermore, insofar as Gentiles were meant to *stay* Gentiles, according to Paul's vision of salvation history, they had the added negative duty of not ritually converting to Judaism or adopting Jewish Torah practices. In

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consideration in the first place for Gentiles seeking to be saved. Thus, Paul's point is that Gentiles should not deviate from God's plan by adopting modified Torah practice or even converting. Gentiles should trust God's plan and stay as they are. See further Terence Donaldson, *Paul and the Gentiles: Remapping the Apostle's Convictional World* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997), chapters 5 and 8.

[157] A number of scholars have suggested that Paul believed *missionizing* practices were also expected of *good* Jews, i.e., to "be a light to the world." This is possible, however, unlikely. As I observed in **Chapter 1**, increasingly the supposed consensus that ancient Judaism was a missionizing religion has been shown to be largely unfounded; instead, texts, such as Isaiah 42:6 and 49:6, were meant to reinforce ethical excellence internally by encouraging one's community to become exemplars for right conduct and behavior for others to imitate. Similarly, Paul expects the majority of his fellow Jews to be moral exemplars, not missionaries; Paul considered his own missionizing practices to be part of his *special prophetic call* and not an expectation for all Jews. Cf. Paula Fredriksen, "Judaism," 538 – 9.

[158] See, for example, Galatians 5:14 and 1 Corinthians 10:23.

[159] 1 Cor. 7:29 – 31: "I mean, brothers and sisters, the appointed time has grown short; from now on, let even those who have wives be as though they had none, and those who mourn as though they were not mourning, and those who rejoice as those they were not rejoicing, and those who buy as though they had no possessions, and those who deal with the world as though they had no dealings with it. For the present form of this world is passing away."

terms of positive duties, Paul expected his Gentiles readers to contribute to the saints in Jerusalem, thereby enacting the eschatological offering of the Nations.[160]

Although John of Patmos modified the motif of the eschatological pilgrimage of the Nations, Paul retained Isaiah 60's expectation of actual financial restitution.[161] As we see throughout his letters (Romans 15; 1 Corinthians 16; 2 Corinthians 8 – 9; Galatians 2), a *modus operandi* for Paul was to take up a collection for "the saints" or "the poor" from his Gentile congregations. "[James, Cephas, and John, i.e., the pillars of the Jerusalem church] asked only one thing, that we remember the poor, which was actually what I was eager to do" (Galatians 2:10). Writing on the biblical foundations undergirding Paul's Gentile mission and collection, Roger Aus has argued that not only were biblical prophecies, such as Isaiah 60, motivating Paul to bring the wealth of the Nations to Jerusalem, but passages such as Isaiah 66:19 – 23 and Jeremiah 3:14 prompted Paul to travel to Spain in order to *complete* the eschatological ingathering of the Nations.[162]

According to Aus, once he had completed his world-wide mission by baptizing and then collecting monies from *some* Gentiles in Spain,[163] Paul would have "brought in" the representative or "*full* number of the Nations" (cf. Romans 11:25: τὸ πλήρωμα τῶν ἐθνῶν).[164] Thus, Paul believed he could *cause* Christ's *parousia* by gathering in the "full number of Gentiles," defined not as the totality of all Gentiles but rather a representative sampling of every variety or tribe from across the world.[165] Whether or not Paul himself would have viewed Spain as the only missing portion of a "full number of the Nations" is unclear. Aus' argument,

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160 See Bruce W. Longenecker, *Eschatology and the Covenant: A Comparison of 4 Ezra and Romans 1 – 11* (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic, 1991), 264.
161 See also Isaiah 45:14; Micah 4:13; and Tobit 13:11.
162 Roger Aus, "Paul's Travel Plans," *passim*.
163 "Tarshish" in Isaiah 66:19 should, according to Aus ("Paul's Travel Plans," 242 – 46) be interpreted as "Tartessos."
164 Roger Aus, "Paul's Travel Plans," 251 – 52.
165 Roger Aus, "Paul's Travel Plans," 257 – 60.

however, rightly points to the fact the Paul's ethical framework is eschatologically oriented; as such, Paul has tailored his expectations for a Gentile financial collection on the basis for how the Nations *ought* to comport themselves in the eschaton.[166] As John Gager notes, "To ignore this (i.e., eschatological or "end-time") all consuming orientation, or to downplay it, is to misread Paul at every turn…this intense eschatological mentality underlies his every thought and action."[167]

Yet, another of Paul's commitments, his concern for continued *harmony* among the members of Christ, tempered the ethical rigor he could demand of his Gentile believers.[168] To illustrate this, let us consider a popular suggestion that has greatly influenced my own thinking on Pauline ethics, that is, Paul advocated that Gentiles in Christ should follow the Noahide Commandments (or something *very* similar), thereby becoming *righteous Gentiles*.[169] What is appealing about this argument is that it too differentiates between Jewish and Gentile ethical conduct and even provides the *specifics* what *good Gentiles* are supposed to do or *not* to do. According to Mark Nanos, Paul adhered to a modified version of an ethic tailored to "righteous Gentiles," i.e., Luke's Apostolic Decree, "which set out the minimal ritual requirements for the

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166 Paul also subtly exhorted his Gentile addressees in Rome to financially support his eschatologically oriented mission to Spain (Romans 15:24a): "For I do hope to see you on my journey, and to be sent on by you (ὑφ' ὑμῶν προπεμφθῆναι)…" See further Robert Jewett, *Romans*, 924 – 26.

167 John Gager, *Reinventing Paul*, 61 – 2.

168 See further Margaret M. Mitchell's *Paul and the Rhetoric of Reconciliation: An Exegetical Investigation into the Language and Composition of 1 Corinthians* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1991) and Dale Martin's *The Corinthian Body* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995).

169 For a useful introduction and discussion of the conceptual framework and content of the Noahide Commandments (e.g., t. Sand. 13.2; t. AZ 8.4), see further Alan Segal, Segal, *Paul the Convert: The Apostolate and Apostasy of Saul the Pharisee* (Yale University Press: New Haven, 1990), 187 – 223; idem, "Universalism in Judaism and Christianity," *Paul in His Hellenistic Context* (ed. Troels Engberg-Pedersen; T & T Clark: Edinburgh, 1994), 1 – 29; David Novak, *The Image of the Non-Jew in Judaism: The Idea of the Noahide Law* (2nd edition, edited by Matthew Lagrone; Oxford: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2011); Mark Nanos, *Mystery of Romans,* 50 – 56 and Chapter 4; and Terence Donaldson, *Paul and the Gentiles: Remapping the Apostle's Convictional World* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997). See also my discussion of the social situation and aims of the Noahide Commandments and the "Rules of the Sojourner" in **Chapter 1**, especially **notes 6** and **32**.

'stranger within your gates.'"[170] Thus, the Apostolic Decree (Acts 15:19 – 35; 21:25) enabled righteous Gentiles to live, eat, and worship alongside Jewish followers of Jesus; due to the "pollution" (ἀλίσγημα) they bring, Gentiles, according to the Apostolic Decree (15:20, 29; 21:25), must avoid "things sacrificed to idols (εἰδώλων), blood (αἵματος), things strangled (πνικτοῦ), and fornication (πορνείας)."[171]

There are at least two reasons, however, for why we ought to reject interpreting Paul's ethical expectations for Gentiles as the implementation of a concept such as the Noahide Commandments and/or Luke's Apostolic Decree.[172] First, as Stanley Stowers has persuasively demonstrated, Paul opposed the contention that Jewish teachers could *make* Gentiles righteous through a modified version of Torah practices.

> [In opposition to this fictive Jewish teacher of Romans 2] Paul's approach was utterly different. Only God can make a person right with him, and he has chosen to justify the gentiles through Jesus Christ in a way analogous to Israel's becoming a righteous people through Abraham's faithfulness. Christ's coming fulfills the expectation that God would gratuitously save the gentile peoples at the end of the age when Israel will be restored."[173]

Consequently, although Paul maintained that his Gentile believers ought, similar to the Apostolic Decree, to avoid *porneia* and *other* vices, this was not so that these Gentiles might *become* righteous; righteousness (or "justification" as it has traditionally been rendered) comes from God through baptism into Christ.[174] Paul's participatory soteriology, then, provides a better, even if

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[170] Mark Nanos, *Mystery of Romans*, 177. According to Nanos (*Mystery of Romans*, 168), Luke's Apostolic Decree "stands somewhere between" the Biblical Rules for the Sojourner (e.g., Lev. 17 – 18) and the rabbinic Noahide Commandments.

[171] Mark Nanos, *Mystery of Romans*, 53; cf. Acts 15:20, 29.

[172] In addition to the two reasons I will provide, one might add that Paul never mentioned anything like the Apostolic Decree (*pace* Nanos' (*Mystery of Romans*, chapter 4) unpersuasive attempts to find such an allusion, e.g. Romans 6:17 – 19: "obedience to *that* form of teaching…"). Generally speaking, Luke's later versions of events tell us much less about the historical Paul than they do about Luke and his historical situation. Consequently, we should exercise much greater caution in reading Luke *back into* Paul.

[173] Stanley Stowers, *Rereading Romans,* 151.

[174] *Pace* Terence Donaldson (*Paul and the Gentiles*, chapter 8) who argues for a much more *formal* and causal link between the conduct of a righteous Gentile and justification or inclusion within his "reconfigured Israel."

not complete, explanation for some of his concerns over holiness and his commitment to avoiding certain biblical forms of impurity, i.e., you must keep your body holy since it is now the dwelling place of the Lord (1 Cor. 3:16, 6:19; 2 Cor. 6:16).

Secondly, when we consider the four prohibited elements of Luke's Apostolic Decree (i.e., things sacrificed to idols (εἰδώλων), blood (αἵματος), things strangled (πνικτοῦ), and fornication (πορνείας), we see that Paul never endorsed such a rigid standard. In fact, Paul allowed that *some* could eat meat sacrificed to idols (τὰ εἰδωλόθυτα) *so long as it did not upset* anyone else (1 Cor. 8 and 10).[175] What was at issue for Paul was communal solidarity. Paul acknowledged that "no idol in the world really exists," and that this should entail that eating meat sacrificed is licit (1 Cor. 8:4 – 13; cf. 1 Cor. 10:14 – 33). However, this was not the point, according to Paul. Yes, "all things are lawful, but not all things are beneficial" (1 Cor. 10:23).

Thus, what should determine the *right* action is how it might affect other members of the community. There may be *some* in the community who do not *know* that idols do not exist and are thus seriously disturbed and troubled when they see their brethren in Christ *seemingly* return to paganism by eating idol meat. Paul's solution: if it troubles your fellow members of Christ, you *must* avoid idol meat (1 Cor. 8:10 – 13). Paul's "ethic of accommodation," therefore, differs from Luke's Apostolic Decree insofar as it requires a different calculus of sin and the flexibility to address contextual problems.[176] To be sure, Paul's conception of what were Gentile vices was likely *determined* by many of the same biblical precedents as the Apostolic Decree and parts of the Noahide Commandments (e.g., the Rules of the Sojourner); yet, Paul, for the sake of social

[175] Mark Nanos has argued extensively that Paul preached the Apostolic Decree in order for Jews and Gentiles to eat and worship together; while it is certainly true that Paul *would* have expected *Gentile* accommodation so that both could dine together, there is *no* evidence that Paul systematically included the Apostolic Decree as his *baseline* for normative Gentile behavior. Instead, he urged ethical solidarity and claimed that care for others should determine one's actions; see 1 Corinthians 10:31 – 33: "So whatever you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do everything for the glory of God. Give no offense to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God, just as I try to please everyone in everything I do, not seeking my own advantage, but that of many, so that they may be saved."

[176] See further Alan Segal, *Paul the Convert*, 236ff.

solidarity, was willing to *make accommodations* so as to preserve the corporate body of Christ until Christ's impending *parousia*.[177]

Fundamentally, Paul's ethic was a balancing act between its eschatological focus and the everyday problems of his Gentile believers. We should not import the later solutions that second, third, and fourth generation followers of Jesus developed as their communities continued to develop and struggle with ethical questions; Paul never thought that far ahead. Nor should we, however tempting it may be, transform Paul into an advocate of modern, liberal values. Paul did not set out to establish a new world order free from all biases and completely harmonious, i.e., where there will no longer be Jews or Gentiles, Slaves or Free, Men or Women. Paul's ethic was a frantic attempt to keep the body of Christ from bursting apart at the seams *until* Christ could return to set everything right. Paul was putting out fires, not establishing a systematic and timeless ethic.

## Conclusion: When Universalism Becomes Triumphalism

> "If there is truth in the claim of the Shema that God is one (Rom. iii.30), then God must judge all by the same standard and neither the ancestral possession of an air of superiority nor the possession of the Torah can make any difference. And is not this precisely the starting point of the argument of Romans? It may turn out that [the book's] greatest contribution lies in the conclusion which Sanders himself refrained from drawing."[178]

So George Caird criticized E. P. Sanders in his review of Sanders' seminal *Paul and the Palestinian Judaism*. For Caird, Paul got it right when the Apostle to the Gentiles erased Israel's special status; if he had not, God's judgments would not be fair. This ill-defined but persistent concern over fairness or justice permeates much of scholarship on ancient Judaism and

[177] As we shall see in **PART II**, the danger of apostasy and post-baptismal sin was a significant social and theoretical problem among subsequent generations of Jesus followers.
[178] George Caird, "Review of E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*," 542 – 3 apud Francis Watson, *Paul, Judaism,* 7.

Christianity. For many still, it constitutes the *raison d'etre* for Christianity, i.e., a truly just God cannot have a favored people but must treat all *fairly* without any concerns for preference and special dispensations. Thus, Christianity, a *universalist* religion, has replaced *Judaism*, a particularist religion.[179] Unfortunately for these scholars, Paul and John of Patmos, their objects of scholarly study, did not think this way.

In **PART I**, we have examined how the distinction between Israel and the Nations was operative for both John and Paul. In light of the continued importance and existence of Israel and the Nations, John and Paul hierarchically described salvation and the ethical expectations enjoined on these different peoples. Neither John nor Paul advocated a transcendent new *race* or religion, i.e., Christianity; instead, both fashioned elaborate teleological narratives wherein Gentiles *qua* Gentiles and Jews *qua* Jews each had their own role to play in the drama of salvation history.

In both **PARTS II** and **III**, this recognition remains paramount. As we shall see texts and authors such as the *Shepherd of Hermas,* the *Apocryphon of John*, and some Valentinians similarly employed teleological narratives containing higher and lower levels of salvation and different profiles tailored to the roles that individuals/groups will play in the drama of salvation. Moreover, like Paul and John, their approach to soteriology did not preclude concerns for proper ethical conduct; on the contrary, by tailoring different ethical standards to different sorts of people and constructing higher and lower levels of salvation, these authors and texts could address the social difficulties posed by the coexistence of sinners and saints in the same

[179] This divide is, of course, an outdated cliché to some but still Gospel truth to others. For an excellent deconstruction of the creation of Christianity as a "universalist" religion, see further Denise Kimber Buell who demonstrates that Christianity's invention of a "universal *genos*" was not the abolition of categories but a historically situated invention meant to argue for the superiority of the *Christian genos*. Buell, Denise Kimber. "Race and Universalism in Early Christianity," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 10.4 (2002): 429 – 68; eadem, *Why This New Race? Ethnic Reasoning in Early Christianity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005).

community (**PART II**) as well as provide justification for missionary successes and failures (**PART III**). In this way, we shall seek to complicate and at times outright refute a popular scholarly narrative that Christianity, beginning with Paul, has a universalized code for ethics and uniform salvation such that all people are judged and saved according to the same standards.

# Part II

## Saints, Sinners, and the Damned in Early Christianity:

### Ethical Differences as Salvific Hierarchies in the *Shepherd of Hermas* and the *Apocryphon of John*

# Chapter 4
# The Problem of Suitable Desserts

> The prayers and oblations of the faithful were not relevant to the *valde boni*: for they could be assumed to have reached heaven with no difficulty. Nor were they relevant to the *valde mali*: for they could be assumed to be either *in* Hell or destined *for* Hell. The 'friction point' of early Christian eschatology, and of Early Christian pastoral care, was the fate of the *non valdes* – the *non valde mali,* the *non valde boni*: the 'not altogether bad' and the 'not altogether good.' [1]

As Peter Brown observes (albeit in reference to a slightly later period of Christian history), a pastoral and theoretical "friction point" for many early Christians was deciding what to do with those who were not so bad as to be excluded from the community of the saved, but who, nonetheless, were not so good as to deserve the same salvation as those who maintained the most righteous or saintly of lives. This moral hierarchy, however, is at odds with the fundamental binary of salvation/damnation. Can and should those who are neither saints nor the damned be saved? If they can be saved, what does this entail for their community's moral standards? Are there differing standards within the same community: a saintly ideal and the merely acceptable life? What separates a minimally acceptable life from one deserving of damnation? And what impact do all these concerns have on the nature of both sin and salvation in early Christian discourse?

In **PART II**, I turn to two early (ca. second-century) Christians texts, the *Shepherd of Hermas* (hereafter *Hermas*) and the *Apocryphon of John* (hereafter *ApocJn*), which address these pastoral and theoretical concerns by constructing a salvific middle ground – below the saints but above the damned – for those who come up short of each text's highest ethical ideals. By constructing a distinction between a lower and higher level of salvation, these texts

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[1] See Brown, "Alms and the Afterlife: A Manichaean View of Early Christian Practice," in *East and West: Papers in Ancient History Presented to Glen Bowersock* (eds. T. Corey Brennan and Harriet I. Flower; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2008), 155.

devised soteriological hierarchies that could explain ethical imperfections, reinforce idealized portrayals of conduct, and justify social differentiation. Furthermore, each text attempts to answer the perennial question of whence sin and contextualize the source(s) of ethical variance between saintly and sinful persons. In so doing, each also creates usable constructions of sinfulness and saintliness in response to the social and theoretical problems posed by ethical variance within their communities.

Comparable to what we saw in **PART I** wherein John of Patmos and Paul the Apostle devised different moral standards for different sorts of people (Jews v. Gentiles), *Hermas* and the *ApocJn* both subdivide the saved into different groups and similarly expect differing moral conduct from the differing groups. *Hermas* and the *ApocJn*, however, divide and create sub-categories of the saved on the basis of ethical variance; as opposed to Paul and John who, as we saw, struggled to assign appropriate standards to classes of people that were divinely ordained and predated Paul and John themselves. Thus, our focus in **PART II** will shift away from the exegetical context of **PART I** to the practical questions and concerns that occupy *Hermas* and the *ApocJn*.[2]

For example, *Hermas* and the *ApocJn* are perplexed by how a saved person (and thus a member of the community) could fall *back* into sin. To account for this relapse, *Hermas* and the *ApocJn* deploy sophisticated demonological theories meant to explain how and why *good* persons might still sin.[3] Moreover, *Hermas* and the *ApocJn* provide remedies and techniques designed to help people resist sin. In this and other ways, *Hermas* and the *ApocJn* provide

[2] I do not want to be mistaken for claiming that John or Paul were *unconcerned* with practical concerns (e.g., Rev. 2 – 3; Romans 9 – 15); rather, I want to signal that *my* emphases will be different in how I introduce and discuss both texts.
[3] See **Chapter 6**.

modern readers with insight into how some socially-minded[4] early Christians developed explanations and practical solutions to the social and theoretical problem of ethical variance. As we shall see, both adopted mediating positions, thereby maintaining ethical standards while remaining flexible enough to readmit penitent sinners.

It is important to note that the *ApocJn* and *Hermas* both describe *corporate* salvation, i.e., salvific ends are tailored specifically to classes or types of persons, not individuals.[5] *Hermas* and the *ApocJn* are both teleological narratives that explicate the different *sorts* of persons and the roles they play and *will* play – for good and evil – in the unfolding of salvation history.[6] This corporate, teleological approach has implications both for how each author characterizes the decision-making and moral agency of persons as well as each author's specific social context(s) and practical aims.[7]

*Hermas* and the *ApocJn*'s approach of higher and lower levels of salvation was just one among many solutions to the problem posed by the co-existence of sinners and saints in the first several centuries of the Common Era. There were a number of competing perspectives – reflecting a wide variety of contexts and agendas – on the dilemma of moral difference and the

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[4] As we shall see in **Chapters 5** and especially **Chapter 6**, it is rather uncontroversial to locate *Hermas* within an early Christian communal setting; it is, however, *very* controversial and contested to locate *ApocJn* in a communal setting. I will, nonetheless, provide a multi-faceted argument for why this context makes the best sense for both texts.

[5] This appears most likely to be a product of genre constraints of teleological narratives (i.e., texts that tell the story of salvation); see further **Chapter 5**; cf. **Chapter 9**.

[6] Both texts invite their readers to identify with and place themselves into their narratives. Through these narratives, *Hermas* and the *ApocJn* not only promote idealized models for ethical conduct but also provide explanations for differences in conduct, i.e., why are some people exceptionally good, some exceptionally evil, and others somewhere in the middle? Which one are *you*, o reader or auditor, and how should you comport yourself after you successfully discover your role? Once the reader assumes a role in the drama of salvation history**,** both *Hermas* and the *ApcJn* provide practical advice for resisting temptations and maintaining proper ethical standards *that are tailored to specific roles*. For a discussion of the use of narrative in identify formation and ethical theory, see further Wayne Meeks (who draws upon Clifford Geertz) in his *The Moral World of the First Christians* (The Westminster Press: Philadelphia, 1986), 154 – 60. See also Stanley Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom: A Primer in Christian Ethics* (University of Notre Dame Press: Notre Dame, 1983), chapter 2 especially.

[7] See **Chapter 6** for a discussion of these issues.

questions of whether and how to save sinners.[8] Some early Christians thought it was simply impossible to save sinners. Ethically rigorous authors, such as the author of the Letter to the Hebrews, maintained that anyone who falls back into sin after "enlightenment" is surely damned.[9] Tertullian, the cantankerous late second and early third-century North African author, mockingly refers to the *Shepherd of Hermas* as "the shepherd of adulterers" due to its inclusive approach to sinners (*de Pud.* 20).[10] Sinners, according to Tertullian, should spend their remaining days groveling in prayer and penitential self-abnegation in the hopes that God might forgive them after their deaths (e.g., *de Pud.* 2, 4).

This rigorist opinion, however, was not universally accepted. Writing in the first half of the second-century, Polycarp preached forgiveness and recommended active guidance of sinners towards repentance and complete reintegration into the community.[11] A near-contemporary of Polycarp, Ignatius of Antioch also advocated a less ethically rigorous and more socially inclusive perspective, according to which sinners could – in the proper context – repent from their past sins and return to the community:

> But where there is division and anger, God does not dwell. Thus the Lord forgives all who repent, if they return to the unity of God and the council of the bishop. (Ignatius, *Philadelphians* 8.1)

By advocating that repentance must include "returning to the council of the bishop," Ignatius sought not only to curb social division but also to claim and consolidate authority solely in the

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[8] See Christine Trevett's excellent overview of repentance in the second-century, "'I Have Heard from Some Teachers': the Second-Century Struggle for Forgiveness and Reconciliation," *Retribution, Repentance, and Reconciliation* (ed. Kate Cooper and Jeremy Gregory; Woodbridge, UK: The Boydell Press, 2004), 5 – 28. See also James Dallen, *The Reconciling Community: The Rite of Penance* (New York: Pueblo Publishing, 1986).

[9] "For it is impossible to restore again to repentance those who have been enlightened (φωτισθέντας), and have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come, and then have fallen away since, since on their own they are crucifying again the Son of God and are holding him up to contempt…" (Hebrews 6:4 – 6; cf. 10:26 – 31; 12:17)

[10] Tertullian even cites Hebrews 6. Compare, however, Tertullian's earlier views (*de Paen.* 12.1), during which he allowed limited repentance.

[11] Polycarp, *Philippians*, 6; cf. Dionysius of Corinth who, as reported by Eusebius (*HE* 4.23.6), advocates total forgiveness of all penitent sinners.

hands of the bishops.[12] Disagreements over the inclusion or exclusion of sinners often intersected with concerns over proper sites and uses of authority.[13]

In addition to debating whether and in what contexts sinners could repent, many early Christians also theorized about the very nature and source of sin. Sin, a moral category encompassing a wide range of referents, connotes disobedience and deviation from the will of God.[14] It is, however, a rather amorphous concept.[15] Thus, it could be constructed and reconstructed in a number of ways to address varying debates and questions. Why would someone sin? Is sin something internal or external to a person? How do you recognize sin and its effects on a member of the community? And are there methods or techniques to resist sinning? There are a number of competing answers to these questions. Some early Christians, echoing Paul (e.g., Romans 5 – 8), refer to sin as a foreign and cosmic power; others internalize sin by locating the responsibility for wrongdoing solely in the volitions or choices of people (e.g., Clement, *Stromata* II; Origen, *Peri Archon*, III).[16] *Hermas* and the *ApocJn*, as we shall see in **Chapter 6**, deployed a demonological construction of sinfulness; this specific permutation of sinfulness, reflecting their social circumstances, enabled both texts to diagnose the risk factors for sin and help save sinners from among their flocks.

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[12] Cf. Ignatius, *Trallians* 1 – 3; for a similar consolidation of authority into the hands of the presbyters, see 1 Clement 57 and Polycarp, *Philadelphians*, 6.

[13] See the studies by Allen Brent, Peter Lampe, and Harry Maier: Brent, *Hippolytus and the Roman Church in the Third Century: Communities in Tension Before the Emergence of a Monarch-Bishop* (Brill: Leiden, 1995); Lampe, *From Paul to Valentinus: Christians at Rome in the First Two Centuries* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003); Maier, *The Social Setting of the Ministry as Reflected in the Writings of Hermas, Clement, and Ignatius* (Waterloo, Canada: Wilfried Lauer University Press, 1991). Cf. *Hermas*, *Vis.* 3.9.7 – 10; *Sim.* 8.7.4 – 6; and 9.31.

[14] See, for example, Matthew 7:21 and the *Gospel of Truth* (33. 1- 32), which reduce ethical obligation to obedience to the "will of the Father"; see further **Chapter 7.**

[15] Often sin is represented or discussed through metaphors of what it is like and/or entails in legalistic (breach of contract or debt) or ritual (pollution) language. For a general introduction, see Paula Fredriksen, *Sin: The Early History of an Idea* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012).

[16] For a lengthier discussion of these differences, see further my discussion of competing notions of moral responsibility in **Chapter 8**.

In this same vein, many early Christians theorized about the practical and soteriological impact of sin. Were all sins the same? Could certain, less horrendous sins be forgiven, even if the worst offenses were unforgiveable? If some sins were worse, were there different acts of penance or even posthumous punishments that were adjusted to correspond to a sin's relative wickedness? The *Apocalypse of Peter*, containing perhaps the earliest Christian discussion of Hell, takes up many of these issues.[17] This second-century[18] text colorfully tailors each sinner's post-mortem punishment to his or her specific sins.[19] For example, those who were guilty of blaspheming were hung by their tongues;[20] women who adorned their hair for adultery were hung by their hair over a boiling mire;[21] and those men who similarly engaged in adultery were suspended by the offending organ over a boiling pit.[22] As opposed to speculating only about post-mortem punishments, other early Christian authors sought to design remedies and penitential practices that could expunge one's sins, either in the here and now or prepare a soul to receive God's forgiveness after death.[23] Yet just what those practices were, for how long they were required, and whether they would be effective were all matters of much debate.

It is within this context – during which no one solution of whether, when, and how to save sinners had secured universal support – that *Hermas* and the *ApocJn* emerged. Reflecting its active engagement with rival thinkers and proposals, *Hermas* (*Man*. 4.3) addresses itself

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[17] See Richard Bauckham, "The Apocalypse of Peter: A Jewish-Christian Apocalypse from the Time of Bar Kokhba," in *The Fate of the Dead: Studies on Jewish and Christian Apocalypses* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 1998), 160 – 258; Martha Himmelfarb, *Tours of Hell: An Apocalyptic Form in Jewish and Christian Literature* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), *passim*.

[18] Although there are a number of issues with the manuscript tradition, Clement of Alexandria (*Eclogues*, 41, 48) quotes from the text, thereby providing an *ante quem* of the late second / early third – century; it is possible that Theophilus of Antioch (*ad Autolycum* II, 19) *alludes* to the a passage preserved in the Akhmimic recension (see *NTA* II, page 634), which would place the *ante quem* at ca. 180 CE.

[19] See Martha Himmelfarb, *Tours of Hell*, 68 – 105.

[20] *Apocalypse of Peter* in *New Testament Apocrypha (NTA) volume II* (ed. Wilhelm Schneemelcher; translated by R. McL. Wilson; Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003), 628 (*Akhmimic* recension, 22).

[21] *NTA II*, 629 (Akhmimic recension, 24).

[22] *NTA II,* 629 (Ethioic recension, 7).

[23] For an outsider's perspective on these practices, see further *Contra Celsum* VI.15; cf. 1 Clement 51, 57; 2 Clement 16.

directly to these debates: "I have heard, Lord," I said, "from some teachers that there is no other repentance except from the one when we went into the water and received forgiveness from our earlier sins..." Yet, *Hermas* and the *ApocJn* were not only interested in the problem of saving sinners; both texts differentiate and explicate the content of a higher ethical standard reserved for saintly characters. Consequently, it is this dual function of *Hermas* and the *ApocJn*'s middle-ground salvific solution between total forgiveness/integration and uncompromising rejection/exclusion that we shall explore in detail throughout **PART II**.

Thus, we shall investigate the social and theoretical function of higher and lower levels of salvation for both *Hermas* and the *ApocJn* within the context of early (ca. second-century) Christianity, in particular as a strategy for dealing with communal difficulties posed by ethical variance. The implications of this will be twofold: first, to elucidate two important yet understudied texts; and second, to add to and improve discussions of early Christian social life and ethical discourse. As we shall see, *Hermas* and the *ApocJn* both present multi-tiered ethical and soteriological landscapes that are populated by more than simply good and bad people. Through their rhetorical constructions of higher and lower levels of salvation, *Hermas* and the *ApocJn* provide evidence of rich and sophisticated problem-solving and ethical reasoning that have been heretofore overlooked by scholars.[24]

*Hermas* and the *ApocJn*, therefore, present ethical ideals of how one ought to aspire to live; yet, they each pragmatically recognize the impossibility for large numbers to abide by this highest standard. Consequently, neither promulgates a zero-sum difference between right and

[24] To the best of my knowledge, no one has previously written on the theoretical and social impact of Hermas' higher and lower levels of salvation; argued that the *ApocJn*'s two-tiers of salvation addresses the communal problem of ethical variance; or have compared and contrasted the forms and implications of *Hermas* and the *ApocJn*'s higher and lower levels of salvation.

wrong conduct.[25] In **Chapter 5**, we shall introduce *Hermas* and the *ApocJn*'s versions of higher and lower levels of salvation; of special interest will be the content of the two levels of ethical conduct: saints and savable sinners. Following this, **Chapter 6** will examine how *Hermas* and the *ApocJn* conceive of sinfulness as part of their efforts to reintegrate sinners into their communities.

By examining what constitutes each text's highest ideals, minimum ethical requirements, notion(s) of sin, strategies for resisting deviant conduct, and means for reincorporating sinners, we gain insight into a formative period of Christian ethical discourse. In light of their shared concerns over communal stability, I will suggest that social location for the writers, readers, and perhaps even the first circulators of both *Hermas* and the *ApocJn* most likely resembled that of the small, tightknit congregations meeting together in house churches in urban settings. Consequently, we will conclude **PART II** by considering some of the social causes and implications of *Hermas* and the *ApocJn*'s theorizing about the nature of sin and salvation.

An additional goal of **PART II** is to bring two texts – the *ApocJn* and *Hermas* – that are normally studied in isolation from one another into close conversation. As I noted in my **Introduction**, one of the aims of this dissertation is to break down artificial divides and anachronistic categories that do more to impede research than they do to actually clarify the texts, authors, or practices they purport to describe. Too often the labels modern scholars assign to texts are determinative of the sorts of questions and frameworks that will be employed.[26] This

[25] Cf. Didache 6:2 "For if you can bear the whole yoke of the Lord (τὸν ζυγὸν τοῦ κυρίου), you will be perfect (τέλειος). But if you cannot, do as much as you are able."

[26] Michael Williams ("A Life Full of Meaning and Purpose: Demiurgical Myths and Social Implications," in *Beyond the Gnostic Gospels: Studies Building on the Work of Elaine Pagels* (ed. Eduard Iricinschi, et al.; Tübingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 2013), 20) articulates precisely this point with his usual insightfulness: "I pose these questions [about the daily lives of so-called heretics] not pretending that all can be answered with much certainty or that that all actual details can be ascertained. Naturally, they cannot. But if 'thought experiments' turned out to hold some value in early twentieth century physics, then perhaps analogous exercise are not without value in other fields

problem is perhaps best illustrated by the use of *comparanda*. So-called heterodox texts and authors are situated and compared almost *exclusively* with other heterodox, marginalized, or even *non-Christian* (e.g., Greco-Roman philosophical, mystery religious, or "auto-Orientalizing" and purposefully exotic) literature;[27] in contrast, so-called orthodox texts and authors are compared to biblical and other early Christian texts presumed to be normative or at least closer to the center of Christian discourse.[28] Consequently, even if we jettison the explicit use of problematic terms (e.g., "heresy" and "orthodoxy"), we still reinscribe normative v. non-normative categories insofar as we will treat marginalized texts one way and retrospectively mainstream texts another way.[29] As we shall see in **chapter 6**, this practice has no historical utility but rather serves to buttress modern theological and apologetic concerns.[30]

In what follows, I am consciously setting aside the dichotomy of heterodoxy v. orthodoxy.[31] As I will show in **chapter 6**, the use of this dichotomy to frame the second-century context is problematic on several grounds. Consequently, in addition to resisting strict binaries

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of research, including historical analysis of the world of Nag Hammadi texts. What one hears in a text is often significantly influenced by what one is *open* to hearing; much else might easily be overlooked."

[27] I borrow the term auto-Orientalizing from Dylan Burns' recent monograph, *Apocalypse of the Alien God: Platonism and the Exile of Sethian Gnosticism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014).

[28] A (and possibly *the* most) prevalent instance of this is scholars who look to Greco-Roman philosophical parallels to explain the *system* – thereby imbibing Irenaeus' heresiological rhetoric (*AH* I) – of so-called heretical thought. As Mark Edwards (*Origen Against Plato* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2002), 8) observed with respect to Origen, however, this mistakes the education of a writer for his or her commitments and aims: "Origen can no more be discussed without a knowledge of philosophy than a knowledge of Greek. Neither of these disciplines, however, can supply us with more than the regulative principles and conditions of thinking rather than the constituents of thought." For an example of the differing questions available and outcomes possible when using *comparanda* from biblical and philosophical sources in the study of so-called heretical texts, see further Alexander Kocar, "'Humanity Came to Be According to Three Essential Types': Ethical Responsibility and Practice in the Valentinian Anthropogony of the Tripartite Tractate (NHC I, 5)." in *Jewish and Christian Cosmogony in Late Antiquity* (ed. Lance Jenott and Sarit Kattan Gribetz; Mohr Siebeck: Tübingen, Germany), 193 – 221.

[29] See Morton Smith's seminal article pointing out the different and inexplicable ways in which the term *gnostikos* is used by modern scholars when describing so-called heretics as opposed to how it is used in studies on Clement of Alexandria, who self-identifies as a "gnostic." Smith, "History of the Term *Gnostikos*" in *The Rediscovery of Gnosticism: Volume II Sethian Gnosticism* (ed. Bentley Layton; Leiden: Brill, 1981), 796 – 807.

[30] Karen King, *What is Gnosticism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003; 2005 edition), 218; cf. Helmut Koester, "*GNOMAI DIAPHORAI*: The Origin and Nature of Diversification in the History of Early Christianity," in *Trajectories through Early Christianity* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1971), 115 – 17.

[31] I am also *provisionally* setting aside labels such as "Sethian" (which I support) and "Gnostic" (which I reject) for the *Apocryphon of John* in the interest of avoiding additional categorical distinctions. For my discussion of the relative utility of the category of Sethian, see my **Appendix** to **PART II.**

between saved and damned, I also provide a substantive demonstration that another binary – heterodoxy versus orthodoxy – is not necessary as an orienting tool for studies of early Christianity. By not depending – even heuristically with any number of caveats[32] – upon this divide between orthodoxy and heterodoxy, I will establish that this binary is not only unnecessary for explaining the wide range of beliefs and practices in second-century Christianity, but it does more to obscure than it does to clarify its objects of study.

Ultimately, **Part II** continues the core question of this dissertation: how do higher and lower levels of salvation reflect and/or affect daily life? Unlike with Paul and John, the *ApocJn* and *Hermas* imagine a much more straightforward and causal relationship between ethical conduct and higher and lower levels of salvation.[33] Moreover, it is not insignificant that *Hermas* and the *ApocJn* are both revelatory dialogues and thus imbue their salvific solution to the problem of ethical variance with divine authority. In this way, the *ApocJn* and *Hermas* map their social experience, of life in a community of both saints and sinners, onto a heavenly hierarchy and thereby invert the Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6:10); the result for both is that heaven now reflects the reality on earth.

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[32] Despite the important contributions of Michael Williams (*Rethinking Gnosticism: An Argument for Dismantling a Dubious Category* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996) and Karen King (*What is Gnosticism*), the dominant practice among scholars is to continue using this and other terms that reinscribe modern categories of normative v. marginal; what has changed is that scholars recognize the fraught and tenuous nature of Gnosticism itself and signal this with scare quotes (i.e., "Gnosticism").

[33] Cf. **Chapter 2**: "For Paul, soteriology and ethics are related, but they do not have a strictly causal relationship where one (ethics) determines or earns the other (salvation); nor does one (soteriology) necessarily subsume or compress the other (ethics) into a uniform system wherein ethics are secondary and contingent insofar as they are only how one stays 'in' the single saved people…"

# Chapter 5
# In Heaven As It Is On Earth:
## Ethical and Salvific Differences in the *Shepherd of Hermas* and the *Apocryphon of John*

*All those who have repented have a dwelling place in the tower. All those who repent more slowly will still dwell within the walls. But those who do not repent but remain in their deeds will surely die*. (*Sim*. 8.7.3)

*And in the third aeon was placed the seed of Seth, over the third light of Daveithai. And the souls of the saints were placed (there). And in the fourth aeon were placed the souls of those who do know the Pleroma and did not repent at once, but who persisted for a while and repented afterwards; they are by the fourth light Eleleth*. (NHC II 8.14 – 9. 23)

## Introduction

Although the *Shepherd of Hermas* and the *Apocryphon of John* have striking similarities to one another and address similar social and theoretical concerns, they are rarely examined together. As we shall see in **Chapter 6**, this is in large part due to the anachronistic, artificial, and misleading divide between orthodoxy and heresy. Yet, both texts are examples of early (ca. second-century) Christians struggling earnestly with the difficulties they experienced as time continued to elapse between the (increasingly distant) era of Christ and his first generation(s) of followers and the present.[1] This maturation coincided with a number of soteriological and ethical questions becoming more pressing: are all the saved – despite differences in moral quality – equal in the eyes of God? Is there (and/or should there be) a soteriological distinction of greater and lesser rewards between saints and merely average Christians? Furthermore, is there a

[1] For example, as the events of Christ's life and death became increasingly distant, the fervor for his imminent *parousia* began to cool for many early Christians as well. An earlier and better known instance of precisely this sort of growing pain is the dilemma faced by the author of 2 Thessalonians, who must confront the listlessness and ethical laxness that sets in as the community adapts to a lengthier wait for the *parousia*; see, for example, 2 Thess. 3.11 – 13 (NRSV): "For we hear that some of you are living in idleness, mere busybodies, not doing any work. Now such persons we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ to do their work quietly and to earn their own living. Brothers and sisters, do not be weary in doing what is right."

reason why some people are saints, whereas most others come up short? How do we quantify and explain this apparent moral hierarchy? And perhaps most unsettling: what happens when the saved sin again? How is this possible? Can it be remedied? Are there different *types* of sinners? Are some worse than others? How should a community balance its standards for ethical uprightness with human moral frailty without either abandoning core values or eventually excluding all but ethical virtuosos?

In what follows, we shall examine a structurally similar solution to these questions that is shared by both *Hermas* and the *ApocJn*: higher and lower levels of salvation. I will first introduce the texts of *Hermas* and the *ApocJn*. I will summarize some of the key historigraphic debates surrounding these texts and outline their soteriologies of higher and lower levels of salvation. *Hermas* and the *ApocJn* both employ utopian, salvific imagery to construct ethical ideals. In so doing, *Hermas* and *ApocJn* create classes of people that are rhetorically useful both for elucidating the content of these higher and lower standards for ethical conduct as well as for justifying higher and lower levels of salvation.[2] In other words, saints, because they do saintly things, occupy a more prestigious heavenly residence than do repentant sinners.

Despite sharing these structural similarities of higher and lower ethical expectations and levels of salvation, the *ApocJn* and *Hermas* differ on the *content* of these ethical ideals. What makes a saint a saint in *Hermas* differs significantly from what makes a saint in the *ApocJn*. Furthermore, what sin and repentance signify differs as well. *Hermas* holds all of humanity accountable to the same, single moral code, i.e., the degree to which people uphold and even suffer for the Law of God (*Sim*. 8).[3] As a result, *repentance*, in *Hermas*, is a total and whole-

[2] On this use of *rhetorical exempla* for ethical paraenesis, see Philip Tite's overview of the use of moral *exempla* in the Greco-Roman world; Tite, *Valentinian Ethics and Paraenetic Discourse*: *Determining the Social Function of Moral Exhortation in Valentinian Christianity*. (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 147 – 64.
[3] Importantly, all are *saved* in the same way as well, i.e., only by accepting "the name of God's Son" (*Sim.* 9.12.4).

minded turning *back* towards this single, moral code.[4] In contrast, the *ApocJn*, through its salvation history narrative, outlines two avenues towards salvation and two *repentances* – one for its own putative community and one for those who live and die outside of it.[5] Nonetheless, both texts employ the soteriological technology of higher and lower levels of salvation to articulate ethical ideals and to address the social and theoretical difficulty of ethical variance (i.e., saints along with sinners) in their midst.

## *The Shepherd of Hermas*: Making a Place for Both Sinners and Saints in the Church Community

The *Shepherd of Hermas* is a lengthy early Christian apocalypse from late first to mid-second-century Rome,[6] which contains a series of five visions, twelve mandates, and ten similitudes or parables.[7] *Hermas* was an extremely popular text that circulated widely among early Christians. From the Egyptian town of Oxyrhynchus alone, we have at least ten Greek and one Coptic Late Antique fragments of *Hermas* – significantly more than from *any* book from the New Testament with the exceptions of the Gospels of John and Matthew[8] from the same period

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[4] *Metanoia* is a difficult term to properly render; some scholars prefer *conversion* over *repentance*. *Repentance*, however, captures both the change in social and mental disposition as well the recurrent idea of returning *back* to the proper moral code that will be a focus of mine here (*Man*. 4.3); though recurrent, this motif of turning back is not always present or emphasized (cf. *Vis.* 2.2.4). For a discussion of difficulties in translating *metanoia*, see further Carolyn Osiek, *The Shepherd of Hermas: A Commentary* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999), 28 – 30; B. Diane Lipsett, *Desiring Conversion: Hermas, Thecla, Aseneth* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 19 – 20.

[5] *Metanoia* may, therefore, retain its two different meanings here: repentance *and* conversion.

[6] Both the date and the identification of the *Shepherd of Hermas* as an apocalypse are controversial; see below for my discussion of these issues.

[7] The textual coherence of the *Shepherd of Hermas* is disputed. Although *Hermas* contains three smaller collections (5 *Visions*, 12 *Mandates*, and 10 *Similitudes*), I am persuaded that (with the possible exception of *Similitude* 10; see below for my analysis) the Shepherd was composed over time but still as a unity before it was divided into the smaller sub-collections that characterize its later circulation. For surviving instances and discussions of these sub-collections, see further Carolyn Osiek, *Shepherd of Hermas*, 1 – 10.

[8] As of the 2007 date of its publication, Eldon Jay Epp counted ten papyri and one parchment copy of the Gospel of John and thirteen papyri and two parchment copies of the Gospel of Matthew. Epp, "New Testament Papyri and the Transmission of the New Testament," *Oxyrhynchus: A City and its Texts* (ed. A.K. Bowman, et al; London: The Egypt Exploration Society's Arts and Humanities Research Council (Graeco-Roman Memoirs, 93), 2007), 319 n.1.

at Oxyrhynchus.[9] Although not included among some of the best-known early Christian canon lists, *Hermas was* included in some of the earliest Bibles, such as the fourth-century *Sinaiticus*.[10] *Hermas*, thereby, embodies the contested and overlapping categories that complicate straightforward accounts of the New Testament canonization process.[11] That is, even if *Hermas* was relegated to the secondary position of educationally useful in some canon lists (Athanasius; Muratorian Canon), it was still part of the *practical* canon for many early Christians, i.e., it was among the works these ancient Christians most often read and used for theological reflection.[12] As a result, *Hermas* was one of the most influential and oft-cited early Christian texts, surpassing many texts that were later included in the New Testament.[13]

Despite its ancient popularity, *Hermas* is notoriously difficult for scholars to categorize and date. It is not a straightforward tractate, epistle, or homily,[14] but is rather an eclectic collection of ethically minded dialogues concerned with reunifying rivalrous factions.[15]

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[9] The ten previously known Greek fragments of the *Shepherd of Hermas* from Oxyrhynchus are *P.Oxy.* 404, 1172+3526, 1599, 1783, 1828, 3527, 3528, 4705, 4706, and 4707. A fourth or fifth century Coptic fragment has recently been edited by Geoffrey S. Smith; see Smith, "The Shepherd of Hermas, Mandates V.2 – VI.1," in *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri* (forthcoming).

[10] It is also included in the list attached to Codex Claromontanus (Carolyn Osiek, *Shepherd*, 6).

[11] For a deft and thorough overview of some of the major scholarly debates, see Harry Y. Gamble, "The New Testament Canon: Recent Research and the *Status Quaestionis*," in *The Canon Debate* (eds. Lee Martin McDonald and James A. Sanders; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2002), 267 – 94.

[12] See David Brakke who considers the creation and diverse use of sub-collections in order to shift the scholarly debate away from exclusive preoccupation over the teleological questions of when and in what context was the canon "closed." Brakke, "Scriptural Practices in Early Christianity: Towards a New History of the New Testament Canon," in *Invention, Writing, and Usurpation*: *Discursive Fights over Religious Traditions in Antiquity* (ed. Jörg Ulrich et al.; Frankfurt, et al.: Peter Lang, 2012), 263 – 80.

[13] See further Carolyn Osiek (*Shepherd,* 4 – 7) who discusses, for example, how both Clement and Irenaeus refer to *Hermas* as scripture.

[14] See B. Diane Lipsett (*Desiring Conversion*, 27): "Hermas is neither epistle, nor tractate, nor manual, nor homily, but story…with minimal plot – little action, but much talk. Long passages are given to description as Hermas relates the visions he is given."

[15] The problem is not – despite how *Hermas* describes it – that the church has *become* schismatic and rivalrous; rather *Hermas* is attempting to unify and reform the church by rhetorically retrojecting his utopian ideals into the past. Thus, *Hermas*' appeal to church unity was not a *reflection* of an attenuated past reality, but rather he is a pioneering voice attempting to address the theological and social difficulties faced by fourth or fifth generation followers of Jesus. A central concern for *Hermas* was the proper use of wealth and the disastrous consequences if it was ill-used: *Vis.* 1:1.8 – 9; 3:3.5 – 6; 3:9.2 – 10; *Man*. 6.2.5; 8:3,10; 10.1.4; 10:4.2 – 3; 12:2.1 – 2; *Sim.* 1:1 – 11; 2:1 – 10; 5:2.9 – 11; 5:3.7 – 8; 9:19:3; 9:30.4 – 5; 9:31.2; 10:4.2

Compounding the enigma surrounding *Hermas* are questions related to its author: who was this eponymous Hermas and when and where did he compose his lengthy work? Most scholars agree that the references to Rome (e.g., the Tiber in *Vis.* 1.1 and *Via Campania* in *Vis.* 4.1) provide plausible enough reason to place its author there.[16] Dating *Hermas*, however, is far more contentious. As Carolyn Osiek notes, there are three "pegs" upon which all theories for dating *Hermas* hang: the reference to Hermas in Romans 16:14,[17] the mention of *a* Clement – who some scholars claim is *the* Clement of Rome[18] – in *Vis*. 2.4.3, and the Muratorian Canon's claim that Hermas composed *Hermas* during the reign of his brother Pius, who was, according to Eusebius (*HE* 4.11), bishop of Rome in 140 – 154 CE.[19] On the basis of these, we are left with a possible time period stretching from the middle of the first century to the second third of the second-century.[20]

Yet, even this cautious and broad range is not without controversy. Implicit in all three pegs is the belief that "Hermas" was not a literary fiction but a flesh and blood person. The opening scene of *Hermas*, however, where Hermas introduces himself – and is thus often interpreted as *the* most autobiographical section[21] – is largely a reworking of Greco-Roman

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For the social context of the Shepherd of Hermas, see Carolyn Osiek, *Rich and Poor in the Shepherd of Hermas: an Exegetical – Social Investigation* (Washington, DC: Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1983); eadem, *The Shepherd of Hermas*: *A Commentary* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999); Peter Lampe, *From Paul to Valentinus: Christians at Rome in the First Two Centuries* (English translation; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003); Harry Maier, *The Social Setting of the Ministry as Reflected in the Writings of Hermas, Clement, and Ignatius* (Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1991).

[16] Carolyn Osiek (*Shepherd*, 18) adds also that the "description of vines grown on elm trees is *Similitude* 2 is characteristics of central Italy."

[17] See J. Christian Wilson (*Toward a Reassessment of the Shepherd of Hermas: Its Date and Pneumatology* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellon Press, 1993), 60 – 61) who, in part, due to this link with Romans dates *Hermas* to approximately 80 – 100 CE.

[18] The author of 1 Clement, who is conventionally dated to the last two decades of the first century; see Peter Lampe, *Paul to Valentinus,* 206 – 17.

[19] Carolyn Osiek, *Shepherd,* 18 – 19.

[20] Irenaeus' reference (*AH* 4.20.2) to *Man*. 1, where he cites it as "Scripture," provides an *ante quem* of approximately 180.

[21] Robin Lane Fox, *Pagans and Christians* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1987), 381*:* "Yet [*Hermas*'] author is the early Christian whom we know best after St. Paul."

literary motifs.[22] Adding further difficulty to our task: none of our three pegs is without serious methodological questions and concerns. Origen is the first author to connect *Hermas* with the Hermas mentioned in Romans 16:14 (*Comm. in Rom*. 10:31), and he does so for the purpose of securing apostolic authority for the text.[23] The reference to a Clement in *Vis.* 2.4.3 is tantalizingly sparse and does not provide enough information to securely identity this Clement with the author of 1 Clement.[24] And finally, the Muratorian Canon is an object of much debate, importantly with regards to both its date and the degree to which it reflects the realities of second-century Christianity;[25] but even if we put aside those serious caveats, the Muratorian Canon is still rather vague in its reference to Hermas, stating only that " Hermas wrote the Shepherd recently in our times (*nuperrime temporibus nostris*) while his brother Pius was sitting as bishop in the chair of the church of the city of Rome."[26]

Can we recover the historical Hermas (if there even was one!) and more precisely delimit his time-period?[27] The best way forward, I contend, is to accept Osiek's sober-minded approach of rejecting the extremes on either end of the possible time range and recognizing that *Hermas* is *neither* exclusively autobiographical n*or* solely literary fiction but contains elements of both.[28] Therefore, I conclude that *Hermas* is a complex narrative containing both semi-autobiographical

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[22] Peter Lampe, *Paul to Valentinus*, 218 – 20; cf. Carolyn Osiek, *Shepherd,* 23 – 28.
[23] Carolyn Osiek, *Shepherd*, 18 – 19.
[24] *Vis.* 2.4.3: "And so, you will write two little books, sending one to Clement and the other to Grapte. Clement will send his to the foreign cities, for that is his commission." I have consulted the Greek and the English found in *The Apostolic Fathers, vol.2* (translated Bart Ehrman; LCL; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003); my translations, however, will often differ in order to call attention to and clarify certain terms and for stylistic reasons.
[25] See Helmut Koester's brief remarks in his *Introduction to the New Testament Volume 2: History and Literature of Early Christianity, 2nd Edition* (New York: Walter De Gruyter, 2000), 12. On the anachronisms apparent in the Muratorian Canon, especially of a monarchial episcopacy, see now Allen Brent, *Hippolytus and the Roman Church in the Third Century: Communities in Tension Before the Emergence of a Monarch-Bishop* (Leiden: Brill, 1995), chapter 7.
[26] Translated by Carolyn Osiek, *Shepherd*, 18 – 19 n. 141.
[27] Some scholars have appealed to additional factors in addition to the three pegs; for example, Hermas' *lack* of monarchial episcopacy (*Vis.* 2.4.3; 3.1.8; see Harry Maier, *Social Setting*, 55ff.); this, however, does not provide a secure date. See Allen Brent's *Hippolytus* cited above in footnote **25**.
[28] Carolyn Osiek, *Shepherd*, 23 – 4: "Hermas was a real person but also a composite literary figure…thus the text contains a mixture of biography and literary reworking."

and stylized elements that was composed sometime between the very end of the first-century and halfway through the second-century in Rome. Thus, even if we cannot recover *the* historical Hermas, we can, nonetheless, examine *Hermas* as an artifact that can provide us with insight into a specific time and place.

The loose, often redundant, and seemingly disorganized style of the *Shepherd of Hermas* is off-putting to many modern readers. On account of *Hermas'* disjointed style, scholars have maligned the intelligence of its author[29] and speculated that it may, in fact, be a piecemeal collection of various works by as many as six different authors and/or comprised of sub-collections that circulated independently before being hastily patched together.[30] These arguments are bolstered by the literary seams that appear throughout *Hermas* (e.g., *Vision* 5 is distinct from *Visions* 1 - 4 and introduces the *Mandates*; similarly *Similitude* 9.1 transitions to a different literary unit as does *Similitude* 10.1).[31]

Carolyn Osiek, however, has persuasively argued that *Hermas*' style is emblematic of oral conventions and that the gradual accretion of literary units is not incompatible with a single author.[32] Osiek's interpretation both accounts for *Hermas*' loose, repetitive, and "conversational" style and makes sense of the elastic nature of the work by means of which additional materials or ideas could be added (e.g., *Sim*. 9).[33] Further strengthening the argument for a single author and weakening the hypothesis that sub-collections of *Hermas first* circulated

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[29] Emblematic is B. H. Streeter's characterization of Hermas as the "White Rabbit" from among the Apostolic Fathers: "He was timid and fussy, a 'kindly, incompetent middle-aged freedman, delightfully naïve,' whose writing, said Streeter, showed his 'pottering mediocrity." Christine Trevett, "I have Heard," 9, citing B.H. Streeter, *The Primitive Church* (London, 1929), 203.
[30] See Carolyn Osiek's useful summary (*Shepherd,* 8 – 10) of past scholarship.
[31] Carolyn Osiek, *Shepherd*, 8.
[32] Carolyn Osiek, *Shepherd*, 12 – 16; eadem, "The Oral World of Early Christianity in Rome: The Case of Hermas," in *Judaism and Christianity in First-Century Rome* (eds. K. Donfried and P. Richardson; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 151 – 72.
[33] Carolyn Osiek, *Shepherd,* 15 – 16.

independently[34] is the fact that early Christians, such as Clement of Alexandria and Origen, treat *Hermas* as a unity and already quote from all three parts (*Visions, Mandates,* and *Similitudes*).[35] Citing *Hermas*' overall linguistic, theological, and conceptual consistency, J. Christian Wilson affirms the hypothesis of a single author and suggests the useful parallel of Luke-Acts for understanding *Hermas* insofar as both are the works of a single-author over an extended period.[36] It appears most likely, then, that *Hermas* was composed by a single author in the following four stages: *Visions* 1- 4; *Vision* 5 – *Similitude* 8; *Similitude* 9, and *Similitude* 10.[37]

In addition to its style and authorship, the genre of *Hermas* has also been the source of some debate. This disagreement can be summarized with the following question: is the *Shepherd of Hermas* an apocalypse?[38] For some, although *Hermas* contains a number of apocalyptic conventions, it is not apocalyptic *enough* in content to truly warrant the label of an apocalypse.[39] According to this view, *Hermas* insufficiently employs typically apocalyptic features such as "detailed revelations about the world beyond and end-time catastrophes; historical speculations; pessimism about the outcome of this world; and pseudepigraphical

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[34] There is evidence from the manuscript tradition that these sub-collections *did* start circulating independently and these small sub-collections *became* the convention by the 4th – 5th centuries; see Geoffrey Smith, "Shepherd of Hermas."

[35] Tertullian also quotes from both the *Visions* and the *Mandates*; see further Carolyn Osiek, *Shepherd*, 4.

[36] J. Christian Wilson, *Reassessment*, 22 – 23; cf. Carolyn Osiek, *Shepherd*, 10: "the thematic unity of the book in spite of some divergences indicates a guiding hand throughout. The loose and fluid structure of the whole is best explained by the close relationship of the written text to the medium of oral performance."

[37] I have some reservations that *Similitude* 10, due to its uneven manuscript transmission – surviving almost exclusively in Latin (for the exception see P.Oxy. 404, which preserves Greek fragments of *Sim.* 10.3 and 10.4) – and clearly appended nature, comes from the same author of the rest of *Hermas*. My approach throughout this dissertation is to treat texts as unities unless it is absolutely necessary to engage in source criticism; nonetheless, I will exercise some caution with respect to *Similitude* 10. For a helpful, general summary of the manuscripts, see Carolyn Osiek, *Shepherd*, 1 – 4; see also Bart Ehrman's list of the contents of the various surviving manuscripts, *The Apostolic Fathers II,* 170 – 71.

[38] See the survey of scholarship in Carolyn Osiek, "The Genre and Function of the Shepherd of Hermas," in *Early Christian Apocalypticism: Genre and Social Setting* (ed. Adela Yarbo Collins; Decatur, GA: Scholars Press, 1986): 113 – 21; eadem, *Shepherd*, 10 – 11.

[39] In fact, *Hermas* contains *more* of such elements than the average "Christian apocalypse"; see Carolyn Osiek ("Genre and Function," 115): "For those impressed by statistics, of the 28 elements suggested as constitutive of apocalyptic form, *Hermas* possesses 16 of them, in a list of Christian apocalypses whose average number is 13.3."

nature."[40] As a result, these scholars characterize *Hermas* as an apocalypse in "form only" or as a "pseudo-apocalypse."[41] Other scholars have concluded that *Hermas* may be an apocalypse but of a *special sort*, adding clarifying modifiers such as "moral," "cooled-down," or "practical."[42] Yet, whatever modern modifier is affixed,[43] *Hermas* is a revelatory text, and ancient readers recognized it as such.[44] The issue for these ancients was not just the degree to which *Hermas* corresponded to a series of genre traits but also the nature of the authority behind the text. Thus, *Hermas* and, as we shall see, the *ApocJn* are both revelatory dialogues that mediate and convey divine knowledge to humanity, thereby imbuing their literary content with heavenly authority.[45] In short, I agree with Adela Yarbo Collins' pithy conclusion that "there is no good reason to exclude [*Hermas*] from the genre of apocalypse."[46]

What is the content of the knowledge revealed in *Hermas*? Belying its "folksy" style that is long on talk and short on action,[47] *Hermas* is a subtly complex text that employs an array of sophisticated layering techniques (e.g., dreams within dreams; the author's self-effacing, self-reflexive, and moralizing construction of "himself" as a hapless narrator)[48] to convey its

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[40] See Carolyn Osiek (*Shepherd*, 11) for a list of scholars who advocate that *Hermas* should *not* be classified as an apocalypse.
[41] Philipp Vielhauer and Georg Strecker, "Apocalyptic in Early Christianity," *NTA* II, 592 – 602, see for example 599: "We should reckon the Pastor Hermae as falling in the genre of Apocalypse only in a non-literal sense, and must therefore designate it as a pseudo-apocalypse."
[42] Carolyn Osiek, *Shepherd*, 11.
[43] See David Aune (*Prophecy in Early Christianity and the Ancient Mediterranean World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1983), 299 – 310), who characterizes different *segments* of *Hermas* as "Salvation-Judgment Oracles" (*Visions* 1 – 4); "Oracles of Assurance," (*Mandates*); and "Parenetic Salvation- Judgment Oracles" (*Similitudes*).
[44] Clement, *Strom.* 1.29.181.1; cf. *Strom*. 2.1.3.5.
[45] As Carolyn Osiek observed ("Genre and Function" *passim*), this *function* (e.g., providing divine sanction and authority for its ethical paraenesis) is unfortunately overlooked when scholars are concerned only over specific, genre traits such as historical speculation or concrete crises.
[46] Adela Yarbo Collins, "The Early Christian Apocalypses," *Semeia 14*: *Apocalypse: A Morphology of a Genre* (ed. John J. Collins; Atlanta: SBL, 1979), 74 – 75.
[47] For the apt description of Hermas' language as "folksy," see Peter Lampe *Paul to Valentinus*, 233; B. Diane Lipseet (*Desiring Conversion*, 39) dryly refers to Hermas' repetitive style as its "principle of copiousness."
[48] Patricia Cox Miller, *Dreams in Late Antiquity: Studies in the Imagination of a Culture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 138: "In Hermas' text, there is a metonymous movement from the literary consciousness of Hermas as author to the oneiric consciousness of Hermas as dreamer and on to the interpretative consciousness of the individual reader and the communal assembly of readers for whom the text operates as a mirror."

overarching concerns and themes; central among these is the issue of repentance or conversion (*metanoia*).[49] Throughout the whole of the work, *Hermas* encourages repentance, at times even through the mouthpiece of the *angel of repentance* (*Vis.* 5.7; *Man*. 12.6.1). In so doing, *Hermas* describes the nature of sin and repentance (e.g., *Man*. 4) and also details how repentance affects one's salvific end (*Vis*. 8). Furthermore, often disappointing intellectual historians,[50] *Hermas* is uninterested in theoretical or doctrinal theologizing about the nature of God, Christ, or creation; instead, *Hermas* is concerned with seemingly mundane sins (e.g., unruly children, gossiping wives, sexual misconduct, and the improper use of wealth) and the social disharmony they cause.[51]

*Hermas*' interest in these everyday banalities has perplexed scholars and likely has contributed to the characterization of the text by some as intellectually inferior.[52] In contrast, Wayne Meeks has suggested that, although *Hermas appears* preoccupied with these everyday types of sin, "sexual sins are thus not the issue for Hermas, but sex serves by synecdoche to represent the disturbances of household management and church unity."[53] Patricia Cox Miller, on the other hand, argues that *Hermas* concentrates on these seemingly mundane sins because they are precisely the sorts of problems faced by its readership. Thus, according to Miller, *Hermas* employs a mimetic strategy whereby its readers identify with the troubles Hermas faces

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[49] See **note 4** above for a discussion of translating this term.
[50] See the list of scholars ridiculing *Hermas* and the acumen of its author in J. Christian Wilson, *Reassessment*, 2.
[51] In addition to these, see the vices listed in *Mandate* 8.
[52] William Jerome Wilson, "The Career of the Prophet Hermas," *HTR* 20 (1927), 35 (apud Christine Trevett, "I Have Heard," 10 – 11 n. 27): "If men such as Hermas had become the real leaders of Christianity, if such books as his had made up the New Testament, the church could hardly have survived. For the intellectual quality of its leadership has been on large secret of Christianity's success."
[53] Wayne Meeks, *The Origins of Christian Morality: The First Two Centuries* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 126.

and thereby enter more fully into the narrative setting by adopting both his struggles and solutions as their own.[54]

Miller and Meeks are both right. *Hermas* is interested in these everyday concerns, including sexual sins, for their own sake but also for what they can represent. Consequently, *Hermas*' account of the fractionalization of his own household resembles the everyday difficulties of other Christians but is also a microcosm for the perils and rivalries threatening the unity of the "Church" throughout the world.

As the text opens, *Hermas* introduces the reader to its complex and often conflicted, eponymous protagonist. While traveling, Hermas comes across his former mistress, Rhoda, bathing in the Tiber; after helping her out from the river, he protests to no one and a bit too strongly that he did not have any untoward desires upon seeing her beauty (*Vis*.1.1.2). The reader's suspicions are confirmed when later Rhoda appears in a dream and confronts Hermas for the "evil desire" that arose in his heart (*Vis*. 1.1.8).[55] In response to Rhoda's accusation, Hermas laments "if this sin is counted against me, how can I be saved?" (*Vis.* 1.2.1) Comforting Hermas and referring to him as the "self-restrained," the revelatory figure who appears, Lady Church, offers the following programmatic claim: even upright persons can sin (*Vis.* 1.2.4). Thus, whether they be his sins of desire or even his failures as a *paterfamilias* (*Vis.* 1.3), there is still hope that Hermas' sins – and by extension the cognate sins of the reader – can be expiated through repentance (*Vis.* 2.2.4). To borrow an excellent epitomization by B. Diane Lipsett, "Hermas is not merely the messenger of *metanoia*, but the *exemplum*."[56]

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[54] Patricia Cox Miller, *Dreams*, 138 – 42, quote from 142: "As I have tried to suggest, there is a mimetic appeal operative in the text, whereby the reader is asked to see his or her own condition mirrored in the plight of the main character, Hermas."

[55] For additional discussion on the eroticized scenes of *Hermas*, see the excellent chapter by B. Diane Lipsett, *Desiring Conversion*, 19 – 53.

[56] B. Diane Lipsett, *Desiring Conversion*, 20.

*Hermas*, therefore, describes the activity and impact that repentance has upon a sinner. Over the course of three *Visions*, the revelatory figure, Lady Church, alters her appearances, and these changes track Hermas' moral advancement.[57] As Hermas "rejuvenates his spirit," Lady Church becomes increasingly younger and more beautiful in appearance (*Vis*. 3. 11 – 13).[58] Hermas progresses from being unable to translate even the *syllables* of Lady Church's book (*Vis.* 2.1.4) to being so full of faith that he courageously steps over a Leviathan he happens upon while traversing the *Via Campania* (*Vis.* 4.1). Fortified by the proper knowledge of repentance, Hermas provides guidance and encouragement for those seeking repentance.

> Hermas has undergone a change of consciousness…no longer a passive confessor of sin, he is an active interpreter of his world … [and] through the lens of his personal struggle with dreams, Hermas the shepherd offered his community a hermeneutic for addressing practical problems in a therapeutic way.[59]

Thus, *Hermas* constructs a character, Hermas, whose internal conflict and moral amelioration, provide the blueprint for its practical advice for repentant sinners.[60]

In addition to its well-crafted and relatable protagonist,[61] *Hermas*' compelling and evocative imagery may help explain its widespread popularity.[62] *Hermas* confronts and challenges the reader with a series of visually rich dreams and parables whose language is "mobile, many-faceted, [and] metaphoric."[63] Through this visual storytelling, *Hermas* not only

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[57] *Hermas* makes these claims in *Vis.* 3.10 (and more elaborately in *Vis.* 3.11 – 13); yet, as Carolyn Osiek (*Shepherd*, 84 – 85) observes, the "rejuvenation" of both Hermas and Lady Church is introduced for the first time here and not in prior appearances of Lady Church.
[58] Patricia Cox Miller, *Dreams,* 145.
[59] Patricia Cox Miller, *Dreams*, 147.
[60] We will return to this theme in **chapter 6**.
[61] Peter Brown attributes much of *Hermas*' literary success to his realistic and relatable portrait of Hermas' internal conflict. "[Hermas] carried conviction because he so transparently described the tensions of his own heart." Peter Brown, *Body and Society: Men, Women, and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity* (Columbia University Press: New York, 1988), 69.
[62] Already by the Third Century images from *Hermas* had been translated into art; for example, the Catacomb of San Gennaro at Naples preserves an image that resembles the idealized tower from *Similitude* 9. See further the bibliography provided by Carolyn Osiek, *Shepherd,* 7.
[63] Patricia Cox Miller, "'All the Words Were Frightful': Salvation by Dreams in the Shepherd of Hermas," *Vigiliae Christianae* 44.4 (1988): 332.

externalizes and translates into commonplace but still vibrant images Hermas' emotional and moral struggles[64] but also employs these images and imagined spaces to illuminate the social situations and ethical dilemmas faced by the Christian "Church" all over the world.[65] In so doing, *Hermas* encourages idealized social relationships and ethical conduct through the creation of these imagined objects and spaces. In *Similitude* 2, for example, *Hermas* articulates the symbiotic (and idealized) relationship of the poor and the wealthy by analogy to the biological metaphor of the interdependent growth of the Elm tree and its vines.[66] Similarly, *Similitude* 8 represents the relative moral quality of all Christians by analogy to different sorts of willow branches.[67] Importantly for this dissertation, *Hermas* routinely makes use of stylized visuals to describe and synthesize moral hierarchy (e.g., among saints, sinners, and the damned) with appropriate salvific statuses.

In the elaborate vision and lengthy clarifying dialogue of *Vision* 3, *Hermas* analogizes the moral and salvific hierarchy of humanity to a massive tower. During this exchange with Lady Church, Hermas is rebuked for his constant concern over sin and repentance. Lady Church interrupts Hermas as he confesses his sins and commands him to "ask also about righteousness" (*Vis*.3.1.6). To illustrate what righteousness entails, *Hermas* describes a great tower made of

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[64] As we will see when I return to this issue in **Chapter 6**, the goal of this externalizing process is ethical self-reflection; see further Patricia Cox Miller, *Dreams*, 145.

[65] See the recent article by Harry O. Maier, "From Material Place to Imagined Space: Emergent Christian Community as Thirdspace in the *Shepherd of Hermas*," in *Early Christian Communities Between Ideal and Reality* (eds. Mark Grundeken and Joseph Verheyden; Tübingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 2015), 144 – 45: "The notion of spatiality this essay explores considers space and ideals not as separate but as intimately bound to each other. It assumes that the formulation of ideals take place in space and time even as the places and times where they are conceived help to shape them. Such an interactionist account sees space not as a passive container for ideas, but a critical factor in the formulation of ideas. Further, space itself takes place – that is ideas shape space so that they become imagined places that are more than the physical dimensions of a given location."

[66] *Sim.* 2.3 – 6: "'This vine," [the Shepherd] said, 'bears fruit; but the elm is a tree that does not. Yet if this vine did not grow up onto the elm, it could not bear much fruit, since it would be lying on the ground, and fruit it bore would be rotten since it would not be clinging to the elm. And so, when the vine attaches to the elm, it bears fruit both of itself and because of the elm…and this parable applies to the slaves of God, the poor and the rich…and so the rich person unhesitatingly supplies everything to the one who is poor. And the poor person, having his needs met by the rich, prays to God…for the petition of the poor person is acceptable and rich before the Lord."

[67] See further below for my discussion of *Similitude* 8.

different types of stone (*Vis.* 3.2.4 – 9). During the vision, Hermas sees thousands of men bringing stones from all over the world. Some stones are accepted and seamlessly become part of the tower; others are rejected, broken, and tossed aside. As is clarified sometime later, this vision is the ideal church insofar as it is a composite structure comprised of different sorts of persons. Through this metaphor, *Hermas* characterizes different types of humanity by spatial analogy to how different types of stone relate to construction of the imagined space of the ideal church.

The engaging vision of the composite tower has a number of ethical functions. It underscores *Hermas*' concern for social harmony among the different factions comprising the "church." By evoking the unity of the whole, *Hermas* reminds its readers that self-centered divisiveness damages everyone by weakening the corporate body of the church.[68] This imagery also prioritizes certain members over and above others on the basis of their apparent moral (i.e., spatial) utility for the building.

> 'Hear now about the stones that go into the building. On the one hand, the squared and white stones that fit together at the joints are the apostles, bishops, teachers, and deacons who live reverently towards God and perform their duties as bishops, teachers, and deacons for the chosen ones of God in a holy and respectful way…' 'But who are the ones drawn from the depths of the sea…''these are those who have suffered on account of the name of the Lord.' '…but who are those who were tossed aside and cast out?' 'These are those who have sinned, but wish to repent…they will be useful for the building if they repent…if they repent while the tower is still under construction.' (*Vis.*3.5.1 – 5)

For *Hermas,* there are certain moral *exempla* whose place in the tower is more secure and useful than others; these *exempla*, moreover, and their distinctive tasks form the content of *Hermas*' highest ethical standard.

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[68] Cf. Paul's similar use of the body of Christ; see further Margaret Mitchell's *Paul and the Rhetoric of Reconciliation: An Exegetical Investigation into the Language and Composition of 1 Corinthians* (Mohr Siebeck: Tübingen, 1991) and Dale Martin's *The Corinthian Body* (Yale University Press: New Haven, 1995).

Yet, this spatial metaphor does more than just valorize apostles, bishops, teachers, deacons, and martyrs; to highlight their exemplary nature, *Hermas* also delineates an inferior sub-section of the "church." In contrast, then, to the extraordinary are the ordinary, i.e., repentant sinners, who fall short of the highest moral standard. Their secondary status is introduced by emphasizing the uncertain and diminishing time available for them to repent (*Vis.* 2:2.5; 3:5.5). Furthermore, *Hermas* spatially subordinates these repentant sinners by noting that although they can be saved, they will be fit into a "greatly inferior place," which they will enter only after suffering expiating torments (*Vis.* 3.7.5 – 6).

At the start of *Similitude* 8, *Hermas* again describes the unequal moral standing of different types of Christians and their different salvific rankings. Recalling the totalizing dichotomies of the *Mandates*,[69] *Similitude* 8 divides all of humanity into either the virtuous or the vicious. As we will see below, the vicious are further subdivided on the basis of both their sins and the likelihood and speed at which they will repent. Similarly, the virtuous, although they all will "enter into the tower" and thus be saved (*Sim.* 8.2), are also subdivided, with some enjoying even greater honors. The virtuous are all saved due to their steadfast obedience to the "Laws of God" (*Sim.* 8.3); some, however, go further and uphold the divine law even in the face of persecution. These martyrs, according to the Shepherd, receive crowns that set them apart and above others (*Sim.* 8.3.6 – 7).

Other early Christians also attributed higher salvific rewards to those who endured suffering on account of their faith. In both *On the Soul* (55) and *Scorpiace* (12), Tertullian ascribes greater salvific rewards to those who have suffered and died for the sake of their faith.[70]

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[69] B. Diane Lipsett, *Desiring Conversion*, 37.

[70] See further Candida Moss, who explores the various, higher salvific honors martyrs were said to enjoy by early Christians (e.g., immediate entry into heaven bypassing the general resurrection, priority seating, as well as thrones and crowns), in her monograph *The Other Christs: Imitating Jesus in Ancient Christian Ideologies of Martyrdom*

Like Tertullian,[71] *Hermas* deploys these saintly characters in the service of his ideological agenda.[72] *Hermas,* therefore, is an important and early instance of a Christian text domesticating the authority of the martyrs.[73] In this way, *Hermas* exploits the social capital of martyrs to authenticate his ethical ideals and social injunctions, e.g., *Mandate* 8.

In addition to extolling and authorizing specific ethical ideals by appealing to higher and lower levels of salvation, *Hermas* employs a different salvific hierarchy – one of only sinners – in order to console those who may have sinned and to distinguish between those who might still return to the fold (both eagerly repentant and recalcitrant sinners) and those who never will (apostates). As Hermas himself illustrates (*Vis*. 3.4.3; cf. *Sim.* 7.1), not everyone is a saint, and many have fallen short of the highest of ethical ideals. It is to this group that *Hermas* addresses the bulk of its paranetic material, and in so doing provides a nuanced and layered account of those who sinners who *may yet* repent.

In the second half of *Similitude* 8, *Hermas* deploys a spatial metaphor similar to *Vision* 3 to differentiate amongst different types of persons; in this case, however, *Hermas* is distinguishing among types of sinners and allocating higher and lower levels of salvation based on the swiftness of one's repentance:

> All those who have repented have a dwelling place in the tower. All those who repent more slowly will still dwell within the walls. But those who do not repent but remain in their deeds will surely die. (*Sim*. 8.7.3)[74]

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(Oxford University Press: Oxford, 2010); cf. Karen King, *S*ecret *Revelation of John* (Harvard University Press: Cambridge, 2006), 143

[71] This hierarchy between saints (specifically martyrs) and *normal* or the majority of Christians is another instance of higher and lower levels of salvation. It is important to note, however, that unlike *Hermas* or the *ApocJn* Tertullian is not deploying salvific difference to address the problem of *sin* or to advocate *repentance*.

[72] See Einar Thomassen, "Orthodoxy and Heresy in Second-Century Rome," *HTR* 97.3 (2004): 241 – 56.

[73] In this characterization, I am influenced by Michael Williams' work on the domestication of charismatic authority, see Michael Williams, "*The Life of Antony* and the Domestication of Charismatic Wisdom," in *Charisma and Sacred Biography* (ed. Michael Williams; Chambersburg, PA: American Academy of Religion, 1982): 23 – 45.

[74] For the full context, see further *Sim*. 8.7.3 – 8.3: "All those who have repented have a dwelling place in the tower. All those who repent more slowly will dwell within the walls. But those who do not repent but remain in their deeds will certainly die…and so many who have heard my commandments have repented. Whoever has repented will dwell in the tower. But some of them have fallen away once and for all. These, therefore, do

In this passage, relative proximity to or distance from the center of the structure conveys the salvific status of the class of person. This spatial hierarchy, unlike in *Vision* 3, is not about representing the ethical hierarchy of the whole church, comprised of sinners and saints alike. Instead, *Hermas* assigns different salvific rewards on the basis of how quickly or easily the sinner repents. In so doing, *Hermas* devises a corresponding hierarchy of *three* types of sinners that plays upon its earlier hierarchy of saints, sinners, and the damned; those sinners who excel at repentance are structurally analogous to saintly figures such as apostles or martyrs. Repentance itself, in contrast to what we will see in the *ApocJn*, remains constant (i.e., it is a return to obeying the laws of God), and is thus the same for both the eagerly repentant and the recalcitrant sinner.

Furthermore, *Hermas'* three types of sinners in *Similitude* 8 appear to be all post-baptismal sinners, i.e., those who have "received the seal (of baptism) but have broken it":

> "Lord, now explain to me what kind of person each one is…so that those who have believed and received the seal, but broken it and not kept it intact, may hear and recognize their own deeds, and so repent, receive a seal from you, and glorify the Lord, because he showed them mercy and sent you [the angel of repentance] to renew their spirits." (*Sim* 8.6.3)

This is one of the earliest references to the "seal" of baptism.[75] Baptism, according to *Hermas*, is the only means of salvation (*Vis.* 3.3.3, 5; cf. *Sim.* 9.16). Moreover, *Hermas* warns those who undergo baptism about both the rigorous standards for purity of post-baptismal life (*Vis.* 3.7.3) and the potentially dire consequences awaiting those who violate this seal with post-baptismal sins (*Man* 4.3).

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not have repentance…but many of them were double-minded. These still have a chance to repent, if they do so quickly; and they will dwell in the tower. But if they repent more slowly, they will dwell only within the walls. And if they do not repent, they too have destroyed their lives."

[75] Carolyn Osiek, *Shepherd*, 206; cf. *2 Clement* 7.6; 8.6.

*Hermas*, therefore, must explain not only why someone might sin after baptism but also why would someone *delay* before repenting from these post-baptismal sins. To account for the possibility of post-baptismal sins, *Hermas* draws upon the demonological discourse of rival angels, one good and one evil (*Man* 6).[76] Furthermore, *Hermas* constructs an innovative category of post-baptismal sinners, those who are "double-minded," in order to account for prolonged sinfulness. Importantly, however, these sinners are still distinct from apostates because although they delay they will eventually repent.

> Many of them were double-minded (ἐδιψύχησαν). These still have a chance to repent, if they do so quickly; and they dwell in the tower. But if they repent more slowly, they will dwell only within the walls. And if they do not repent, they too have destroyed their lives. (*Sim* 8.8.3)

In this way, *Hermas* uses spatial metaphors to differentiate and subdivide post-baptismal sinners into distinct and usable categories of persons, e.g., recalcitrant sinners who are not apostates. In so doing, Hermas is crafting a hierarchy of human behavior and dispositions that is suited for his own pastoral concerns: he can reintegrate different types of sinful community members – even those who may have strayed more seriously and for longer periods of time – but still, ultimately, insulate his community from (the idea of?) dangerous apostates. By means of this new category of post-baptismal sinners, Hermas can encourage these post-baptismal sinners to return and participate in the shared salvation of the unified church, even if, due to their double-mindedness, these sinners are ultimately sequestered in a lower level of salvation.

Before turning to the *ApocJn*, I wish to reiterate a few key points. First, *Hermas* deploys a salvific hierarchy that tailors salvific rewards according to the degree persons satisfy an ethical ideal epitomized by saintly figures. In addition to a highest level of salvation for saintly figures, there is also a middle class of salvation for those who fall short of this ideal. Secondly, *Hermas*

[76] See further **chapter 6**.

devises a second hierarchy structurally similar to his first (i.e., of saints, repentant sinners, and damned sinners) that consists only of sinners. In so doing, the position of saint is occupied by virtuosos at repenting, i.e., those who do so immediately and whole-heartedly. By creating a hierarchy of repentant sinners, *Hermas* can encourage immediate repentance by warning of the impending day of the Lord but still has the theoretical flexibility to address the problem of those sinners who have not *yet* repented.[77] Third, *Hermas* curbs the impulse to police social boundaries too absolutely. *Hermas* warns steadfast community members against maintaining too rigid boundaries between themselves and apparent apostate sinners.

From an eschatological vantage point of *knowing* how everything will eventually turn out, it is possible to distinguish between apostates and those sinners who will eventually repent; but from the point in time in which Hermas and his readers are currently living, however, apostates and future repentant sinners resemble one another. Consequently, though there may eventually be true apostates, it is unclear which post-baptismal sinners will ultimately return or remain in mired in sin. Thus, *Hermas*' middle class of salvation and *their delayed repentance* blurs the boundary between repentant sinner and apostate in order to facilitate the reintegration of sinners. In **Chapter 6**, we will consider in greater detail the social context motivating this reintegration of sinners.

## The *Apocryphon of John*: Narrativizing Sin and Salvation

A revelatory dialogue between John the son of Zebedee and the risen Christ, the *Apocryphon of John* is likely the earliest Christian text to present a unified and totalizing narrative of the nature of God, the source of sin, the origin of the world, the creation of

[77] Cf. 2 Clement 8 – 9, which rhetorically highlights the limited time available for repentance for similar purposes.

humanity, and the plan for salvation.[78] In the four manuscripts in which it survives, the *ApocJn* was placed in the first position or directly following the *Gospel of Mary* in the *Berlin Codex* (NHC II,1; III,1; IV,1; BG 8502,2), and Michael Williams has persuasively suggested that this position reflects *ApocJn*'s perceived role as an overview of Christian theology and cosmology.[79] The *ApocJn* is a remarkably rich text that blends cosmogonic ideas drawn from Platonic (*Timaeus* and *Parmenides*) and Jewish (Genesis) sources; presents a similarly synthetic account of human psychology and behavior; and retells the story of salvation history by interacting, correcting, and expanding on the accounts of Genesis and the Gospel of John.[80]

Although the *Apocryphon of John* survives only in four fourth or fifth-century Coptic manuscripts,[81] most scholars agree that it was likely composed in Greek and that this Greek *vorlage* comes from approximately the second century.[82] Two external witnesses appear to support this approximate date for the composition of the *ApocJn*. In his late second century (ca. 180) work *Against Heresies* (1.29), Irenaeus cites something very much like the cosmogonic myth found at the beginning of the *ApocJn*. Furthermore, in the mid third-century, Porphyry criticizes a group affiliated with the study circle of his teacher Plotinus that read books similar to

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78 Karen King, *The Secret Revelation of John* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), vii.
79 Michael Williams, *Rethinking Gnosticism: An Argument for Dismantling a Dubious Category* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 247 – 55.
80 Karen King, *Secret Revelation*, 215 – 24, 235 – 38; Tuomas Rasimus, *Paradise Reconsidered in Gnostic Mythmaking: Rethinking Sethianism in Light of the Ophite Evidence* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 243 – 79, esp. 267 – 8; and John Turner, "Johannine Legacy: The Gospel and Apocryphon of John," *The Legacy of John: Second-Century Reception of the Fourth Gospel* (ed. Tuomas Rasimus; Brill: Leiden, 2010), 105 – 44.
81 "A fair number of scribal errors (e.g., *saut du même au même*, haplography) in the four witnesses leave no doubt that each was copied from a Coptic exemplar." Zlatko Pleše, *Poetics of the Gnostic Universe: Narrative and Cosmology in the* Apocryphon of John (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 1.
82 Some scholars speculate it may be earlier while others would prefer a later date. Often these debates revolve around reconstructing the various sources and uncovering/dating the editorial process that culminated with the *final* (or at least approximating) forms of the two recensions. For the sake of scope in this dissertation, I will take the mean of these scholarly arguments and provisionally accept a ca. second-century date. For some of the most recent and best instances of these debates, see John Turner, *Sethian Gnosticism and the Platonic Tradition* (Les Presses de l'Université Laval: Québec, 2001); idem, "Sethian Gnosticism: A Revised Literary History," *Actes du huitième congrès international d'études coptes, Paris, 28 juin – 3 juillet 2004 vol. 2* (eds. N. Bosson and A. Boud'hors; Leuven: Peeters, 2007), 899 – 908; Tuomas Rasimus, *Paradise Reconsidered*.

the *ApocJn* (*Life of Plotinus*, 16); one such book title ("the Book of Zoroaster") appears in the *ApocJn* itself (NHC II, 19.10).[83]

Among the four manuscripts, there are two different recensions: a shorter (BG and NHC III) and longer (NHC II and IV) version.[84] Some of the major differences between the shorter and longer recension are that the shorter lacks the concluding *Pronoia* hymn (NHC II, 30.11 – 31.25) and the lengthy *melothesia* section describing the archontic construction of the various parts of Adam's body (NHC II, 15.29 – 19.10). Although it is difficult to establish a clear stemma among the four manuscripts,[85] there are some general tendencies. The longer recension (NHC II and IV), especially when compared to the shorter recension (NHC III and BG), appears more internally consistent and to have fewer "contradictions and ambiguities."[86] Bernard Barc and Louis Painchaud, consequently, suggest that the longer recension underwent editorial redaction to bring the whole of the text into agreement with the addition of the concluding *Pronoia* Hymn.[87]

Karen King, however, is certainly right to caution against facilely assuming that *the* original text of the *ApocJn* is recoverable due to an allegedly straightforward and linear progression from the shorter to the longer recension.[88] Nonetheless, as the work of Barc and Painchaud demonstrate, we can plausibly recover a *rationale* for some scribal modifications

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[83] See further my **Appendix** on Sethianism for an additional discussion of these texts.
[84] See the standard edition of all four manuscripts in Michael Waldstein and Frederik Wisse, *The Apocryphon of John: Synopsis of NHC II,1; III,1; and IV, 1 with BG 8502, 2* (Leiden: Brill, 1995).
[85] See the conjectural stemma provided (albeit with the heavy caveat that it is an oversimplification) in Karen King "Approaching the Variants of the *Apocryphon of John*," in *The Nag Hammadi Library After Fifty Years: Proceedings of the 1995 Society of Biblical Literature Commemoration* (ed. John Turner and Anne McGuire; Brill: Leiden, 1997), 125.
[86] Karen King, "Approaching the Variants," 123.
[87] Bernard Barc and Louis Painchaud, "La réécriture de l'Apocryphon de Jean à la lumière de l'hymne final de la version longue," *Le Muséon* 112 (1999): 317 – 333.
[88] Karen King, "Approaching the Variants," 126 – 37.

through close synoptic study.[89] Fortunately for my purposes, both the shorter and longer recension contain the hierarchical description of the four luminaries (*BG* 35.6 – 36.16; *NHC II* 8.35 – 9.24) and the dialogue concerning various salvific fates of different types of souls (*BG* 64. 14 – 71.2; *NHC* II 25.16 – 27.30). Thus, although I will not appeal to any manuscript as containing the *original* reading, I will note differences among the manuscripts and offer explanations where I can of the probable cause for some variants.

Based upon the content and form of the *ApocJn*, David Frankfurter connects the *ApocJn* to the revelatory dialogue of 4 Ezra and conventions drawn from the "traditions of Jewish apocalyptic."[90] For example, the *ApocJn*'s format of a dialogue between the distressed John and his heavenly interlocutor echoes a well-established trope in apocalyptic literature.[91] Furthermore, as both Karen King and Zlakto Plese have compellingly argued, the *ApocJn*'s genre as a revelatory dialogue enabled a degree of textual elasticity, i.e., certain ideas could be expanded upon or inserted over the course of the *ApocJn*'s transmission history while still preserving the relative stability of the work as a whole.[92] Moreover, the *ApocJn*, as a textual vehicle for revelation,[93] plays the role of the revealer figure.[94] In this way, the reader identifies with John whose questions aim to anticipate and reflect the readers' concerns; primary among them, as we will see, are: what is the source and nature of evil? How can people saved? Are all

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[89] See also the response by Michael Williams "Response to Papers of Karen King, Frederik Wisse, Michael Waldstein, and Sergio La Porta," in *Nag Hammadi Library*, 208 – 213.

[90] David Frankfurter, "The Legacy of Jewish Apocalypses in Early Christianity: Regional Trajectories," in *The Jewish Apocalyptic Heritage in Early Christianity* (ed. James C. VanderKam and William Adler; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), 159 – 60. On this relationship more generally, see Harold Attridge, "Valentinian and Sethian Apocalyptic Traditions," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 8.2 (2000): 173 – 211; Dylan Burns, *Apocalypse of the Alien God: Platonism and the Exile of Sethian Gnosticism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2014).

[91] See the helpful list provided by Dylan Burns of the numerous instances of this trope in Jewish apocalyptic literature (*Apocalypse of Alien God*, 54 n. 43).

[92] See King, *Secret Revelation*, 184; Pleše, *Poetics*, 17 – 19.

[93] As the titular colophon makes clear, the *Apocryphon* of John is a hidden (*Apocryphon*) dialogue; by signaling both its dialogue format and esoteric content, the *Apocryphon of John* enhances its appeal and authority.

[94] Karen King, *Secret Revelation*, 155; see further Einar Thomassen, "Revelation as Book and Book as Revelation: Reflections on the *Gospel of Truth*," in *The Nag Hammadi Texts in the History of Religions* (ed. S. Giversen et al.; Copenhagen: C.A. Reitzel, 2002), 35 – 45.

people saved and if not what happens to sinners? Through its dialogue format, the *ApocJn* answers these pressing questions with responses imbued with the authority of the Savior.

As the *ApocJn* opens, John, the brother of James and the son of Zebedee,[95] is accosted by a Pharisee named Arimanios[96] (NHC II, 1.1 – 2.25 ; BG 19.6 – 23.16). Since this conversation takes place after the Savior's ascent, Arimanios asks John where his master has gone and then ridicules John for his response that his master has returned to "the place from which he came."[97] Distressed by Arimanios' accusation that he has "abandoned the traditions of your fathers," John vacates the temple for a deserted mountain (BG 20.4 –6).[98] There, John becomes emotionally distressed and pleads for answers to his questions: "How was the savior appointed? Why was he sent into the world by his Father? Who is his Father who sent him? And what sort is that aeon to which we shall go?" In answer, the heavens open up, the earth shakes, and a revelatory figure, having the appearance of a child, an old man, and a servant appears. This figure, who identifies himself as the "Father, Mother, and Son," promises to reveal to John: "What is, what was, and what will come to pass…the things concerning the immovable race of the perfect man" so that John can reveal these things to "your fellow spirits" (NHC II, 2.23: [ⲛⲉⲕϣⲃⲣⲡ]ⲛⲁ; BG, 22, 13 – 14: [ⲛⲉⲕϩⲟ]ⲙⲟⲩⲛ̅ⲛ̅ⲁ̅).[99] So begins the revelatory dialogue of the *ApocJn* (*NHC* II, 1.1 – 2.25; *BG* 19.6 – 22.16).

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[95] Although it has been argued that the *ApocJn* is Christian in form only (due to its frame narrative), see now David Brakke (*The Gnostics: Myth, Ritual, and Diversity in Early Christianity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010), 85) and Zlatko Plesse's (*Poetics*, 13 – 19) persuasive rebuttals.

[96] Arimanios (NHC II) or Arimanias (BG and NHC III); the name likely relates to the malicious Zoroastrian deity Ahriman.

[97] This alludes to the Gospel of John (8:42; 14:3).

[98] Abandoning the Temple mount is not inconsequential. This supports an overarching narrative aimed at rejecting Ialdabaoth, who is portrayed as a parody of the Jewish God Yahweh; cf. Elaine Pagels (*The Johannine Gospel in Gnostic Exegesis*: *Heracleon's Commentary on John* (SBLMS 17; Abingdon Press: Nashville, 1973)), who similarly examined the symbolic register of varying characters and places in Valentinian exegesis.

[99] See Dylan Burns (*Apocalypse of Alien,* 53 n.37) for a list of comparable injunctions towards missionizing activities found at the conclusion of the contemporaneous Jewish apocalyptic texts (e.g., *2 Enoch* 39; *4 Ezra* 14:13 – 18, 27 – 26; *2 Baruch* 31, 44 – 45; 76:4 – 77:1).

In what follows, this enigmatic figure – later identified with the Savior (*NHC* II, 22.10, 12) or Christ (*BG* 58.2) – reveals to John the nature of the true and highest God (the "Father" or "Invisible Spirit") and the most perfect levels of reality as well as why the material world was created and what humanity's role is in this sweeping narrative spanning all time (i.e., present, primordial past, and eschatological conclusion). Engaging with but also qualifying contemporary middle-Platonic theological and epistemological speculation, the *ApocJn* employs both *apophatic* and *kataphatic* strategies in its revelatory description of the highest God.[100] In this way, the Savior *reveals* the nature of the Father to John through a complex mix of *via negationis*, *via eminentiae* or *via oppositionis*, and *via analogiae* or causal claims.

Zlakto Plese may be right that the *ApocJn* is disputing the apparent claims of middle-Platonists, in particular Alcinous,[101] that human rationality can comprehend the reality of the highest divinity;[102] instead, and underscoring the transcendence of the highest God, the *ApocJn* maintains that it is only through revelation that one can *know* about him (*NHC* II, 4.10 – 5.4; *BG* 26.1 – 27.19).[103] However, as John Peter Kenney has persuasively shown, negative (apophatic) theologies could be deployed in support of a variety of claims.[104] Thus, Plese's explanation, while likely, does not exhaust the meaning and function of this sophisticated passage. In addition to addressing epistemological concerns, the *ApocJn*, through its pious reflection on the

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[100] Michael Williams, "Negative Theologies and Demiurgical Myths in Late Antiquity," *Gnosticism and Later Platonism: Themes, Figures, and Texts* (eds. John Turner and Ruth Majercik; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2000), 280 – 83; Karen King, *Secret Revelation*, 86

[101] Zlatko Pleše, *Poetics,* 88 – 91

[102] Yet, as Michael Williams argues ("Negative Theologies," 277), this does *not* entail then that the *ApocJn* is somehow *anti-intellectual* or shows "a despair and abandonment of rationality."

[103] Zlatko Pleše, *Poetics*, 88: "God transcends discursive reasoning and univocal definitions. 'Positive epithets,' even when applied to God, say nothing about his essence, but simply emphasize God's absolute transcendence and ontological priority. For example, good is not essentially good, but only bestows good, is not being but is beyond being (*ousiotes*), and is self-perfect in the sense of being non-deficient etc…"

[104] John Peter Kenney, "Ancient Apophatic Theology" in *Gnosticism and Later Platonism: Themes, Figures, and Texts* (ed. John Turner and Ruth Majercik; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2000), 259 – 75.

transcendence of the highest God, also establishes a vertical orientation and hierarchy of values that foregrounds the remainder of the text's ontological, ethical, and soteriological discussions.

This hierarchy is further underscored during the *ApocJn*'s account of the emergence of remaining two members of the divine triad (the "Mother" or "Barbelo" and the "Son" or "Autogenes"), the four Lights or Luminaries, and the twelve aeons.[105] As Plese suggests, the *ApocJn* recounts the gradual emergence of the divine realms in a "metaphysical fiction that reenacts the stages of God in a folktale sequence."[106] These stages imbue the mythic narrative with a value-laden hierarchy of stations and ranks. For example, the four Lights or Luminaries (NHC III and BG: ⲟⲩⲟⲉⲓⲛ; NHC II and IV:ϥⲱⲥⲧⲏⲣ), which also house the twelve aeons, are introduced in descending, hierarchical order:

> Grace is with the first light, Harmozel, who is the angel of light in the first aeon, with him there are three aeons: Grace, Truth, and Form. The Second light is [Oro]iael, the one He placed over the second aeon, with him are three aeons: Providence, Perception, and Memory. The third light is Daveithe, the one He placed over the third aeon, with him are three aeons: Understanding, Love, and [Idea].[107] And the fourth light is [Ele]leth, the one He placed over the fourth aeon, with him are three aeons: Perfection, Peace, and Wisdom (*Sophia*). (*BG* 33. 7 – 34.7)

Further underscoring its utopian but also hierarchical portrait of the divine realm, the aeons operate analogously to a well-regulated household, with the *paterfamilias* at its head.[108] In this way, the unfolding of the heavenly realms occurs only with the consent of the Father. Thus, the

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[105] I have streamlined the complex mytho-poetic account of the *Apocryphon of John* here. For a fuller account of some of the hypostatic and personified divine predicates mentioned in the theogonic section, see the helpful chart in Karen King, *Secret Revelation*, 87. For a very different approach to the *ApocJn* that focuses on locating sources / thematic units throughout the text, see further Tuomas Rasimus, *Paradise Reconsidered*; Rasimus' study aims to more accurately identify and differentiate among literary elements – especially families of mythic features – into better defined categories and relate them to external testimonies of different social movements (e.g., Ophites, Barbeloites, and Sethians). See further the **Appendix** for my discussion of Rasimus.

[106] Zlakto Pleše, *Poetics*, 140.

[107] Reconstructed from ⲧⲉⲗⲁⲑⲉⲗ in NHC III 12.11.

[108] Michael Williams, *Rethinking*, 154 – 56.

heavenly realms are an idealized collection of aeons, organized in a spatial and temporal hierarchy, all of which came to be with the consent of the Father.[109]

This ordered and harmonious congress of heavenly realms is ruptured by the deviant behavior of its lowest (last mentioned) aeon, Sophia (NHC II 9.25 – 13.7; *BG* 36.16 – 45.4). Sophia's unruly conduct (i.e., desiring "to manifest a likeness of herself" [NHC II 9.28 – 29: ⲟⲩⲱⲛϩ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ⲛ̄ⲟⲩⲉⲓⲛⲉ ⲛ̄ϩⲏⲧⲥ̄]) without the consent of the Father or her consort) upsets the pattern of deference and single-minded obedience to the governance of the Father that had previously epitomized the organization of the divine realms.[110] Sophia's deviant conduct produces the "problem child" Ialdabaoth who is a deformed monstrosity but also steals a portion of his Mother, Sophia's power.[111] In her shame, Sophia hides Ialdabaoth from her aeonic colleagues in a bright cloud.

Ignorant of his own origins, Ialdaboath creates – according to the divine pattern (*BG* 39.9: ⲧⲩⲡⲟⲥ) and by means of the great power (*NHC* II, 10.21: ⲇⲩⲛⲁⲙⲓⲥ)[112] he stole from Sophia – his own, lower world order consisting of inferior aeons and authorities.[113] Because he has this stolen power in him, Ialdabaoth is able to fashion the lower world "according to the model of the first aeon" (ⲕⲁⲧⲁ ⲡⲓⲛⲉ ⲛ̄ⲛ̄ⲯⲟⲣⲡ [ⲛ]ⲁⲓⲱⲛ) and "the pattern of the indestructible ones" (ⲙ̄ⲡⲥⲙⲁⲧ ⲛ̄ⲁⲧⲧⲉⲕⲟ).[114] After surveying his creation, Ialdabaoth boasts: "I am a jealous God; there is no other God beside me" (*BG* 44.14 – 15; *NHC* II, 13.8 – 9). Although Ialdabaoth's boast resonates with biblical authority (Isaiah 45:5 – 6; cf. 46:9), it is patently false;

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[109] See further Michael Williams, "A Life Full of Meaning and Purpose: Demiurgical Myths and Social Implications," *Beyond the Gnostic Gospels: Studies Building on the Work of Elaine Pagels* (ed. Eduard Iricinschi et al.; Mohr Siebeck: Tübingen, 2013), 19 – 59.
[110] Karen King, *Secret Revelation*, 90.
[111] Michael Williams, *Rethinking* 10 – 11.
[112] See also *NHC* II 12.5 – 8, which refers to the "the power of the glory of his Mother's Light."
[113] I use the word inferior to denote the relative value of the created world vis-à-vis the perfect, aeonic realms; see below **note 115** for my discussion of the perils in labeling the temporal world "evil" in the *ApocJn.*
[114] *NHC* II, 12.33 – 13.5.

the narrative voice of the Savior even peevishly asks: "If there are no other gods of whom could he be jealous?" (*BG* 44. 17 – 18; *NHC* II, 13.12 – 13) And so, by reinterpreting and synthesizing Jewish and Platonic creation accounts, the *ApocJn* recounts how the world – a mixture of good and evil – came to be: an ignorant and rebellious (*BG* 43.4: ϵϥο ⲛ̅ⲛⲁⲧⲡⲓⲑϵ) creator who, nonetheless, employed a divine and superior power and model.[115]

In what follows, the *ApocJn* narrates the story of Sophia's repentance and redemption, which leads to the ultimate restoration of the divine harmony; of special importance to the *ApocJn* is the role of humanity in this cosmological drama of salvation history. Upon seeing the wickedness of her offspring and grasping the depth of her error, Sophia becomes distressed. Sophia's agitated state, according to the *ApocJn*, explains why Moses said (Gen. 1:2) that God's Spirit "moved to and fro" over the waters.[116] Seeing the wickedness of Ialdabaoth, Sophia becomes ashamed and "repented and wept with much weeping" (*BG* 46.13 – 15; *NHC* II 13.36 – 14.1).[117] Upon hearing Sophia's prayers of contrition, her aeonic colleagues[118] intercede on her behalf before the Invisible Spirit (*BG* 46. 15 – 47.3; *NHC* II, 14.1 - 9).[119] In response, the Great Spirit devises a plan through Pronoia (*BG* 47.6) to restore Sophia's deficiency, placing Sophia into the ninth heaven until her deficiency is corrected (*BG* 46.19 – 47.13; *NHC* II, 14.4 – 13).

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[115] There has been a lot of ink spilled over whether and to what degree the temporal world is either good or evil in the *ApocJn*. The best and most recent study of this issue is Michael Williams, "A Life Full of Meaning and Purpose" who emphasizes that Ialdabaoth created the world "according to the divine image"; thus, it is misleading and a gross oversimplification to characterize the world as simply evil.

On how best to describe the temporal world I am persuaded by the excellent, unpublished paper by Benjamin Nickodemus ("The Temporal World as Process in the *Apocryphon of John* and Origen of Alexandria"). Nickodemus argues that the binary of *either* a good *or* evil world is something inherited from polemical sources and should thus be jettisoned from discussions; instead, Nickodemus argues it is better to construe the temporal world as *process* insofar as it is the *site* for the redemptive story that unfolds.

[116] *BG* (45.1) even retains the Greek ⲑⲡⲓϥⲑⲣ[ⲉ] of the LXX.

[117] *BG* (45.12 – 13) states that it was Ialdabaoth's *apostasy*, which led to Sophia's repentance (ⲙⲉⲧⲁⲛⲟⲉⲓ).

[118] *BG* 46.18: ⲛⲉⲥⲛⲏⲩ ("brothers"); *NHC* II, 14.3 – 4: ⲡⲉⲡⲗⲏⲣⲱⲙⲁ ⲧⲏⲣⲥ ("the whole Pleroma").

[119] It is probable that the *ApocJn* expected this ethical ideal of lending assistance to repenting community members to be replicated on the level of human interactions.

In a series of moves and counter-moves, Sophia and various agents of the Invisible Spirit[120] attempt to recover the power Ialdabaoth stole while Ialdabaoth and his authorities jealously seek to retain it.[121] These contestations help explain, according to the *ApocJn*, the strange bricolage of divine power and psychic and material parts that is the human person.[122] Ialdabaoth and his cronies are tricked into creating humans. They hear a voice from on high declare "The Human/Man (ⲠⲢⲰⲘⲈ) exists and the Son of Man (ⲠⲰⲎⲢⲈ ⲘⲠⲢⲰⲘⲈ)," followed by his image appearing reflected in water (*BG* 47.14 – 48.9; *NHC* II, 14.14 – 34). Seeking to possess this great light as well, Ialdabaoth exhorts his authorities: "Come let us create a man according to the image of God and according to our likeness (ⲔⲀⲦⲀ ⲠⲚ̄ⲈⲒⲚⲈ) so that his image may become a light for us" (*NHC* II, 15.1 – 4).

The *ApocJn* then recounts the individual efforts of the rulers and authorities as they each construct a specific part of the composite body of Adam (*BG* 48.14 – 50.11; *NHC* II, 15.5 – 28); the longer recensions provide a lengthy excursus on the names of "365 angels" (*NHC* II, 19.2 – 3) and the specific zones for which each was responsible (*NHC* II, 15.29 – 19.10).[123] In the end, however, this psychic and material human body remained inert. Prompted by *Autogenes* and the Four Luminaries, Ialdabaoth breathed his spirit into the body (cf. Genesis 2:7), thereby passing the power he stole from Sophia into Adam (*BG* 51.12 – 20; *NHC* II, 19.21 – 32). Infuriated at his loss of his mother's power, Ialdabaoth and the authorities attempt to reclaim this power in a series of tactics (e.g., the trees of paradise; the extraction of Eve; the rape of Eve); however, they

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[120] An interesting and provocative difference between the shorter and longer recensions is the different characters who intercede over the course of salvation history. For example, *BG* (50:9) states that it is *Autogenes* and the four lights who trick Ialdabaoth into breathing into the lifeless body of Adam; whereas *NHC* II (19:19) does not mention *Autogenes* and instead has five luminaries.

[121] Karen King, *Secret Revelation*, 97; cf. Michael Williams, *The Immovable Race: A Gnostic Designation and the Theme of Stability in Late Antiquity* (Leiden: Brill, 1985), 122 – 26.

[122] On ancient context for the (demonic) construction of the "psychic" body of Adam, see Roelof van den Broek, "The Creation of Adam's Psychic Body in the *Apocryphon of John*," in *Studies in Gnosticism and Hellenistic Religions Presented to Gilles Quispel on the Occasion of His Sixty-Fifth Birthday* (Leiden: Brill, 1981), 38 – 57.

[123] See further **note 146** below.

are routinely frustrated and outmaneuvered in their attempts (*BG* 52.2 – 64.13; *NHC* II, 19.34 – 25.16).

In light of this series of moves and countermoves, significant events from the biblical narrative – including the expulsion from the Garden of Eden and the Great Flood – all take on a different meaning as they turn out to be evidence of Ialdabaoth's failed attempts to extract Sophia's divine power out from humanity.[124] Yet, humanity is not simply a passive victim caught between these warring factions.[125] As the introduction and function throughout of the Counterfeit Spirit (ⲁⲛⲧⲓⲙⲓⲙⲟⲛ ⲙ̅ⲡ̅ⲛ̅ⲁ̅) make clear (*BG* 56.14 - 15),[126] the *ApocJn* expects active participation and *moral effort* by persons to resist Ialdabaoth's efforts and help restore Sophia's stolen power. Thus, borrowing an apt phrase from a recent article by Lance Jenott, the *ApocJn* invites its readers to self-identify as "agents of Providence" and locate themselves and their attendant ethical roles as they appear in the *ApocJn*'s unfolding story of salvation history.[127] For example, those who have received the spirit of life, likely a reference to baptism,[128] are able to save other souls and free them from the cycle of metempsychosis (*NHC* II, 27.17 – 21; cf. *BG* 70.3 – 8).

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[124] These passages are notoriously difficult and thus invite a great deal of exegetical creativity; see further Michael Williams' (*Rethinking Gnosticism*, 54 - 79) excellent classification and discussion of them as "scriptural chestnuts."

[125] *Pace* Karen King ("The Body and Society in the *Apocryphon of John*," in *The School of Moses: Studies in Philo and Hellenistic Religion* (ed. Peter John Kenney; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995), 96) who focuses too much on the anthropological limitations of humanity (see **Chapter 6**) and therefore significantly underestimates the importance of moral effort in the *ApocJn*: "Hence the *Apocryphon of John* speaks less of ethics than Philo, not because it countenances a greater acceptance of moral evil, but because ethics imply a purposefulness and power to human action that the *Apocryphon of John* does not experience."

[126] See further **chapter 6**.

[127] Lance Jenott, "Emissaries of Truth and Justice: The Seed of Seth as Agents of Divine Providence," in *Gnosticism, Platonism, and the Late Ancient World: Essays in Honor of John Turner* (ed by Kevin Corrigan and Tuomas Rasimus, et al.; Brill: Leiden, 2013), 43 – 62.

[128] Whether this (likely ritual) infusion of the Living Spirit resembled the baptism of the five seals is unclear; on the five seals, see further Jean-Marie Sevrin, *Le Dossier Baptismal Séthien (Études sur la Sacramentaire Gnostique* (Les Presses de l'Université Laval: Québec, 1986); John Turner, "Ritual in Gnosticism," in *Gnosticism and Later* Platonism, 87 – 97; and idem, "The Sethian Baptismal Rite," *Coptic – Gnosica Manichaica: Mélanges offerts à Wolf-Peter Funk* (ed. Louis Painchaud and Paul-Hubert Poirer; Les Presses de l'Université Laval: Québec, 2006), 941 – 92. For a different approach making use of additional sources and categories, see also Tuomas Rasimus, *Paradise Reconsidered*, 255 – 79.

Reinforcing this appeal to ethical conduct, the *ApocJn*, like *Hermas*, links ethical achievement with greater salvific rewards. An important theoretical and rhetorical feature of the *Apocryphon of John* is that there is symmetry between its cosmogony and eschatology. Much of the drama of salvation history revolves around explaining the effects of the primordial rupture that created sin/deficiency and the human contribution towards restoring the primordial harmony. Emblematic of its overall symmetry, the *ApocJn*'s hierarchy of cosmic realms corresponds to different sorts or classes of humanity.[129] Thus, there are four aeonic luminaries and each corresponds to a class or type of humanity. Employing its vertical, cosmic hierarchy, the *ApocJn* conveys the relative merits of each class of humanity eschatologically on the basis of which aeonic luminary or level of heaven a soul will inhabit:

> The perfect man (came forth)…and he placed him, Adam (BG 35.5) / Pigeradamas (NHC II 8.35), over the first aeon…by the first light Armozel… And he placed his son Seth over the second aeon in the presence of the second light Oroiel. And in the third aeon was placed the seed of Seth, over the third light of Daveithai. And the souls of the saints were placed (there). And in the fourth aeon were placed the souls of those who do know the Pleroma and did not repent (ⲙⲉⲧⲁⲛⲟⲉⲓ) at once, but who persisted for a while and repented (ⲙⲉⲧⲁⲛⲟⲉⲓ) afterwards; they are by the fourth light Eleleth. (NHC II 8.32 – 9. 23)

Analogous to what we saw in *Hermas*, the *ApocJn* differentiates between higher and lower levels of salvation spatially, through different ranks of the heavenly realms.[130] Further echoing what we saw with *Hermas*, the "saints" will enjoy a higher level of salvation (Daveithai, the third Luminary) than those "who persisted for a while and repented afterwards" (Eleleth, the fourth Luminary).

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[129] Building on exegesis of Genesis, the *ApocJn*'s hierarchy of humanity is articulated genealogically, i.e., on the priority of one's proximity to the divine spark of the perfect human: so Adam, Seth (Adam's third son), seed of Seth, and the rest of humanity

[130] John Turner, *Sethian Gnosticism*, 599.

In his recent monograph, David Brakke claims that the first three of these four classes represent historical stages from the biblical narrative. Drawing upon two other texts with close mythological affinities with the *ApocJn* (the *Hypostasis of the Archons,* and *the Holy Book of the Great and Invisible Spirit*),[131] Brakke concludes that *all* those who are saved in the present today (of the author) will reside in Eleleth.

> All of these passages (drawn explicitly from *Apocryphon of John, Hypostasis of the Archons,* and *the Holy Book of the Great and Invisible Spirit*) suggest the Eleleth is the luminary of the archetypes of the contemporary Gnostics and other saved human beings. And so there are four divine archetypes of humanity: Adam (Harmozel), Seth (Oraoiael), the primeval descendants of Seth (Daveithai), and the contemporary Gnostics, the present-day seed of Seth (Eleleth).[132]

While Brakke's interpretation *may* be correct for the *Holy Book* (NHC III 65.17 – 22; IV 77. 16 - 20),[133] there is no compelling reason to read the *ApocJn* in this way.[134] The hierarchical relationship of the saints or Seed of Seth and those who repent/convert more slowly maps onto the divide found later in the text between the "immovable race" (*BG* 65.2 – 3; *NHC* II 25.23) and "those who have not known the All (ⲡⲧⲏⲣⲥ̄)" (*BG* 68.14 – 15).[135] Moreover, the immovable race is described analogously to Seth and the Seed[136] insofar as they are all formed by the infusion of the Spirit (Seth and the Seed: *BG* 63.14 – 64.13; immovable race *BG* 65:3 – 8), likely a reference to baptism. I will return to discuss and compare the infusion of Spirit of Life with the Counterfeit Spirit in **chapter 6.**

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131 See the **Appendix**

132 David Brakke, *Gnostics*, 57.

133 Although it should be noted that Brakke's interpretation of the *Holy Book* is not without difficulties, namely pushing for a very literal reading of "children of Seth" to mean Seth's biological offspring as opposed to a ritual or social category. Furthermore, the *Holy Book*'s schema differs from the *ApocJn* in multiple ways, such as including Jesus in the second luminary and having an additional *fifth* station, Yoel, below Eleleth.

134 See the excellent discussion and cautious approach to diversity among Sethian texts (see the **Appendix** for explanation of "Sethian") in Lance Jenott's *The Gospel of Judas: Coptic Text, Translation, and Historical Interpretation of the 'Betrayer's Gospel'* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 70 – 101.

135 The Berlin Codex (as reported by Waldstein and Wisse) reads ⲛ̄ⲧⲏⲣⲥ̄; lacking an object marker (cf. *NHC* III, 35.3: ⲉⲡⲧⲏⲣⲥ̄), the supralinear stroke may serve this function.

136 Wisse and Waldstein (*Apocrypohn*, 144) translate ⲡⲉⲥⲡⲉⲣⲙⲁ (*BG* 64.5) as *"her* seed," though this would require an additional sigma, which may have fallen out; however, all the other manuscripts (III, 32.16; II, 25.10; IV 39.8) report only the single sigma.

Despite this hierarchical ranking of classes of humanity and heavenly stations that is indebted to its eclectic blending of Jewish biblical history and Platonic metaphysics, the *ApocJn* is concerned over the salvation of *all* of humanity and the importance of ⲙⲉⲧⲁⲛⲟⲉⲓ.[137] In fact, the *ApocJn* is universalist *in scope* insofar as it expects that almost all of humanity *eventually* will be saved, so long as people eventually realize their error and repent.[138] Giving voice to this overarching concern, John asks whether all souls will be saved (*BG* 64.14 – 16; NHC II, 25.17 – 18). In response, the Savior assures John that all who are of "immovable race" will be saved and become perfect; the souls of sinners, into whom the *Counterfeit* Spirit enters – even those who may not "have known the All" (*BG* 68.14 – 15) – will still be saved but only after extensive purgation; *apostates,* however, are utterly damned:

> "Those who did know and turned away, where will their souls go?" Then he said to me, "To that place where the angels of poverty go – [that] is where they will be taken. And they will be kept on the day on which those who have blasphemed the spirit [and] will be tortured and punished with eternal punishment." (*NHC* II, 27.21 – 29)

Consequently, the *ApocJn* – similar to what we saw in *Hermas* – has a tripartite salvific scheme of highest salvation (the seed of Seth or immovable race), middle-ground (repentant sinners), and the damned (apostates); in this way, *both Hermas* and the *ApocJn* have tailored higher and lower salvific rewards to reflect the ethical achievements of different sorts of persons. Unlike *Hermas*, however, for the *ApocJn* this tripartite scheme comprises the whole of humanity and not just insiders or baptized members of the community.

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[137] ⲙⲉⲧⲁⲛⲟⲓⲁ (and its cognates) appears six times in the Berlin Codex: three times describing Sophia's repentance (45.13; 46.13, 16), twice describing those who will dwell in Eleleth who delay before repenting (36.10, 12), and once describing the fate of apostates for whom there is no repentance (70.15).

[138] It is essential to differentiate between this use of universalism (in scope) from other resonances of the term; most notably that universalism connotes the total erasure of all difference (see, for example, my discussions in **Chapter 1**). This second meaning has been employed as part of strategies meant to create and popularize a single, uniform model for humanity and ethical responsibility (see the implications of this in **Chapter 8**).

Michael Williams and Karen King have rightly marshaled the above passage (*NHC* II, 27.21 – 29) and others to overturn the tired cliché of "Gnostic" ethical indifference. Those who are saved, in fact, *deserve* to be saved due either to the merit of their conduct whilst alive (*BG* 65.3 – 66.12; *NHC* II, 25.23 – 26.7) or redemptive, postmortem purgation (*BG* 68.13 – 69.13; *NHC* II 26.32 – 27.11). [139] Emphasizing the *universality* of salvation for all (except apostates), Williams suggests that the difference between the Seed of Seth and other saved may be provisional.[140] Instead of genetic determinism, so the argument goes, all have the capacity to be counted among the Seed of Seth or the Immovable Race.[141] This latent but potential identity is available to everyone but requires moral effort to activate. Yet, even those who are unable to activate this latent identity in life, still have access to salvation, albeit only through post-mortem cycles of reincarnation and purgation.[142] In this way, so both Williams and King conclude, the *ApocJn* is *not* representative of "salvific elitism" but is rather engaged in ethical *paraenesis* that encourages all – whether in this life or after-death – to progress and become part of the Immovable Race.[143]

Expanding upon the significant insights of Williams and King, I will, however, argue for preserving and even highlighting the soteriological distinction between the Seed of Seth or

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[139] Michael Williams, *Rethinking Gnosticism,* 196 – 98; Karen King, *What is Gnosticism*, 200; eadem, *Secret Revelation*, 143.
[140] See most recently his argument in "A Life Full of Meaning" (49 – 52), which makes use of the sociological categories of first and second order believers.
[141] See **PART III** of my dissertation wherein I examine whether conversion or change in social group is 1. presupposed in comparably theoretically and teleologically oriented texts and 2. necessary for the attribution of moral responsibility.
[142] Michael Williams, *Rethinking Gnosticism*, 195 – 98; Karen King, *Secret Revelation*, 210.
[143] Karen King, *What is Gnosticism*, 200; cf. Michael Williams, *Rethinking Gnosticism*, 196. The polemical charge that a rival moral framework or ideal is elitist does not end with these early heresiologists. An interesting and illuminating parallel is Stanley Cavell's defense of Emersonian perfectionism against Rawls' analogous criticism that it is ultimately elitist. See Stanley Cavell, *Conditions Handsome and Unhandsome: The Conditions of Emersonian Perfectionism* (University of Chicago Press: Chicago, 1990).

immovable race and penitent sinners.[144] What is to be gained by highlighting the language of salvific difference in the *ApocJn*? By concentrating on the *ApocJn*'s use of salvific difference, we can focus on the text's multi-tiered ethical framework and sophisticated problem solving. Through its rhetorical construction of higher and lower levels of salvation, the *ApocJn* can deploy a sophisticated ethical map that is not only a binary between good and bad conduct. The *ApocJn*, like *Hermas*, privileges a certain class of saintly figures who, strengthened by the infusion of the Spirit of Life, are paradigms for Stoic virtue living the life of the sage free from the passions (anger, envy, fear, or desire) and indifferent to any problems they might experience (*BG* 65.11 – 66.1; *NHC* II 25.29 – 26.1).[145] Nonetheless, as we will see further in **chapter 6**, the *ApocJn* also makes pragmatic accommodations for community members who fall short of this rigorist standard as well as establishes a secondary path for the salvation of outsiders, i.e., post-mortem purgation.[146] In short, the *ApocJn* does not reduce the salvation of humanity to a single ethical standard of good vs. evil, but offers *three* possible ways for a person to be saved.

To summarize, the *ApocJn*'s revelatory account of the highest echelons of reality is not *only* speculative philosophy about ontology and epistemology; nor is its discussion of the angelic

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144 For a Sethian text that presents a binary of salvation/damnation, see the *Gospel of Judas* (Lance Jenott, *Gospel*, 88), which affirms that only the holy race will be saved.

145 See Tad Brennan, *The Stoic Life: Emotions, Duties, and Fate* (Oxford University Press, 2005); and Margaret Graver, *Stoicism and Emotion* (University of Chicago Press: Chicago, 2007).

146 The *ApocJn* has elaborate cosmogonic and demonological explanations for why some persons become perfect while others are possessed by the Counterfeit Spirit; central to this discussion is the function and construction of the *body* as the location for redeeming others and oneself. Especially problematic are *apostates*, whose existence *should* be impossible since baptism *ought* to transform a person utterly and render them unable to sin again (*NHC* II, 25. 23 – 26.7). Seemingly recognizing this theoretical difficulty, the longer recension has a much more elaborate demonological discussion. Thus, not only does the longer recension discuss the virtues of true baptism (*Pronoia Hymn*), but it also contains an elaborate and lengthy section in which 365 demons construct the human anatomy. The demonological construction of body not only explains why those *in the body* might still sin even after baptism, but it also provides the pragmatic solution to this problem: if you know the demon's *name* who is upsetting or targeting a specific passion zone or part of your body, you can abjure and command him to cease his activities. See further Michael Williams, *Immovable Race*, 127 – 29; idem, *Rethinking Gnosticism*, 132 – 38; Richard Valantasis, "Adam's Body: Uncovering Esoteric Traditions in the Apocryphon of John and Origen's Dialogue with Heraclides," *Second Century* 7 (1989–90): 150–62; David Brakke, ""The Body in Early Eastern Christian Sources," *Bulletin of the American Society of Papyrologists 37* (2000): 119–34; Karen King, "Approaching the Variants," 112 – 14; eadem, *Secret Revelation,* 110 – 4, 148 – 55.

construction of the body evidence of world-hating asceticism.[147] Instead, the *ApocJn* is an exegetically and ethically engaged text concerned with the redemption of *different types of persons*. The *ApocJn* provides a sophisticated narrative that explains the origins as well as practical solutions for how to save different kinds of people. Thus, unlike *Hermas* and its exhortation towards repentance as a return to a single, ethical code, the *ApocJn* lays out different paths for how to be saved, i.e., baptism or post-mortem purgation, as well as different strategies to assist persons on each path, i.e., demonic adjuration and spiritual assistance given by a baptized member.

Ultimately, although very different in terms of content, both *Hermas* and the *ApocJn* differentiate among different types of people and different levels of salvation. Both employ *utopian*, heavenly imagery to articulate the highest of ethical ideals, e.g., the martyr or the Stoic sage. Additionally, both texts are concerned with the rigors and difficulties of remaining morally upright and construct secondary levels of salvation for those who fall short of these highest ideals. And finally, both texts employ revelatory authority to sanction this two-tiered ethical framework. In **Chapter 6**, I will argue that both are committed to framing the issue of moral hierarchy as a social, i.e., dependent upon external circumstances, and demonological problem. By investigating and categorizing different types of persons, especially vis-à-vis their sinfulness, both *Hermas* and the *ApocJn* can develop and deploy strategies to resist and overcome sin as well as repair the social damage caused by sinning members of their communities.

[147] A cliché when it comes to the body that is still remarkably popular despite Michael Williams' thorough dismantling (*Rethinking Gnosticism,* 116 – 62); cf. Williams' catalogue ("A Life Full of Meaning," 48 n.86) of scholars who still choose to promulgate it.

# Chapter 6
# Diagnosing Sin and Saving Sinners:
## Situating Ethical and Soteriological Hierarchies in Their Social Context

## Introduction

In the previous **Chapter** we considered the two-tiered ethical and soteriological frameworks of *Hermas* and the *ApocJn*. In particular, we demonstrated how these hierarchies mutually reinforce each other and tell an inclusive story of salvation insofar as it is not only the saints who will be saved. In so doing, we also examined the *content* of each text's ethical ideals, i.e., what made a saint a saint? How are they different from other, morally *average* Christians? And how do these ethical ideals help them to make sense of and locate themselves in the world and the unfolding narrative of salvation history? In this chapter we consider the flipside of higher and lower levels of salvation: who are the sinners who can be saved? What is sinfulness and how can or should we resist it? And what are the practical implications of diagnosing and proposing solutions to human sinfulness?

As we shall see, *Hermas* and the *ApocJn* share a very similar etiology of human sin or wrongdoing.[1] This, I suggest, may reflect their analogous social contexts and comparable ideological aims. Both texts deploy higher and lower levels of salvation to justify ethical difference within their communities. This entails that just as some Christians are *better* than others, then some must also be *worse*. Through both *Hermas* and the *ApocJn*, we can investigate ancient Christians as they struggled with the ongoing sins of some of their members. Both *Hermas* and the *ApocJn*, therefore, construct a notion of human sinfulness tailored to these circumstances, i.e., it not only seeks to explain how it is that some members have fallen back into

[1] My focus is on *human* sinfulness and not cosmic evil (i.e., lack of God's presence, cosmic misfortune, etc.)

sin but it also facilitates the creation of practical techniques to protect against the dangers of future relapses. Thus, just as higher and lower levels of salvation enabled the privileging of certain ethical ideals without anticipating that every member could achieve all of them, so too did this soteriological technology provide the flexibility to handle the social and theoretical difficulties of reintegrating sinners into these ethically mixed communities.

Making explicit a thread running throughout **PART II**, this chapter is meant also to address a poorly argued yet persistent cliché among scholars, i.e., that groups later designated as heretics did not (and *could* not) have had the same kinds of social organizations (i.e., churches) as those retrospectively called orthodox.[2] Once we remove this anachronistic binary (heresy v. orthodoxy) as an orienting tool, however, we find that there is no sound reason internal to *Hermas* or the *ApocJn* to assign these texts to radically different social settings. Instead, as we will see, the constructions of human sinfulness promulgated by both *Hermas* and the *ApocJn* come from texts that were both deeply concerned over the stability of their communities and the intimate danger of their sinning members. Consequently, both *Hermas* and the *ApocJn*'s discussion of human wrongdoing makes the best sense within the setting of close-knit, urban house churches of the late first and early second-centuries.

To these ends, I will open this chapter with an overview of human sinfulness in *Hermas* and the *ApocJn*. The closest parallels for both *Hermas* and the *ApocJn*, I will argue, are Jewish texts that ascribe human wrongdoing to demonic influences.[3] In each case, externalizing the

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[2] As I noted in **Chapter 4**, I have purposefully set aside the misleading and anachronistic divide between heresy and orthodoxy as I compare these two texts. In so doing, I hope to demonstrate – by not using them – their arbitrariness and the fruits of leaving them behind altogether. See sections **Early Christianity Beyond "Orthodoxy" and "Heresy"** and **Social Deviants, Intellectual Recluses, or Early Christian House Churches** below.

[3] To be clear, I do not presuppose a genealogical relationship between these Jewish texts describing demonic sources of sin and *Hermas* or the *ApocJn*; rather, this comparison is meant to be heuristic. Thus, I am comparing Jewish sources and *Hermas*/*ApocJn* with respect to their common feature of a demonic source for human sinfulness. See further J. Z. Smith's explanation (*Drudgery Divine*: *On the Comparison of Early Christianities and the Religions of Late Antiquity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 51) of this comparativst approach: "It is agreed that the

source of human sinfulness has important consequences for how each text assesses moral responsibility. Finally, I will situate *Hermas* and the *ApocJn* within the dynamic context of *circa* second-century Christianity. In so doing, I hope to offer not only a useful analysis of two ancient texts but also, through this unusual pairing, demonstrate the fruitfulness of leaving behind terms and boundaries that do little more than impede research while affirming (apologetic) commitments.

## Demons as a Source of Human Sinfulness

In his recent monograph on the *yetzer* or (evil) inclination in rabbinic literature, Ishay Rosen-Zvi points to *Hermas* as one of the closest parallels to his object of study.[4] In particular, *Hermas'* description of two competing angels – one good and one evil (*Man*. 6)[5] – appears structurally analogous to some contemporary rabbinic discussions of the good and evil *yetzarim* (e.g., *mBerakhot* 9:5).[6] Rosen-Zvi rightly contends that *Hermas*, like the rabbis, explains moral evil and ascribes the source of sinfulness to the influence of external entities, be they demons or angels. Rosen-Zvi emphasizes demonology as part of a corrective he is offering to a hyper-

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statement 'x resembles y' is logically incomplete, for what is being asserted is not a question of the classification of species x and y as instances of a common genus, but rather a suppressed multi-term statement of analogy and difference capable of being properly expressed in formulations such as: 'x resembles y more than z with respect to…" or, "x resembles y more than w resembles z with respect to…"

My thinking on comparison has also been influenced by the important criticisms and caveats voiced by Samuel Sandmel and Peter Schäfer. See especially Sandmel, "Parallelomania," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 81 (1962): 1-13 and Schäfer, "New Testament and Hekhalot Literature: The Journey into Heaven in Paul and in Merkavah Mysticism," in *Hekhalot-Studien* (Tübingen: Mohr and Siebeck, 1988): 234 – 49.

[4] Although Rosen-Zvi never mentions the *ApocJn*, it is, as we will see, an even better *comparandum*, especially for his claim that a *single* yetzer was "the more prevalent model in rabbinic literature," Ishay Rosen-Zvi, *Demonic Desires: Yetzer Hara* and the Problem of Evil in Late Antiquity (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 57.

[5] *Man.* 6.2.1 – 4: "Hear now," he said, "about faith. A person has two angels, one of righteousness and the other of wickedness." "And how then, Lord," I asked, "will I know the inner workings of these, since both angels dwell with me?" "Listen," he said, "and you will understand these things. The angel of righteousness is sensitive, modest, meek, and mild. And so, when he rises up in your heart, he immediately speaks with you about righteousness, purity, reverence, contentment, and every upright deed…See now also the works of the angel of wickedness. First of all, he is irascible, bitter, and senseless, and his works are wicked, bringing ruin on the slaves of God."

[6] Ishay Rosen-Zvi, *Demonic Desires*, 55 – 56.

Foucaultian and Hellenizing trend in scholarship.[7] According to Rosen-Zvi, this trend has psychologized evil and uncritically employed Foucaultian concepts with the result that

> The rabbinic concept of *yetzer hara* has been incorrectly contextualized, as part of the ancient discourse of *self-control* and *self-fashioning*. It should be understood as part of the biblical and post-biblical search for the sources of human sinfulness. Rabbinic *yetzer* should therefore not be read in the tradition of the Hellenistic quest for control over the lower parts of the psyche, but rather in the tradition of Jewish and Christian demonology.[8]

Thus, according to Rosen-Zvi, we ought to avoid psychologizing sin into the desires or appetites arising from a *natural*, if lower, part of the soul.

To concretize this point, Rosen-Zvi sets up a strong contrast between demonology and psychology.[9] In so doing, Rosen-Zvi is responding also to a particular application of the burgeoning field of scholarship into "whole and divided selves."[10] In contrast to partitioning the soul,[11] the rabbinic *yetzer* is an external *intruder*, i.e., it is fundamentally *foreign* to the human person and the layers of his or her psyche.[12] Yet *Hermas*' enigmatic term for a sinner, someone who is *dipsyche* or "two / divided souled,"[13] poses some difficulty for such a radical divide

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[7] Rosen-Zvi lists (*Demonic Desires,* 136 – 7 nn. 15 – 16, 18) Jonathan Schofer, Michael Satlow, and Daniel Boyarin as noteworthy representatives of this trend.

[8] Ishay Rosen-Zvi, *Demonic Desires*, 5 – 6 (italics added).

[9] Ishay Rosen-Zvi (*Demonic Desires*, 6 – 7): "This book is thus a concerted effort to render the *yetzer* without recourse to psychology, reading it instead as a component of the ontology of evil. Indeed, much of the analytic effort of this book is dedicated to dissociate the rabbinic *yetzer* from the discourses of 'divided self' – whether figurative or real – and relocate it as part of the demonological tradition."

[10] See, for example, the extensive work by Christopher Gill, especially his *The Structured Self in Hellenistic and Roman Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006); see also **PART III** for a more thorough discussion of divided selves.

[11] For an overview of Plato's influential rendering of a divided soul in the *Republic*, see G. R. F. Ferrari, "The Three Part Soul," *The Cambridge Companion to Plato's Republic* (ed. G. R. F. Ferrari; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 165 – 201.

[12] Ishay Rosen-Zvi (*Demonic Desires,* 7): "Rabbinic *yetzer* should not be conflated with ancient concepts of the multiplicity of the psychic realm, even when taken literally as metaphysics rather than psychology. Even if one accepts the Platonic view of reason (or conscience) as a divine spirit, a *daemon*... it should still be distinguished from the idea of the *yetzer* as an external intruder into humans."

[13] In addition to *Hermas*, *dipsychia* and its cognates appear in James 1:8; 4:8; *Didache* 4.4; *Barnabas* 19.5; *1 Clement* 11.2; 23.2 – 3; *2 Clement* 11.2; 23.5; 19.2 (Carolyn Osiek, *Shepherd*, 30 n.232).

between demonology and psychology.[14] Rosen-Zvi, however, contends that this term and similar expressions are evidence of a "wider *koine* in late antiquity, in which cosmic multiplicity was transferred into the human mind, creating a 'multiplicity of the self.'"[15] Although the particulars of Rosen-Zvi's argument are at times elusive, especially as regards his construction of a "self," his distinction between demonology and psychology is, nevertheless, instructive for how *Hermas* and the *ApocJn* conceive of sinfulness and, in particular, for how each constructs remedies to it and thereby assesses moral responsibility.[16]

In the following sections, we will examine the demonological origins of human sinfulness in both the *ApocJn* and *Hermas*. Both texts contain characters (i.e., angels and demons) who tempt and compel people to sin. Accordingly, both texts depict the moral struggle

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[14] In arguing against psychologizing demons (rightly so), Rosen-Zvi, nonetheless argues (seemingly exclusively so) against a Platonic conception of psychology that distinguishes between physical and mental/psychological phenomena, thereby importing a material v. immaterial divide. As we will see below (see especially **note 16),** this was just one view of psychology in antiquity, and though it *is* what many modern readers may intuitively assume, it was *not* the most prevalent view among the ancients prior to late antiquity. For an alternative, materialistic (or monistic) conception of the *whole person* ("psychophysical holism") that differs significantly from this Platonic dualism and its divided soul, see Christopher Gill's survey in *Structured Self*; see also Brad Inwood, *Ethics and Human Action in Ancient Stoicism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), chapter 2.

[15] Ishay Rosen-Zvi, *Demonic Desires*, 7; cf. 56 – 7; Rosen-Zvi is paraphrasing Peter Brown's oft-cited passage responding to E. R. Dodds (*The Making of Late Antiquity* (Harvard University Press: Cambridge, 1978), 68, italics added): "The third-century solution of the problem of contact with the divine came from another strand in the *koiné* of the Mediterranean. It is usually said that Late Antiquity is marked by a sharpening of the dichotomy between the self and the body. 'That dichotomy comes, of course, from classical Greece – the most far-reaching, and perhaps the most questionable, of all her gifts to human culture.' Yet, for Late Antique people, the more fruitful gift of Greece was the sense of the *multiplicity of the self*." As we shall see below, however, I do not find the explanation of "multiple selves" to be the best or most economical way of clarifying what *Hermas* means by the idea of *dipsychia.*

[16] Fundamentally, Rosen-Zvi's heuristic divide between natural (psychology) and unnatural or foreign (demonology) is illuminating, though, see **notes 14** above and **notes 42 – 43** below for important caveats; his use of "self," however, is less clear. Rosen-Zvi provides a lengthy endnote to his "Afterword" (*Demonic Desires*, 212 n.5) – citing *inter alia* Marcel Mauss, Bernard Williams, and Charles Taylor – that describes the self as roughly equivalent to self-reflective consciousness that is distinct from a Platonic "inner self" or the Foucaultian idea of "self-fashioning" i.e., "becoming what you are not yet." A further "self" we should add to this list is a *symbolic space* that can be filled, emptied, or even fought over by competing powers (e.g., angels and demons).

*Hermas* and the *ApocJn* are literary texts with rhetorical agendas; as such, there is no a *single* conception of a "self" found throughout either text. My focus in this dissertation, however, will be on the final conception of a "self," i.e., the self as *symbolic space*. Nonetheless, since the term "self" has *so* many possible meanings, I will avoid this ambiguity by not using the term "self," preferring instead "person" or "people." An added resonance that I wish to make, clear, however, is that for both *Hermas* and the *ApocJn* people, psychologies, emotions, etc. are *portrayed* as *physical* stuff; see further the "physicalism" and "materialism" of ancient conceptions of the mind, emotions, and agency expertly described by Julia Annas' in her *Hellenistic Philosophy of the Mind* (Berkeley, et al.: University of California Press, 1992).

to resist sin as a battle against an external, invading force.[17] To overcome sinfulness, both contain strategies tailored to conquer demonic compulsion, rather than to control a lower yet natural part of one's own soul. Thus, Rosen-Zvi's model is especially useful for highlighting the difference between self-mastery and fighting off an external threat.

Yet, both texts blur this boundary between internal (psychological) and external (demonic) in a number of ways; most notably, the way in which each diagnoses different affinities or vulnerabilities to sin. Though each text's remedy treats sinful inclinations as an invasive threat, both *Hermas* and *ApocJn* must account for why some people are more vulnerable to demonic compulsion than others.[18] Moreover, the differing perils facing certain persons or practices further illustrate and help to explain the ethical and soteriological hierarchies we outlined in **chapter 5**. To address these risks, *Hermas* and the *ApocJn* both encourage self-reflection to recognize one's own specific and *differing* vulnerabilities to demonic influence.[19] As a result, *Hermas* and the *ApocJn*'s discussions of the origins of sin supply both theoretical explanation and practical guidance for dealing with the problem of human wrongdoing.

## The *Shepherd of Hermas*: The Dangers of Evil Angels and Permeable Persons

As we saw in the preceding chapter, *Hermas* is concerned with general human sinfulness, especially the moral failings of "good" persons. Even Hermas the self-controlled (Ἑρμᾶς ὁ ἐγκρατής) can be overcome by a wicked thought (πονηρὰ βουλὴ) and led into sin (*Vis.* 1.2.4; cf.

[17] In this way, I agree with Rosen-Zvi's claim (*Demonic Desires*, 41) that this struggle against demonic influence is fundamentally a *moral* struggle.

[18] Cf. Evagrius Ponticus who practiced personalized demonological discernment; see David Brakke's excellent chapter on Evagrius in his *Demons and the Making of the Monk: Spiritual Combat in Early Christianity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), 48 – 77.

[19] See B. Diane Lipsett's similar characterization (*Desiring Conversion: Hermas, Thecla, Aseneth* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 52): "Each person has the duty to know who he is, that is, to try and know what is happening inside him, to acknowledge faults, to recognize temptations, to locate desires; and everyone is obliged to disclose these things either to God or to others in the community, and hence, to bear public or private witness against oneself."

*Sim.* 7). Why, however, would a person, especially a *good* person like Hermas, sin? What could compel him, or any of the other "saints," to sin? (*Vis.* 2.2.4) And what can an upright person do to stand fast and not fall into sin (again)? *Hermas* claims that the source of human sinfulness is an external and hostile force, variously described as an angel or, in some cases, specifically as the devil (e.g., *Man.* 12.5). Furthermore, although everyone is at risk, certain persons are even more prone to falling back into sin under this demonic compulsion. This is due to their competing and conflicted commitments, which, according to *Hermas*, marks them as *dipsychoi*. Resisting sin, then, requires a two-directional defense: an external one aimed at pre-empting the pernicious efforts of this hostile angel, but also an internal and self-reflective process whereby a person acknowledges the elements of his or her own character and social position that may make a person more likely to become *dipsychos* and thus dangerously vulnerable to the temptation to sin (*Sim*. 8.8 – 11; *Man.* 10.1; cf. *Vis*. 3.6 and 3.9).

Throughout the *Mandates* and the *Similitudes*, the angel of repentance explains to Hermas what the nature of sin is and why it is so difficult for Christians to resist falling back into sinfulness. Most prominently in *Mandates* 6, *Hermas* maintains that there are two, opposing angels who can enter into the heart of every person: an angel of righteousness (δικαιοσύνης) and one of wickedness (πονηρίας).[20] Since both are angels, a person can recognize and distinguish between them only on account of their differing activities and effects. The angel of righteousness is associated with a series of beneficial traits and works. As such, when the angel of righteousness rises up, "he straightaway speaks with you about righteousness, purity (ἁγνείας), reverence (σεμνότητος), self-sufficiency/ contentment (αὐταρκείας),[21] and every righteous deed and every glorious virtue." (*Man*. 6.2.3) In contrast, the angel of wickedness is

[20] On the Jewish background for the idea of wicked angels, see the following section.
[21] See Carolyn Osiek's discussion (*Shepherd*, 124) of the Christian associations for this term and its connection with Stoic ethical theory.

linked to a list of negative characteristics and actions. Thus, when this angel enters into a person, he provokes a person towards "irascibility or bitterness…desire of extravagant foods (πολυτέλειαι ἐδεσμάτων), drinking bouts (μεθυσμάτων), carousing (κραιπαλῶν), fancy delicacies (ποικίλων τρυφῶν), desire for women (ἐπιθυμίαι γυναικῶν), greed (πλεονεξία), arrogance (ὑπερηφανία), pretentiousness (ἀλαζονεία), and everything that is closely aligned to these." (*Man*. 6.2.5)

Although this picture superficially resembles the "two ways tradition" of the *Didache* (1 – 6)[22] in which there are two types of conduct (good vs. evil) that a person must choose between,[23] *Hermas* does not ascribe to people the volitional freedom to select between these two angels.[24] Instead, a person is subject to the compulsions of whichever angel may, at that time, exert control over his or her heart.

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[22] *Didache* 1:1: "There are two ways, one to life and one to death, but the difference between the two ways is great." Translation from Kurt Niederwimmer *The Didache*: *A Commentary* (translated by Linda Maloney; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998), 59.

[23] A number of scholars have claimed that various Jewish (*e.g., 1 QS's Treatise on the Two Spirits,* the supposedly Jewish *Testament of Asher*, et al.) and Christian texts (e.g., the *Didache, Barnabas, Didascalia, Canons of the Apostles*, et al.) transmit a version of an early "two-ways" source; moreover, these scholars have attempted to trace the historical development of this source to uncover its origins. Emblematic of this genealogical approach is the article by John S. Kloppenborg, who offers a stemma outlining the literary relationships of various *Christian* texts to this putative source on the basis of doctrinal differences. See Kloppenborg, "The Transformation of Moral Exhortation in *Didache* 1 – 5," in *The Didache in Context: Essays on Its Text, History, and Transmission* (ed. Clayton Jefford; Leiden: Brill, 1995), 88 – 109, stemma on 92.

An alternative approach (and better one, I think) is to use the "two ways" as a typological grouping of texts, comprised of individual or sub-groups of texts that *may* (and in some cases certainly do) have historical inter-relationships; all of which, however, share a *typologically similar* rhetorical technology – a radical, all-encompassing divide – that is meant to encourage its audience to abide by a certain ethical standard. In this characterization, I draw upon but also disagree with M. Jack Suggs' article "The Christian Two Ways Tradition: Its Antiquity, Form, and Function," *Studies in New Testament and Early Christian Literature: Essays in Honor of Allen P. Wikgren* (ed. David Edward Aune; Leiden: Brill, 1972), 60 – 74; in particular, I agree with his claim (63 – 4) that "the metaphor of 'two paths' is such a natural rhetorical device that it should be obvious that considerably more than the metaphor itself is needed to establish connections;" I do not believe, however, that the features he lists (e.g., "sharply dualistic, lists of 'virtues' and 'vices,' and concluding eschatological admonition") are sufficiently unique to engage in source-critical arguments. Moreover, a genealogical approach investigating issues of dependence and development does not satisfactorily encompasses nor elucidate the diversity of formations of the "two ways" in early Jewish and Christian sources.

[24] Neither, in fact, does another text, *1 QS* 3.13 – 4.26, often included among the "two ways tradition"; see, in contrast, *T. Ash.* 1.3 – 8. For a more in depth discussion of choice and volition, see further **PART III** of the dissertation.

> For even if someone is a most faithful (πιστότατος) man, should the thought (ἐνθύμησις) of the [wicked] angel rise up in his heart, then that man or woman *must* (δεῖ) commit a sin (ἐξαμαρτῆσαί τι). On the other hand, even if someone is a most wicked (πονηρότατός) man or woman, should the works of the angel of righteousness rise up in the heart of that one, then he or she *necessarily must* (ἐξ ἀνάγκης δεῖ) do something good (ἀγαθόν τι ποιῆσαι). (*Man*. 6.2.7 – 8)

Character, whether praiseworthy or blameworthy, is no stable indicator of future conduct.[25] According to *Hermas*, people are exceedingly permeable[26] and thus susceptible to external, angelic compulsion.[27] Although there are precautions and strategies for resisting such angelic puppetry, it is *not* something that is up to an internal, deliberative choice between alternatives. Thus, according to *Hermas*, sinfulness (as well as righteousness) can arise due to external forces and not through a person's conscious choice.[28]

These two opposing angels, therefore, are not stylized or literary representations of lower and higher parts of the agent's very own soul between which a third and governing part of a person must select.[29] As we will see below, the *person* is described as the *container* for these

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[25] In contrast, this idea is near-axiomatic for many ancient philosophers, especially the Stoics, for whom free or autonomous choice is not incompatible with the idea that our choices are still causally determined by who we are, i.e., our experiences, current mental states, and moral formation or character. In other words, the Stoics, like most ancient thinkers, did not ascribe to a person a completely free will that could in identical circumstances choose either to cross the street or to remain where he or she is from sheer capriciousness. See further Susanne Bobzien, The Inadvertent Conception and Late Birth of the Free-will Problem." *Phronesis* 43 (1998): 133–175; eadem, "Did Epicurus Discover the Free Will Problem?" in *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy XIX* (ed. David Sedley; Oxford University Press 2000), 287–337; Ricardo Salles, *The Stoics on Determinism and Compatibilism* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2005); and Michael Frede, *A Free Will: Origins of a Notion in Ancient Thought* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011). I will return to these very same issues in **Chapter 8** of **PART III**.

[26] For the permeability of people, see further Dale Martin, *The Corinthian Body* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), especially Part II: Pollution.

[27] This materiality/physicality of both angels and humans (see below) bypasses an ancient philosophical puzzle – often subsumed within the dualistic (Platonic) soul/mind v. body problem – of how something immaterial could control or affect something material. For a concise overview of this problem, see further John Dillon, "How Does the Soul Direct the Body, After All? Traces of a dispute on mind-body relations in the Old Academy." *Body and Soul in Ancient Philosophy* (ed. Dorothea Frede and Burkhard Reis; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter; 2009), 349 – 56. *Hermas*' physical assumptions appear to closely align with Stoic arguments that both mind and body are material, even if one (mind) is more rarified (Julia Annas, *Hellenistic Philosophy*, chapter 2).

[28] At this point, it is anachronistic and misleading to refer to the concept of a free will, which imports additional ideas and concepts not yet invented or popularized. See below for my discussion of the difficulties of this idea.

[29] See *The Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs* (*Test. Ash* 1; cf. *Test*. *Jud*. 20), which describes the moral struggle of a person to overcome wicked impulses as a battle against opposing dispositions or spirits in one's own heart;

two forces, which can be expelled and *removed* from the person. To further illustrate the specific contours of this conception of a person, let us consider two parallels that may seem structurally analogous yet differ in significant and illuminating ways. *4 Ezra*'s use of the opposition between an evil heart and the Torah within a person appears markedly similar to *Hermas*' opposing angels; although its author suggests that the evil heart is not (or no longer) foreign but natural to all descendants of Adam (*4 Ezra* 3:20 – 22, 26; cf. 4:30; 7:118).[30] Through its figural language, especially the metaphor of seeds, *4 Ezra* emphasizes the natural and inborn status of this evil heart.[31] By contrast, the erudite and eclectic Christian teacher Clement of Alexandria (*Strom*. 2.20.110 – 11) *did* conceive of evil impulses as foreign entities; however, he also ascribed to people the volitional power to either assent to or reject these impulses *on their own*. Unlike *4 Ezra* or Clement then, *Hermas* portrays the demonic origins of human sinfulness as something both *foreign* and *overpowering*.

Despite this demonological explanation of good and evil conduct, *Hermas* does not absolve individuals from responsibility for their behavior. On the contrary, *Hermas* employs this demonic source of evil to exhort its readers towards moral preparedness. Employing a series of spatial metaphors of various containers, *Hermas* argues that the best defense against demonic invasion is to ensure that there is no *room* in a person's heart for a wicked entity to enter and inhabit. Analogizing people to wine jugs, *Mandate* 12 claims that so long as a person is full of "wine," there is no room for the devil to enter; however, if he or she is only half-full, "[the devil] comes to those who are partially empty (ἀποκένους), and because there is room, he enters them; he does whatever he wishes, and they become his obedient slaves (ὑπόδουλοι)." (*Man.* 12.5.4)

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moreover, a person's "conscience" is between (e.g., *Test. Jud.* 20.2: καὶ μέσον ἐστὶ τοτῆς συνέσεως τοῦ νοός) and able to select between the two.

[30] Cf. Ishay Rosen-Zvi, *Demonic Desires*, 180, 184

[31] See **PART III** for further discussion of the language of sowing and seeds.

As the passage continues, the Shepherd explains that the "wine" a person ought to fill him/herself with is the habituated and habituating practices of obeying the commandments (*Man*. 12.6).[32] This has a striking parallel to a passage from rabbinic literature where Torah-observance is a bandage against demonic attack, and this bandage must be constantly worn and maintained in order to be effective.

> *Therefore impress these My words upon your heart* (Deut. 11:18) – this tells us that the words of the Torah are like an elixir of life. This is comparable to a king who was angry with his son, struck him a violent blow, and placed a bandage on the wound. He told him: My son, as long as this bandage remains on your wound, you may eat whatever you please and drink whatever you please, and bathe either in hot or cold water, and you will come to no harm.[33] But if you remove it, it will immediately fester…be occupied with the words of Torah and [the evil *yetzer*] will not reign over you, as it is said (Gen 4:7): *sin crouches at the door, its urge is toward you*…[34]

Thus, the bandages and the wine are physical representations of persistent and daily practices – practices meant to keep a person protected from demonic compulsion, i.e., from the *spatial intrusion* of such a demonic force. For both this rabbinic example and *Hermas*, the ongoing contests against demonic compulsion are portrayed through physical imagery and metaphor.

By contrast, those who fill their hearts with wickedness increase their predilection for immoral conduct. Just as filling up one's heart with "wine" reduces demonic access due to spatial constraints, so too does filling a heart with wickedness make it less habitable for the Holy Spirit. When a heart become polluted by wickedness, the Holy Spirit, who is also imagined as an

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[32] By "habituated," I mean that these practices are repeated until they become internalized as ethical *dispositions*. See further Albrecht Dihle, *The Theory of Will in Classical Antiquity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), 56: "[Aristotle] defines virtue neither as *dunamis* – that is to say a natural gift or faculty – nor as *epistemē* – theoretical knowledge acquired through intellectual activity – but as a disposition of the soul (*exis*). The disposition results, on the basis of natural faculties, from permanently acting in accordance with the virtue in question. So man does not acquire a justice which enables him to act justly. On the contrary, by practicing justice in a chain of individual acts he becomes just. This practice, however, ought not to be sheer habit. Every act in that process has to be intentional and thus subject to moral judgment."

[33] The superiority of Torah-practice and its ability to grant complete freedom is *not* paralleled by *Hermas* or the *ApocJn*; both express concern that certain behaviors are slippery slopes towards sinfulness and demonic influence.

[34] *Sifre Deut* 45, translated by Ishay Rosen-Zvi (*Demonic Desires,* 21, italics in original).

occupant of the heart, may find that such a person's heart feels "cramped" and will thus vacate, increasing the person's susceptibility to compulsion by evil angels (*Man*. 5; cf. *Man.* 10.2). For *Hermas*, therefore, the struggle to resist demonic compulsion does not come down to the proper, volitional response (e.g., assenting to the correct angel) at a decisive moment of temptation and choice; rather, *Hermas* encourages moral preparedness.[35] If a person has not prophylactically filled him or herself with the proper *stuff* prior to an attack by an evil angel, it is already too late.

What might stop a person from preparing for and defending against compulsion by an evil angel? *Hermas* is remarkably sensitive to the competing interests and divided loyalties of many of its Christian brethren. In particular, *Hermas* highlights the dangers that certain *circumstances* present to wholeheartedly obeying the commandments (e.g., *Man*. 8), in particular tragedy and financial success. These circumstances could lead to improper emotional responses (e.g., λύπη or "grief")[36] in the first case or in the latter case holding onto incongruous loyalties, thereby becoming a double-minded (*dipsychos*) person. As a result, these circumstances – when unrecognized for their potential dangers – could increase a person's likelihood of falling under demonic compulsion and sinning again. Thus, *Hermas* encouraged self-scrutiny and increased self-awareness by describing the risks these conditions could pose. Grief, according to *Hermas* (*Man.* 10.2 – 3) renders the prayers of a person ineffective

> "Because," [the Shepherd] said, "when grief lounges in his heart, grief is thereby mixed with the petition and does not allow it to rise pure onto the altar. For just as vinegar mixed with wine does not produce the same pleasure, so too does grief mixed with the Holy Spirit not produce the same petition." (*Man*. 10.3.3)

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[35] For a summary of Stoic ideas of assent and its internal (as opposed to external) role in moral responsibility, see further "'Humanity Came to Be According to Three Essential Types': Ethical Responsibility and Practice in the Valentinian Anthropogony of the Tripartite Tractate (NHC I, 5)." in *Jewish and Christian Cosmogony in Late Antiquity* (eds. Lance Jenott and Sarit Kattan Gribetz; Tübingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 2013), 193 – 221; and **PART III** of this dissertation.

[36] "Irascibility" (ὀξυχολία) was also a danger, according to *Hermas*; it was, however, less so than grief (*Man.* 10.1).

Grief here is described as a physical entity *distinct* from the person. As a physical entity that dwells *within* a person, it cannot cohabitate with the Holy Spirit or Spirit of God (τὸ πνεῦμα τοῦ θεοῦ), who, since it too occupies space,[37] cannot stand to be mixed with the polluting vinegar of Grief.[38]

Like Grief, *Hermas* describes the malady of *dipsychia* (e.g., *Man.* 9) and its impact (e.g., *Man*. 11) through spatial analogies that portray the person as a vessel or container.[39] *Dipsychia*, which has a special prominence in *Hermas*,[40] refers to a person who has divided, and in *Hermas*' view, incompatible commitments; often these divided loyalties include financial concerns or status among outsiders.[41] Attracting like to like, when a person holds opposing commitments, *dipsychia* enters into him or her (*Man*. 9). Through this rhetorical portrayal of *dipsychia* as an invading force, *Hermas* also echoes the Hellenistic sensibility that emotions, the soul, and the human mind are all *physical*, i.e., comprised of bodies that occupy space and thus can act and be

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[37] Remarkably, *Hermas* (Man. 10.2.6) describes the Spirit of God as entering into the *flesh* (εἰς τὴν σάρκα).

[38] In this, *Hermas* may be making use of or alluding to Stoic ideas of blending/mixing v. juxtaposition. Although sharing space within a person, grief and the Holy Spirit both retain their original properties but also clearly remain distinct entities; thus they do not blend or form a "new stuff." See Julia Annas' helpful summary (*Hellenistic Philosophy*, 47 – 8) distinguishing among juxtaposition, fusion, and blending: "In Stoic physics, there are three ways in which stuffs can be related. One is juxtaposition, of which an example is a mixture of beans and grains of wheat…they do not blend; the stuffs retain their own properties because they do not form a new stuff. Another is fusion, as in cooking. The eggs, flour, and other ingredients form a new stuff with new properties; they do not retain their own properties and are not recoverable from the new stuff. The third is total blending. Two stuffs are blended through and through so that there is no part of the blended mixture which does not consist of both; yet each of the stuffs retains its own properties and is in principle recoverable from the blending." See also the passages gathered together by A. A. Long and David Sedley in *The Hellenistic Philosophers Volume 1: Translations of the Principal Sources with Philosophical Commentary* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 48.

[39] Although the body is frequently described as the container for the soul by a number of ancient thinkers, this differs from *Hermas* who contends that the *container* is the whole *person*, who can then be invaded and filled with good or evil impulses. For the more standard position of the body as a container to be filled with various psychic (demonic, mental, etc.) forces, see Keimpe Algra, "Stoics on Souls and Demons: Reconstructing Stoic Demonology" in *Body and Soul in Ancient Philosophy* (ed. Dorothea Frede and Burkhand Reis; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2009), 359 – 87.

[40] Carolyn Osiek, *Shepherd*, 30: "*Dipsychia* ("double-soulness" or "doublemindedness") and its related verb and adjective occur 55 times in *Hermas* … as contrasted to a total of 10 times in all other early Christian literature (see **note 13** above**)** up to this time."

[41] *Pace* J. Reiling (*Hermas and Christian Prophecy: A Study of the Eleventh Mandate* (Leiden: Brill, 1973), 32 – 33) who reduces *dipsychos* to simply the opposite of whole-minded/hearted faith without attention to social contexts and implications. See, in contrast, Patricia Cox Miller, *Dreams in Late Antiquity: Studies in the Imagination of a Culture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 143 – 45.

acted upon.[42] *Hermas*, however, characterizes emotional states as invasive and personified forces that dwell within the heart of a person.[43] By demonizing emotions as well as sin, *Hermas* can offer distinctive strategies tailored for his *materialist* constructions of demonic compulsion and persons.

Whether Hermas intended the *physicality* of these emotions or demons to be *merely* metaphors or to be an accurate portrait of their actual nature is besides the point here. What is important for our purposes is that by representing the problem posed by a *physical* threat (e.g., a demon or emotion) against a person (represented as *physical* space), *Hermas* could offer solutions similarly couched in spatial rhetoric. Put simply, we must *fill* up on what is right to resist the intrusive compulsions of what is wrong. Furthermore, to prophylactically defend ourselves, as a symbolic space,[44] from this demonic invasion we need to exercise self-scrutiny to prepare against circumstances and commitments that might increase our vulnerability of falling back into sin.

To summarize, human sinfulness and wrongdoing are not something wholly external or internal to a person; instead, they are a confluence of differing circumstances and causes.[45]

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[42] A. A. Long, *Hellenistic Philosophy: Stoics, Epicureans, Sceptics* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1974), 153. According to materialist philosophers, all of existence is comprised of physical phenomena; see Julia Annas (*Hellenistic Philosophy*, 3 – 4) who contrast Hellenistic physicalism with the marginal and "far from dominant" view of Platonic dualism, which differentiates between physical things and mental or psychological phenomena and assumes that each (physical v. mental) requires a different method of enquiry.

[43] In contrast, the Stoics, for example, were (in)famous for conceiving of emotions as erroneous belief or uncontrolled impulses, i.e., mental events generated through a misfiring of a person's reasoning faculties (cf. Long and Sedley, *Hellenistic Philosophers*, 65A: Stobaeus 2.88,8 – 90,6 (*SVF* 3.378, 389, part)). Accordingly, they developed strategies for scrutinizing and rejecting such impressions and corresponding beliefs that required a person to inculcate the right beliefs and fortify his or her character to resist assenting to these emotional impulses.

*Hermas*, on the other hand, portrays emotions as demons; and demons, according to *Hermas*, are not mental events and thus cannot be refuted by withholding assent. As we saw above, demons are invasive forces that can easily overpower even the good person, *if there is space available* in his or her heart. Thus, different strategies are required.

[44] See **note 16** above.

[45] In this way, sin, though caused by external, demonic compulsion, still requires additional, collaborating causes that are both outside our control as well as "up to us." For a discussion of the idea of "up to us" and its importance for ancient discussions of moral responsibility, see **PART III** of this dissertation.

Nevertheless, due to their permeability, people are constantly at risk of demonic invasion and compulsion. Returning to the soteriological hierarchy we outlined in **chapter 5**, this permeability of persons makes sense of why even *good* people can still fall back into sin. Furthermore, by offering this explanation of moral hierarchy, *Hermas* reinforces and justifies its soteriological hierarchy. And finally, although never systematically elaborated,[46] *Hermas*' treatment of sinfulness provides a multilayered answer to the question "why would the saved sin again?" that makes use of real world examples and circumstances. Furthermore, *Hermas*' practical recommendations for preparing against demonic compulsion *rhetorically* highlight the physicality of both human persons (including mind or soul) and demonic influence *so that* it can offer pragmatic techniques designed to insulate the human person, as a physical phenomenon, against foreign, demonic contamination.

## The *Apocryphon of John*: Warring Against the Counterfeit Spirit

Similar to *Hermas*, the *ApocJn* also attributes human sinfulness to demonic causes. Although the *ApocJn*'s account of moral struggles cannot be understood apart from its layered and inter-related narrative of the fall of Sophia, the archontic creation of the world and humanity, and the agonistic series of moves and countermoves propelling salvation history,[47] I will focus on the role of the Counterfeit Spirit in human wrongdoing.[48]

[46] There are several questions left unresolved; perhaps most perplexing: are demons the source for ALL sin or simply the specific cases that *Hermas* discusses?
[47] See **Chapter Five**.
[48] Certainly, Ialdabaoth and the archons are also demonic, but my emphasis will be specifically upon the Counterfeit Spirit; I will briefly consider the archons vis-à-vis their role in the construction of Adam's body at the end of this section.

While the archontic creation of the body is significant, it does *not*, however, entail that the body is *the* source for evil or evil itself; rather this composite creation is a battleground.[49] The body may be a rich target for demonic compulsion but it also encompasses the means for resisting such demonic influence. Thus, like the temporal world itself, the body is simultaneously a mix of possible pitfalls and dangers as well as the locus for redemption, especially for those requiring remedial metempsychosis (*BG* 68.13 – 70.8; *NHC* II 26.32 – 27.21). In contrast, the Counterfeit Spirit – one of the greatest strategies of Ialdabaoth and his archontic colleagues to recapture Sophia's lost power – serves *no other purpose* than to lead humanity astray.[50] This Counterfeit Spirit is able to push seemingly stalwart Christians into sin and eventually apostasy; thus, it is against the demonic Counterfeit Spirit that the *ApocJn* offers strategies for overcoming human sinfulness.

After Ialdabaoth and his demonic colleagues are deceived into creating humanity and thereby lose Sophia's captured power, they respond with a series of failed attempts to reclaim this power. Every attempt, e.g., casting Adam into lowest material realm (*BG* 52.15 – 54.9; *NHC* II, 20.7 – 20.31), introducing human mortality (*BG* 54.9 – 55.18; *NHC* II, 20.32 – 29.16), and the deception and temptation in the garden (*BG* 56.18 – 58.10; *NHC* II 21.30 – 22.18), was foiled by divine intervention.[51] Although Adam's freedom was diminished as a result of these

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[49] *Pace* Zlatko Pleše who cites the *ApocJn*'s account of the creation of Adam as evidence that the body is a major source for evil; see Pleše, "Evil and Its Sources in Gnostic Traditions," in *Die Wurzel allen Übels: Vorstellungen über die Herkunft des Bösen und Schlechten in der Philosophie und Religiondes 1.–4. Jahrhunderts* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), 118.

In contrast it is better to construe the body as setting practical limits on conduct, analogous to other natural laws. In this way, though the body may limit absolute freedom and it can be dangerous, it is not evil. Moreover, this demarcation of human capacity is *pragmatic*. It does not remove the possibility for "purposefulness" in action, but rather it addresses why people are in the state they are in, what their practical limitations are, and what they are still expected to do. *(Pace* Karen King, The Body and Society in the *Apocryphon of John*," in *The School of Moses: Studies in Philo and Hellenistic Religion* (ed. Peter John Kenney; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995), 96.

[50] This characterization parallels Ishay Rosen-Zvi's description of the *yetzer* as "antinomian," i.e., interested in sin for sin's sake; cf. Rosen-Zvi, *Demonic Desires,* 6.

[51] Michael Williams, *Rethinking "Gnosticism": An Argument for Dismantling a Dubious Category* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 11 – 13; 67 – 79.

archontic attempts, he remains superior to these demonic rulers and does not fall victim to their efforts to make him forget his own origins and "perfection" (ⲡⲥ̅ⲧⲱⲕ; *BG* 56. 16 – 17; cf. *BG* 54.5 – 11; 55.17 – 18; 58.8 – 10).[52] In other words, these early attempts do not result in human sinfulness; rather they explain the origins of the limited and mixed (both salutary and pernicious) facets of the embodied person.[53] Patricia Cox Miller's comments on the late antique ascetic view of the body are apropos here: "the body was perceived to be problematic, not because it was a body, but it was not a body of plenitude."[54] Similarly, when compared to the highest echelons of reality, the human body is remarkably inferior and limited; yet it is *not* evil, nor is it even the source of evil.[55]

It is not until the separation of Eve from Adam and her subsequent rape by Ialdabaoth that the *ApocJn* introduces human wrong-doing or sinfulness (*BG* 58.6 – 64.13; *NHC* II 22.15 – 25.16). Frustrated by the failure of their previous attempts, Ialdabaoth and his colleagues place Adam into a "trance" in order to extract the divinely infused "power" (*BG* 58.11: ⲧ6ⲟⲙ) and

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[52] Adam has an active role in *NHC* II, 22.15 – 18 as opposed to *BG* 58.8 – 10's terse rendering:

| ***BG* 58.8 – 10** | ***NHC* II, 22.15 – 18** |
|---|---|
| And he [the Chief Ruler] knew that she (ⲉⲡⲉⲓⲛⲟⲁ) would not obey him because she was wiser than him. | And he [Adam] was disobedient to him [the Chief Ruler] because of the light of ⲉⲡⲉⲓⲛⲟⲁ who is in him, which set straight his thought (ⲡⲉⲥⲙⲉⲉⲩⲉ) above that of the Chief Ruler (ⲡⲫⲟⲣⲡ ⲛ̅ⲁⲣⲭⲱⲛ). |

[53] Understanding the limits of human freedom was major topic in ancient philosophy. See, for example, the excellent discussion of autonomy of decision v. freedom of action (i.e., deciding to cross a street v. *actually* crossing a street) found in Michael Frede's *A Free Will*, chapter 3. See also Susanne Bobzien, "Stoic Conceptions of Freedom and their Relation to Ethics," in *Aristotle and After* (ed. Richard Sorabji; London: Institute of Classical Studies, School of Advanced Study, University of London, 1997), 71-89.

[54] Patrica Cox Miller, "Dreaming the Body: An Aesthetics of Asceticism" *Asceticism* (ed. Vincent Wimbush and Richard Valantasis; New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 281 – 82.

[55] Cf. Seneca (*Ep.* 65) and Epictetus (*diss.* 1.9) who, drawing on Plato's *Phaedo*, both portray the body as a prison from which the soul will be released. So too with these Stoics (e.g., Epictetus, *diss*. 1.3), however, the *ApocJn*'s devaluaing of the body reinforces its relative hierarchy and proper orientation. Thus, this anti-body language was meant to curtail and warn against attachments and inculcate *indifference* to the body and its passions. Consequently, as A. A. Long clarifies, this does not entail extreme asceticism or body mortification; rather, "to actualize our divine kinship, we need to treat our minds as the exclusive locus of our human identity. That project requires us to regard our bodies as merely instrumental to our lives and as distinct from our essential selves, but these are not reasons for neglecting the body…by minimizing the importance of the body, Epictetus keeps his focus on the mind as the essential bearer of human identity." Long, *Epictetus: A Stoic and Socratic Guide to Life* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002), 159 – 60.

"reflection of light" (*BG* 59.7 – 7: ϵⲡϵⲓⲛⲟⲓⲁ ⲙⲡⲟⲩⲟⲓⲛ) that had thus far enabled Adam to resist the demonic machinations.[56] Yet, despite his efforts to capture her, the Chief Ruler could not grasp ϵⲡϵⲓⲛⲟⲓⲁ (*BG* 59.8 – 12; *NHC* II 22.29 – 32).[57] Instead and continuing its exegetical expansion and adaptation of Genesis 2, the *ApocJn* narrates how Ialdabaoth constructed a form in the shape of a woman, i.e., Eve, by means of the essence (ⲧϵϥⲟⲩⲥⲓⲁ) of Adam (*BG* 59.12 – 60.19).[58]

Upon seeing Eve, Adam is "awakened" from the trance that had dulled his senses (*BG* 59.20 – 60. 2; *NHC* II 23. 4 – 8). In contrast to Adam's virtuous response, Ialdabaoth immediately rapes Eve upon seeing her (*BG* 62.8 – 20; *NHC* II 24.15 – 25). As a product of their illicit union, she begets Eloim and Yave who are later called Abel and Cain, thereby blending exegesis of Genesis 2 – 3 with 6:1 – 4. An additional by-product of Ialdabaoth's rape of Eve is sexual procreation through marriage (*BG* 63.3: ⲡⲥⲩⲛⲟⲩⲥⲓⲁ ⲙ̄ⲡⲅⲁⲙⲟⲥ).[59] Sexual congress transmits the Counterfeit Spirit, previously mentioned as a feature of Adam's bodily tomb or prison,[60] to subsequent generations *without* transmitting the divine infusion of power

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[56] The *ApocJn* engages directly and offers its own correction to Genesis here claiming that this trance, "unlike what Moses said" (*BG* 58.16 – 18; *NHC* II 22.22 – 24), was not sleep but the deprivation of Adam's perception (ⲁⲓⲥⲑⲏⲥⲓⲥ; *BG* 58.19; *NHC* II 22.25).

[57] ϵⲡϵⲓⲛⲟⲓⲁ: ϵⲡϵⲓⲛⲟⲓⲁ ⲙ̄ⲡⲟⲩⲟϵⲓⲛ.

[58] This is a point on which the shorter and longer recensions have important differences. The *Berlin Codex* emphasizes their *essential/substantial similarities* insofar as Eve possesses Adam's ⲟⲩⲥⲓⲁ (*BG* 60.4). In contrast, *NHC* II states that Eve is based on the likeness of the reflection (*NHC* II 22.35 – 36: ⲕⲁⲧⲁ ⲡⲓⲛⲉ ⲛ̄ⲧϵⲡⲓⲛⲟⲓⲁ) and was Adam's *likeness* (*NHC* II 23.9: ⲡⲉϥⲉⲓⲛⲉ) rather than his essence/substance. This shift, as elsewhere (*BG* 63.13, 19; *NHC* 24.35, 25.4) where *BG* and *NHC* II render ⲟⲩⲥⲓⲁ and ⲉⲓⲛⲉ respectively, may reflect a discomfort on the part of the longer recension with connecting the core identify of a person with materialist language like ⲟⲩⲥⲓⲁ; especially when it is through the body/flesh that the Counterfeit Spirit was transmitted.

[59] On the diversity of opinions in early Christianity on marriage and sexuality, see Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata* III.

[60] *BG* (54.11 – 55.13) and *NHC* II (20.23 – 21.13) both present this Counterfeit (ⲁⲛⲧⲓⲙⲓⲙⲟⲛ) or Contrary (ⲁⲛⲧⲓⲕⲉⲓⲙⲉⲛⲟⲛ) Spirit as an integral part in the archontic construction of Adam's body or "prison." *BG* (56.14 – 17) further states that the Counterfeit Spirit was created in order to "lead him astray."

*BG* (55.8 – 9) does contain a singular reading of ⲁⲛⲧⲓⲕⲉⲓⲙⲉⲛⲟⲛ (cf. *NHC* III 26.19: ⲁⲛⲧⲓⲙⲓⲙⲟⲛ). Deciding whether this indicates corruption in the manuscript tradition or that *BG* simply used another title or characteristic for the Counterfeit at 55.8 – 9 does not concern me here. It appears that both ⲁⲛⲧⲓⲙⲓⲙⲟⲛ and

that enabled Adam himself to resist this demonic character (*BG* 63.1 – 64.12; *NHC* II 24.26 – 25.16).

The *ApocJn*'s sexualized, demonological etiology of sin resembles some elements of motif of the fallen angels who, according to an influential interpretation of Genesis 6, raped women and introduced evil to humanity.[61] In fact, *ApocJn* provides a *second* etiology for human sinfulness, which much more closely resembles the Enochic story of fallen angels (1 Enoch 6 – 16) who rape the daughters of men and produce unnatural offspring but also bring illicit products and knowledge to corrupt humanity (*BG* 73.19 – 75.14; *NHC* II 29.16 – 30.11).[62] In this second version, the *ApocJn* alters the chronology of the biblical account so that it is Noah's daughters who were raped by Ialdabaoth's fallen angels. Through the Counterfeit Spirit,[63] these fallen angels assume the appearance of their husbands and seduce Noah's daughters as well as corrupt them with the temptations of fine goods (e.g., good and silver) and metallurgy (iron and copper). As a result, their offspring – and thus all of humanity[64] – are doubly burdened with sinful inclinations since we are both the products of the sexual congress of this Counterfeit Spirit

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ⲁⲛⲧⲓⲕⲉⲓⲙⲉⲛⲟⲛ reference what, for the sake of convenience, I call the Counterfeit Spirit; see especially *BG*'s continuation of the same thread and its use of ⲁⲛⲧⲓⲙⲓⲙⲟⲛ at 56.14.

[61] See Loren Stuckenbruck, "The 'Angels' and 'Giants' of Genesis 6:1-4 in Second and Third Century BCE Jewish Interpretation: Reflections on the Posture of Early Apocalyptic Traditions," *Dead Sea Discoveries* 7. 3 (2000): 354 – 77; Annette Yoshiko Reed, *Fallen Angels and the History of Judaism and Christianity: The Reception of Enochic Literature* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

[62] See Karen King (*The Secret Revelation of John* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), 109) who offers an interpretation of this passage that emphasizes the *deception* of the angels as part of her argument that the *ApocJn* is best understood not as an *overtly* political text but as a *subversive*, anti-Roman imperial text (*Secret Revelation*, 157 – 73). Although I agree with King's claims that the *ApocJn* is utopian, I do not agree with her implications that this counsels disengagement or disinterest in *practical* (i.e., everyday) ethical concerns or that the *ApocJn* ought to be understood as a proto-type for post-colonial theory and empire criticism. On this latter point, see Michael Williams, *Rethinking Gnosticism*, chapter 5.

[63] The longer version, likely recognizing the repetition and incompatibility of *two* accounts for the creation of the Counterfeit Spirit, refers here (e.g., *NHC* II 29.24, 30.11; cf. 26.27, 36) to this demonic entity as the *Despicable* or *Bitter* Spirit (ⲡⲛ̅ⲁ̅ ⲉⲧⲱⲏⲥ).

[64] *NHC* II 30.4 – 7: "And the whole of creation became enslaved forever, from the foundation of the world until now."

"mixed with darkness and evil" (*BG* 74.13 – 16; cf. *NHC* II 29.28 – 29) and continue to be tempted by these illicit technologies and gifts (*BG* 74. 16 – 75.3; *NHC* II 29.30 – 30.2).

Although this second account of the Counterfeit Spirit differs from the first,[65] the importance of this elaborate and agonistic pre-history is that it explains the situation that humanity finds itself in now. The Counterfeit Spirit, linked to Adam's fleshly body or "prison" (*BG* 55.9 – 13; cf. *BG* 56.14 – 15), is no longer kept at bay by divine intervention (*BG* 63.18 – 64.13; *NHC* 25.2 – 25.16); instead, operating analogously to *Hermas*' materialistic evil angels, it is portrayed as a *physical* entity that dwells *in* the flesh and seeks to lead people astray. In either version, therefore, these demonic characters are members of an alternative – but ultimately suppressed[66] – narrative for the origins of human sin that differs from the anthropocentric idea that Adam's disobedience in the Garden was the source for human wrongdoing.[67]

On this point, the *ApocJn* and its near-contemporary Justin Martyr (2 *Apology* 5)[68] agree: the origins of human sinfulness may lie outside of the human mind or heart insofar as it was either fallen angels or demons[69] who were first responsible.[70]

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[65] This may provide evidence of the spliced and diverse textual traditions underlying the uneven transmission history of the ApocJn; see also the difference between the insider terminologies of the Immovable Race (*BG* 65.2 – 3; *NHC* II 25.23) as opposed to the seed of Seth (*BG* 36.2 – 7; *NHC* II 9. 14 – 17).

[66] See, for example, Ishay Rosen-Zvi's description (*Demonic Desires*, 54) of Philo's suppression of demonic responsibility in favor of ascribing blame to the individual (e.g., *de Spec. Leg*. 1, 89).

[67] Cf. Annette Yoshiko Reed, "The Trickery of the Fallen Angels and the Demonic Mimesis of the Divine: Aetiology, Demonology, and Polemics in the Writings of Justin Martyr," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 12.2 (2004), 141 – 71, 151: "…the *Book of the Watchers* [makes] the radical assertion that human sinfulness has its origins not in primeval human disobedience nor an evil inclination in the human heart but rather in a rebellious breach in the harmony of the supernatural realm, with the descent of the angels and their revelation of forbidden secrets to humankind."

[68] In contrast, Justin's *Dialogue with Trypho does* place responsibility for human sinfulness on the *individual*, in particular *Jewish persons*, as part of its polemical attack on Judaism; see further Annette Yoshiko Reed ("Trickery of Fallen," 155, *passim*) who lays out precisely how Justin fashions his conceptions of sin in order to suit his polemical targets.

[69] Justin differentiates between the Fallen Angels of Genesis 6 and the souls of the dead Nephilim, which he calls demons.

[70] Annette Yoshiko Reed, "Trickery of Fallen," 153: "By 'skipping' the story of Adam and Eve's expulsion from Eden, *2 Apol.* 5 effectively omits any hint of human culpability in contributing to the distance between corrupt humankind and their beneficent creator." Cf. Martha Himmelfarb, *Ascent to Heaven in Jewish and Christian Apocalypses* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 74.

> The angels, having transgressed (παραβάντες) their appointment (i.e., care of humanity), were captivated by the love of women and begat children who are those that are called demons; and afterwards they enslaved (ἐδούλωσαν) humanity to themselves, partly through magical writings (μαγικῶν γραφῶν), partly through the fear and punishments (τιμωριῶν) they inflict, and partly by teaching them to offer sacrifices, incense, and libations of the sorts of things they (the angels) needed after they were enslaved to lustful passion. (*2 Apol.* 5. 3 – 4)[71]

Justin and the *ApocJn* differ, however, in how they envision these external forces interacting with and fostering human wrongdoing. For Justin, these fallen angels are responsible for human sinfulness insofar as they revealed forbidden and dangerous knowledge to humanity. Once the angels had corrupted humanity by revealing illicit knowledge and irreligious practices (i.e., paganism), they could sow (ἔσπειραν) pernicious societal ills such as murder, wars, adultery, and licentiousness (ἀκολασίας) into the hearts of humankind with seeming impunity (*2 Apol*. 5.4).[72]

In addition to sharing with Justin the Enochic etiology of human sin as illicit, angel-bestowed technology, the *ApocJn* ascribes a more active role to the Counterfeit Spirit that is comparable to what we saw above in *Hermas*. As the *ApocJn*'s soteriological catalogue makes clear, it is the relative influence of the Counterfeit Spirit upon a person that determines his or her degree of sinfulness. The saints who are from the immovable race (*BG* 65.2 – 3; *NHC* II 25.23: ⲧⲅⲉⲛⲉⲁ ⲛ̄ⲁⲧⲕⲓⲙ) are infused with Spirit of Life[73] and thus use (*BG* 66.1: ⲭⲣⲁⲥⲑⲁⲓ; *NHC* II 25.35: ⲫⲟⲣⲉⲓ) the flesh (ⲥⲁⲣⲝ) but are not affected or "ruled" (ⲁⲙⲁⲣⲧⲉ) by it (*BG* 64.17 – 66.12; *NHC* II 25.18 – 26.7). In contrast with those who are infused with the Spirit of Life and thus will surely be saved (*BG* 67.1 – 14; *NHC* II 26.10 - 19), are those into whom the Counterfeit

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[71] Translation from *The Ante-Nicene Fathers: Vol.* 1 (ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2004), 190, modified.
[72] As Annette Yoshiko Reed persuasively argues ("Trickery of the Fallen," 159) Justin connects this angelic etiology of sin and suffering with illicit religious practices as part of his broader rhetorical strategy of refuting paganism.
[73] Thus, like in *Hermas*, there should not be space available for the entry of the *Counterfeit Spirit*; this, however, does seem to be reflect the *lived experience* of the *ApocJn*'s community, as we shall see below.

Spirit enters and leads astray (*BG* 67. 14 – 71.2; *NHC* II, 26.20 – 27.30). Echoing similar rhetorical strategies found among Second Temple Jewish texts, e.g., *The Treatise of the Two Spirits* (1QS 3.13 – 4.26), the *ApocJn* deploys the contrast between the Spirit of Truth[74] and the Counterfeit Spirit to establish a boundary between its Christian insiders and all others.[75]

The *ApocJn*, however, complicates this totalizing binary between insiders/saved and outsiders/damned by exploring the grey areas of sinful insiders and savable outsiders. Like *Hermas* (*Vis.* 3 and *Sim*. 8),[76] the *ApocJn* further subdivides and hierarchically describes sinners. There are those in whom the power (likely of the Spirit of Life) overcomes the Counterfeit Spirit; despite their sinfulness, these members of the community will be saved and taken up to the repose of the aeons (ⲧⲁⲛⲁⲡⲁⲩⲥⲓⲥ ⲛ̄ⲁⲓⲱⲛ; *BG* 67.18 – 68.12; *NHC* II 26.22 – 26.32). Outsiders[77] over whom the Counterfeit Spirit has greater control require post-mortem punishments and metempsychosis before they are ultimately saved (*BG* 68.13 – 70.8; *NHC* II 26.32 – 27.21). And finally, there are those who were insiders[78] yet blasphemed the Spirit of Life and turned away;[79] these sinners are punished eternally (*BG* 70.8 – 71.3; *NHC* 27.21 – 30).

If sinfulness does not arise from human disobedience or *exclusively* from illicit technology, where else does it arise? To put it more simply, how does the Counterfeit Spirit affect a person? The Counterfeit Spirit, like *Hermas*' angels, is represented as a *physical* entity,

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[74] The Counterfeit Spirit is a inferior variation of the True Spirit; in an interesting parallel, *NHC* II consistently (e.g., 21.9) refers to the Counterfeit Spirit as ⲡⲉⲩⲛ̄ⲛ̄ⲁ̄ ⲉⲧⲯⲃⲃⲓⲁⲉⲓⲧ, which is the same term it uses to differentiate between Sophia and Ialdabaoth at 10.4: ⲁⲩⲱ ⲉⲥⲯⲃ̄ⲃⲓⲁⲉⲓⲧ ⲁⲡⲉⲥⲥⲙⲟⲧ.

[75] On the theoretical and social tension in the *Treatise of the Two Spirits*, see Ishay Rosen-Zvi, *Demonic Desires*, 50, italics in original: "…I suggest acknowledging a basis inconsistency or tension in the cosmology of the *yahad*. Such an inconsistency was identified in the context of the "doctrine of two spirits" (1 QS III 13 – IV 26). At the beginning of this famous passage, the two spirits control different groups: the sons of righteousness are led by the prince of light, and the sons of wickedness by the angel of darkness; but by the end, the sprits are transformed from cosmic to psychological beings, contained within *all* people…

[76] See further **chapter 5.**

[77] *BG* 68.14 – 15: "did not know the All."

[78] *BG* 70:10: "did know the All"

[79] *BG* 70. 10: ⲁⲩⲕⲟⲧⲟⲩ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ; *NHC* II 27. 23: ⲁⲩⲥⲛ̄ⲧⲟⲩ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ

insofar as it inhabits the *space* of the "fleshly prison" of a person, the lowest part of humanity's composite body. This bodily hierarchy is comparable to other texts, such as *Timaeus* 90, the *Thanksgiving Scroll*,[80] and Paul (e.g., 1 Cor. 15; cf. Gal. 5), which similarly feature physiological or anthropological hierarchies as analogues to psychological or mental hierarchies and/or cosmic or soteriological hierarchies.[81] Dwelling within the lowest parts of a person, the Counterfeit Spirit "burdens the soul" and draws it down into "works of evil and casts it down into forgetfulness."[82] As a result, the *ApocJn*'s etiology of sin not only explains the demonological origins of human sinfulness it also provides a diagnostic tool for recognizing *when* a person is under attack. Uncontrollable passions and illicit practices are, in fact, evidence that a person is in the throes of a battle (and losing) against the Counterfeit Spirit.[83]

The means, therefore, to resist the Counterfeit Spirit was to expunge its presence from the body. The most explicit technique for overcoming the Counterfeit Spirit was to receive, as Adam did, an infusion of the Spirit of Life (*BG* 52.17 – 53.10; *NHC* II 20.9 – 19). Echoing Pauline baptismal language of rebirth (e.g., Romans 6), the *ApocJn* later represents this entry of the Spirit of the Life as the (re)birth of the soul:

> Those into whom the Spirit enters will surely live and come away from evil. For the power enters into every person, for without it they could not stand. After it (the soul) is born then the Spirit of Life comes into it. Thus, when this mighty Spirit of Life has come, it makes strong the power that is the soul, and it (the soul) does not stray into evil. (*BG* 67.1 – 14; *NHC* II 26.10 – 19)

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[80] See further Miryam Brand's discussion (*Evil Within and Without: The Source of Sin and its Nature as Portrayed in Second Temple Literature* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2013), 59 – 73) of the *physicality* of sin and its link to "unrighteous flesh" in both the *Thanksgiving Scroll* (*Hodayot*) and the *Hymn of Praise* from the end of the *Community Rule* (1 QS X.9 – XI.22).

[81] See **PART III** for a similar phenomenon in Valentinian language of hylic, psychic, and pneumatic.

[82] *NHC* II, 26.36 – 27.4; *BG* 68.17 – 69.5.

[83] See, in contrast, *BG* 65.11 – 66.1; *NHC* II 25.29 – 26.1 for the *ApocJn*'s ethic of living free from the passions.

The *ApocJn* encourages and expects its readers to become like Adam and Seth, who were both insulated from the influence of the Counterfeit Spirit due to divine intervention and spiritual infusion (*BG* 63.12 – 64.13; *NHC* II 24. 25 – 25.16).[84]

But what happens if this infusion of the Spirit is not enough? The example of those Christians who required providential assistance (*BG* 68.8 – 10) indicates that some members of the *ApocJn*'s community may have continued to struggle with sin. What recourse do these Christians, who have regrettably sinned again, have? The *ApocJn*, in particular its passages on the archontic/demonic construction of the human body, may provide additional resources for resisting demonic compulsion. This list, in particular the longer recensions's *extensive melothesia* section,[85] specifies the name of the demon responsible for the construction of individual body parts, e.g., *NHC* II 15.32 – 33: "Asterechmen (created) the right eye; Thaspomocham (created) the left eye" and even sinful impulses like the passions (e.g., *NHC* II 18.15 – 18: Ephememphi who is pleasure; Yoko who is desire; Nenentophni who is grief; Blaomen who is fear).[86] It may have been possible, as Origen of Alexandria claims (*Contra Celsum* 1.6, 24; 8.58; cf. Plotinus, *Ennead* 2.9.14 – 15),[87] to use these lists to adjure and command a specific demon *by name* to cease its activities, if it was assumed to be causing illness or inflaming particular passions.[88]

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84 For an argument that this infusion of the Spirit coincided with the ritual of baptism, see Karen King, *Secret Revelation* 148 – 49.
85 For the whole list, see *NHC* II 15.29 – 19.10
86 See further *NHC* II, 18.14 – 31 for the interrelationships and functions of these demonic passions.
87 John Dillon, "The Magical Power of Names in Origen and Later Platonism," *Origeniana Tertia* (eds. Richard Hanson and Henri Crouzel; Rome, 1985), 203 – 16.
88 See further Michael Williams, *Immovable Race*, 127 – 29; idem, *Rethinking Gnosticism*, 132 – 38; Richard Valantasis, "Adam's Body: Uncovering Esoteric Traditions in the Apocryphon of John and Origen's Dialogue with Heraclides," *Second Century* 7 (1989–90): 150–62; David Brakke, ""The Body in Early Eastern Christian Sources," *Bulletin of the American Society of Papyrologists 37* (2000): 119–34; Karen King, "Approaching the Variants," 112 – 14; eadem, *Secret Revelation,* 110 – 4, 148 – 55.

If the *ApocJn*'s list of demonic names could be used in this way, then this list belies easy classification as a collection of "amoral magical" incantations consisting simply of *voces magicae*.[89] Commenting on comparable lists of *voces magicae* and ritual incantations, Wayne Meeks reduces these "magical" texts to expressions of power and technical efficacy, apart from any moral framework:

> The magical papyri are full of spells that promise immunity from attacks by demons – and others that explain how to use demonic hit-men for one's own nefarious purposes. Indeed one of the things that strikes us as we read these spells is how utterly amoral is this technical world of magic…not only is the world of magical practice largely amoral, its theology, if one can call it that, is helter-skelter.[90]

With the *ApocJn*, however, this list of demonic names is *embedded* in a narrative that is, as we have seen, clearly invested in ethical and theological concerns.[91] Moreover, knowledge of these names provides the reader with both an explanation of evils and tactics to deal with various *moral* struggles. Why has someone sinned again or worse become an apostate? Perhaps, as we saw with *Hermas*, they let their guard down and did not practice the correct, persistent, and self-reflective analysis meant to recognize when a demonic force was acting against them.[92] If recognized in time, a person could cure bodily dysfunction, however it might be manifested, through proper ritual incantations.

Despite some distinctive and important differences, both *Hermas* and the *ApocJn* view the source of human evil as demonic insofar as it is an external, invasive, and personalized force

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[89] Wayne Meeks, *Origins of Christian Morality: The First Two Centuries* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 112 – 114.
[90] Wayne Meeks, *Origins,* 113 – 14.
[91] Perhaps a list of names and ritual commands could be classified as "amoral," just as a list of statistics or empirical observations could be (although there may be very real concerns here); however, once such lists or statistics are *embedded* within and provide motivational content as well as encourage certain behaviors they cease being *amoral*.
[92] Recalling B. Diane Lipsett's (*Desiring Conversion,* 52; cf. **note 19** above) characterization, in the *ApocJn*, just as in *Hermas*: "Each person has the duty to know who he is, that is, to try and know what is happening inside him, to acknowledge faults, to recognize temptations, to locate desires; and everyone is obliged to disclose these things either to God or to others in the community, and hence, to bear public or private witness against oneself."

acting upon persons. This externalization of the source for human sinfulness, however, does not mean that *Hermas* or the *ApocJn* absolve people from moral responsibility. As we have seen, both texts were not only committed to ethical ideals (**Chapter 5**) but also developed elaborate theories and strategies for dealing with those who come up short. In so doing, *Hermas* and the *ApocJn* crafted compelling but also *useful* constructions of human sin as part of their broader strategies of addressing ethical variance through higher and lower levels of salvation. As we shall see in the following section, *Hermas* and the *ApocJn*'s demonological construction of sin has important implications for how we discuss important moral concepts and questions.

## The Internalization of Demonology and the Externalization of Moral Accountability

As we saw above, sin is an invasive and overpowering demonic force; with proper preparations, however, people could – with moral effort – avoid such demonic compulsion. How should we characterize this moral effort and the decision-making behind it? Neither *Hermas* nor the *ApocJn* ascribe to humans the volitional power to choose against demonic compulsions. Instead of an idealized moment of ethical choice during which a person stands in the breach between moral improvement and degradation and has the mental autonomy to choose between,[93] demons, according to *Hermas* and the *ApocJn*, are far too powerful for the human heart to resist without assistance. In other words, *Hermas* and the *ApocJn* do not contain a modernist idea of a will free to elect any course of action.[94] Thus, it is anachronistic to speak of the presence of a

[93] Cf. Clement, *Stromata* 4.24.153.1.

[94] Both texts lack, for example, the capacity to "have done otherwise" or to be able to freely volition apart from any preceding causes, *including* one's very own character. On the former issue, see Susanne Bobzien, "Inadvertent Conception"; on the latter, see eadem, "Did Epicurus Invent," George Boys-Stones, "'Middle' Platonists on Fate and Human Autonomy," in *Greek and Roman Philosophy 100 BC – 200 AD, Volume 2* (ed. Richard Sorabji and Robert W. Sharples; London: Institute of Classical Studies, 2007), 431 – 447; and idem, "Human Autonomy and Divine

"free will" in either text.[95] By moving away from this problematic and late concept,[96] I do not mean to claim that these texts *lack* ethics or moral responsibility;[97] rather, I am attempting to shift the focus towards a more precise but also thicker description of the moral choices and habituated practices imagined by these texts. This more theoretical discussion will foreground the latter portion of this chapter wherein we will consider the practical implications of ethical and soteriological hierarchies in the small, tightknit Christian communities of the second-century.

Although neither the *ApocJn* nor *Hermas* adhere to strict terminological distinctions, we can, in light of what we have seen, make the following claims: both texts attempt to encompass the complex nature of persons, especially their conflicting desires. For *Hermas*, a person is a great mixing bowl of competing impulses that one needs to either fill up on or purge;[98] for the *ApocJn*, people are comprised of higher and lower parts as a result of their demonic construction. In recognizing this limited capacity of persons, both *Hermas* and the *ApocJn* are *pragmatic* texts insofar as each makes accommodations to people as they struggle to live a moral life. Responding to the tension that arises between enforcing ethical standards but still reintegrating (some!) sinners, both texts correlate superior ethical conduct with superior salvific rewards. And finally, each text connects moral achievement and security from demonic compulsion with

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Revelation in Origen," in *Severan Culture* (ed. Simon Swain et al.; Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 489 – 99.

95 *Pace* Michael Williams, *Rethinking Gnosticism*, 205 and Karen King, *Secret Revelation*, 147.

96 The most influential study on free will remains Albrecht Dihle's teleological narrative, *The Theory of the Will in Classical Antiquity*, in which he concludes that the modern notion of the will was not "discovered" until the writings of Augustine. Subsequently, scholars have updated Dihle's study by focusing on different conceptions of will and freedom; see Charles H. Kahn, "Discovering the Will: From Aristotle to Augustine," *The Question of 'Eclecticism': Studies in Later Greek Philosophy* ed. John Dillon and A. A. Long (Berkeley, et al.: University of California Press, 1988): 234-59; Susanne Bobzien, "Inadvertent Conception"; eadem, "Did Epicurus Discover"; and Michael Frede, *A Free Will.*

97 Unfortunately, this is often seen as a zero sum question: either a text has the concept of free will or it is amoral. See further **Chapter 8** of **PART III** for my discussion and rejection of this false dichotomy.

98 This is structurally similar to the fragment of Valentinus (fragment #2) preserved by Clement of Alexandria (*Stromata* II 114:3 – 6), in which Valentinus represents the human heart as a inn filled with unruly and demonic occupants.

habituated practices and not singular or isolated cognitive events (e.g., giving/withholding assent or voluntarily willing/choosing a course of action). In this way, the goal is to encourage constant moral preparation; without this a person is not (and could not be!) free to not sin.

Yet, as Michael Williams astutely observes, don't apostates "knowingly do wrong"[99] and thereby demonstrate the presence of something like a free will?[100] But if I am right, and sinfulness in *Hermas* and the *ApocJn* is demonic, then this significantly alters the presuppositions of that question. Rather than placing the onus for sinfulness on a single cognitive event – knowingly doing wrong – the rabbinic metaphor of a maintaining a bandage against demonic infection illustrates the practices and choices that could lead to apostasy more precisely. In short, a person will sin when demonic influence seeps into that *unwary* person; an apostate is someone who *ought* to have been conscientiously and carefully maintaining his or her bandage (see: correct moral choices and practices) as a ward against such demonic influence. The apostate did not knowingly rip off the bandage for the purpose of letting the demon in; rather, he or she did not carefully and continually observe the practices and self-reflective analysis meant to keep these pernicious forces at bay.

Consequently, everyone is still responsible for his or her sins. This externalization, i.e., a demonic cause, shifts the focus of ethical metrics from (a modernist interest in) internal or cognitive concerns towards external and visible practices.[101] As Peter Brown noted, there is a crowded and nearly claustrophobic atmosphere in antiquity, according to which there was little

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[99] This phrase is a Socratic maxim (see for example, *Protagoras* 358c: ἐπί γε τὰ κακὰ οὐδεὶς ἑκὼν ἔρχεται οὐδὲ ἐπὶ ἃ οἴεται κακὰ εἶναι.") This concept has been central to *some* reconstructions of the development a free will (e.g., Dihle, *Theory of Will*, 39ff.).

[100] Michael Williams, *Rethinking Gnosticism*, 205; Williams' objection, I should note, points to an important but understudied theoretical issue, i.e., the problem of apostasy is an enormous *lacuna* that is unaccounted for in Dihle's and many others' accounts.

[101] I do not mean to import an absolute dichotomy between the two; however, this shift towards external, bodily practices and concerns may help explain the longer recension's extensive *melothesia* section. This section could have been added during the transmission history of the text to provide a diagnostic tool and pragmatic solution for sinners in their midst.

privacy and everyone knew each other, perhaps *too* well.[102] Heretofore our focus on internal or cognitive questions has meant that we have paid too little attention to *Hermas*' and the *ApocJn*'s interest in ethical preparations and practices and their communal setting.

What this interpretation also alerts us to is that *Hermas* and the *ApocJn* use demonology for different purposes than did many of their Christian peers. In his survey of "superstition" in antiquity, Dale Martin finds that Christian authors often deployed demonology to explain the illicit practices and beliefs of *outsiders*, especially the errors of paganism.[103] In contrast to some of their fellow Christians, *Hermas* and the *ApocJn* are concerned with the sinfulness of their own community members. Foreshadowing the monastic battles against demons, *Hermas* and the *ApocJn* articulate the ongoing moral struggle to resist sin as one against demonic opponents. Demons, therefore, are not something outside the confines of the community but are an intimate threat already ravaging through individuals and thus affecting whole Christian congregations, leading to the apostasy of some members. To situate this struggle against demons, we shall consider the likeliest social context (i.e., small, urban house churches) for both *Hermas* and the *ApocJn* in the following two sections.

## Early Christianity Beyond "Orthodoxy" and "Heresy"

Scholarly attempts to explain the wide-ranging diversity of early (ca. second-century) Christianity often rely on agonistic metaphors to concretize this amorphous period of competition and debate. One such heuristic metaphor is that of a horserace, in which rival schools or "Christianities" vie for dominance, and one horse – "proto-orthodoxy" – ultimately wins the contest. According to this metaphor, race spectators (historians) observe the diversity

[102] Peter Brown, *Making of Late Antiquity*, 4.
[103] This insider/outsider divide was elaborated in a number of ways through demonology; Especially interesting was Origen's "patronage" system; see Dale Martin, *Inventing Superstition: From the Hippocratics to the Christians* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), 182ff.

of the field and document the relative fitness of each horse (type of Christianity) over the course of the race. This model, however, orients us in such a way that we center our retrospective interpretations upon the outcome of the contest – what did proto-orthodoxy do to win and what did the other contenders (e.g., Marcionites, Valentinians, Sethians, etc.) do to lose? In this way, we infuse proto-orthodoxy's victory with a sense of inevitability, which simultaneously marginalizes the also-rans of early Christianity.[104]

In addition to this teleological critique, David Brakke has convincingly shown that the horse-race metaphor also artificially reifies these competing Christian groups:

> Another problematic feature of the horse-race model is that horses are – thank goodness – discrete bounded entities, clearly distinct from one another. Racing horses do not really change through their competition with each other…so too the predominant way of imagining the varieties of Christianity depicts them as discrete bounded groups.[105]

Thus, not only should we avoid a teleological perspective – and its privileging of a certain group ("proto-orthodoxy") – by telling the story of early Christianity as a competition among winners and losers, but Brakke also problematizes the apparent coherence of these "horses" themselves by highlighting the dynamic and fluid interactions of early Christian figures, groups, practices and ideas. Early Christian authors and groups were not hermetically sealed, but rather, practices, ideas, and texts circulated widely.[106] Consequently, many authors who are retrospectively

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[104] In other words, this teleological retelling is interested primarily or even exclusively in reconstructing proto-orthodoxy's refutation of its rivals' shortcomings or searching for those nascent kernels among proto-orthodox figures of what will develop into normative or "orthodox" Christianity (especially canon, liturgies, creeds, or doctrines) in the fourth-century and beyond. In so doing, we either bypass large amounts of evidence that does not cohere with later creeds and doctrines ("heretics") and propose contorted and anachronistic interpretations to bring the allegedly authentic ("proto-orthodox") texts into line with the post-Constantinian views we are so certain they would adopt, if only they had lived a few centuries later. For the metaphor of a horserace, see further Philip Rousseau, *Pachomius: The Making of a Community in Fourth-Century Egypt* (Berkeley, et al.: University of California Press, 1985), 19.

[105] David Brakke, *The Gnostics: Myth, Ritual, and Diversity in Early Christianity* (Harvard University Press: Cambridge, 2010), 9.

[106] On the sociology of reading networks, in particular how ancient texts circulated through interpersonal and informal friendship networks, see further R. J. Starr, "The Circulation of Literary Texts in the Roman World." *Classical Quarterly* 37.1 (1987), 213-223; Harry Gamble, *Books and Readers in the Early Church. A History of*

included in the proto-orthodox camp were not in their own context socially or ideologically aligned with one another or unified against other camps; in fact, some figures claimed by later orthodoxy had more in common with their so-called heterodox peers (e.g., Clement and the Valentinians) than they did with each other (e.g., Clement with Hippolytus or Irenaeus).[107]

Yet, Brakke is quick to warn that in compensating for these past historiographic errors, we ought not to swing the pendulum in the opposite direction so far as to make it impossible to speak of *any* ancient groups or communities.[108] What, then, should be our way forward? How should we balance sensitivity to the fragmentary evidence of ancient authors and thinkers who do not fit neatly into well-defined and bounded categories with *our* role as modern historians committed to reconstructing, as much as possible, the values, actions, and daily lives of our objects of study?

In her programmatic essay addressing the problem of how best to describe and study early Christian diversity, Karen King economically lays out an approach conventionally referred to as "identity formation."[109] Recognizing that social categories previously assumed as static and bounded – such as orthodox and heterodox – are rhetorically created and hotly contested,[110] identity formation concentrates instead on the discursive strategies (e.g., producing texts, practicing rituals, and constructing creeds and canons) that enabled ancient persons to devise,

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*Early Christian Texts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995); Kim Haines-Eitzen, *Guardians of Letters: Literacy, Power, and the Transmitters of Early Christian Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); William Johnson, "Toward a Sociology of Reading in Classical Antiquity," *The American Journal of Philology* 121.4 (2001): 593-627; idem, *Readers and Reading Culture in the High Roman Empire. A Study of Elite Communities* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

[107] David Brakke, *Gnostics*, 10.

[108] David Brakke, *Gnostics*, 15ff.

[109] Karen King, "Which Early Christianity," in *The Oxford Handbook of Early Christian Studies* (ed. Susan Ashbrook Harvey and David G. Hunter; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 66 – 84.

[110] Alain Le Boulluec, *Le Notion d'hérésie dans la literature grecque II^e – III^e siècles* (2 vol.; Paris: Études augustiniennes, 1985).

maintain, and/or subvert communal boundary-lines.[111] Furthermore, these strategies, while certainly rhetorical (i.e., constructing *images* of reality), were not disconnected from historical circumstances but were contingent upon and reflect discrete practices (e.g., rituals of initiation or excommunication, catechetical instruction, the circulation or repression of certain texts, etc.) that affected the social realities and communal life of early Christians.[112]

Therefore, we shall conclude this chapter and **PART II** as a whole by considering the social-material context of higher and lower levels of salvation. In **Chapter 5**, we examined *Hermas* and the *ApocJn*'s efforts to privilege and exclude virtuous and vicious persons respectively; thus far in **Chapter 6**, we have considered how both texts strategically constructed sinfulness. Now we shall situate these rhetorical efforts in their likeliest social contexts, i.e., small, tightknit communities meeting in compact spaces. I will not, however, connect either the *ApocJn* or *Hermas* to other texts or broader "textual communities" [113] but instead will study the efforts of the *ApocJn* and *Hermas*, as individual texts,[114] to create and enforce *mores* and social boundaries.

A recent and excellent example of a study that situates ancient rhetorical strategies in their likeliest social and material context is Einar Thomassen's "Orthodoxy and Heresy in Second-Century Rome."[115] Thomassen's specific interest is the forms and scope of ecclesiastical authority in second-century Rome. His point of entry is the apparent paradox that Valentinus

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[111] See Karen King, "Which Early Christianity," 73; see also Judith Lieu, *Christian Identity in the Jewish and Graeco-Roman World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).
[112] David Brakke, *Gnostics*, 14 – 15
[113] I use the term *textual community* to refer to the social phenomenon whereby the production, interpretation, and circulation of particular texts has such a high level of ideological importance that it could help create shared identity and thus communal solidarity. See, for example, Brian Stock's definition a textual community: "We can think of a textual community as a group that arises somewhere in the interstices between the imposition of the written word and the articulation of a certain type of social organization. It is an interpretative community, but it is also a social entity." (Brian Stock. *Listening for the Text: On the Uses of the Past* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1990), 150).
[114] See **Chapter 4, note 31:** I do not reject the use of all categories; but I am provisionally setting them aside here.
[115] Einar Thomassen, "Orthodoxy and Heresy in Second-Century Rome," *HTR* 97.3 (2004): 241 – 56.

and Marcion, figures considered to be the two marquis heretics of second-century Rome, were never excommunicated by a bishop, a council of elders, or any other form of ecclesiastical authority.[116] What does this tell us about the structures and notions of authority in second-century Roman Christianity? Conversely, what does this tell us about the rhetorical aims, social context, and practical impact of someone like a Justin Martyr, who as a Christian denizen of second-century Rome wrote a condemnation of so-called heretics, including his near-contemporaries the Valentinians (*Dialogue* 35.4) and Marcion (*1 Apol.* 26)?[117]

Building on the work of earlier scholars,[118] Thomassen recognizes that there was no "unitary church" in second-century Rome; instead, there were a number of small and semi-independent congregations. Each congregation most likely met in a house-church or place of business, thereby entailing the relatively small size but also tightknit mentality of each group.[119] In this context, prestigious teachers such as Valentinus or Justin would be the pride of their congregation. Yet these small congregations were not ignorant or unconcerned with their Christian brothers and sisters spread throughout the city (or even across the world), but imagined themselves as members of a much larger community than the one confined by the spatial limits of their house-churches.[120] Exemplifying this conception of broader unity, *Hermas* (*Vis*. 2.4.3)

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116 Einar Thomassen, "Orthodoxy and Heresy," 242 – 43.

117 For more on Justin and his heresiological project, see the recent study by Geoffrey Smith, *Guilt By Association: Heresy Catalogues in Early Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), chapter 2.

118 Notably, Peter Lampe, *From Paul to Valentinus: Christians at Rome in the First Two Centuries* (English translation; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003.

119 Peter Lampe, *Paul to Valentinus*, 369: "…in the first two centuries, there was no real estate which was owned collectively and centrally administered by the church community. On the contrary, all property used by the church was de jure individual private property (owned or rented), that one fraternally placed at the disposal of the community…"

Such shops and living quarter for early Christians likely would have been compact and ill-suited for large groups (e.g., *tabernae* and *insulae*); see the summary of literature in Christine Trevett's "'I Have Heard from Some Teachers': the Second-Century Struggle for Forgiveness and Reconciliation," *Retribution, Repentance, and Reconciliation* (ed. Kate Cooper and Jeremy Gregory; Woodbridge, UK: The Boydell Press, 2004), 11 n.29.

120 Wayne Meeks (*The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul,* 2nd Edition (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 107 – 10) already makes note of the idea of a worldwide church in Paul.

describes the roles that certain officers play on behalf of the whole of the Roman *ekklesia*, such as education, foreign correspondence, and charity.

Thomassen characterizes the inward and outward orientations of these groups as decentralizing and centralizing forces respectively, and uses this dichotomy heuristically to reinterpret authors and texts such as Marcion, Valentinus, and the *Shepherd of Hermas*. As Thomassen demonstrates, there are several *decentralizing* forces, e.g., the small, private setting for gatherings, the diversity of congregations (further exacerbated by the influx of immigrants with varying beliefs and customs), social and economic inequality among and within the congregations, and the established norm that religious *collegia* were autonomous and thus independent from centralized authority, that would work against unifying or centralizing efforts.[121] Nonetheless, Marcion, Valentinus, and *Hermas*, despite holding *very* different theological views, each sought to enact *centralizing* reforms. In other words, although disagreeing over what constituted the core or theological *center* of early Christian discourse and thereby demonstrating the very *lack* of such a core, each author strenuously preached a message of unification and eradication of diversity. Thus, Thomassen rightly destabilizes the assumption that ideological commitment to *unity* was the sole possession of certain, retrospectively orthodox authors; instead, just as Justin sought to restore and unify his beloved Christian commonwealth spread throughout the world, so too did Marcion.[122]

In what follows, I will suggest that social location for the writers, readers, and perhaps the first circulators of both *Hermas* and the *ApocJn* most likely resembled that of the small,

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[121] Einar Thomassen, "Orthodoxy and Heresy," 248.

[122] Strangely, Justin has dropped out of Thomassen's discussion at this point ("Orthodoxy and Heresy," 251ff.). I include him here because 1. he fits well into Thomassen's paradigm of centralizing/decentralizing forces and 2. he is a much more potent and destabilizing person to pair with Marcion than Valentinus or Hermas.

tightknit congregations meeting together in house-churches in urban settings.[123] As we will see, this is a rather controversial claim. Despite the findings of the research that I have summarized in this section, the *ApocJn* is still most often categorized as belonging to a fundamentally *non-Christian* social organization (e.g., an "audience cult," reclusive sect, or mystery cult), whereas *Hermas* is said to belong to a house-church community.[124]

In light of what we have seen throughout **PART II**, however, I will argue that we, as modern scholars, should interpret both as belonging to the same social location, i.e., early Christian house churches. Furthermore, I will conclude that *Hermas* and the *ApocJn*'s shared solution of higher and lower levels of salvation is a *centralizing* technology meant to address the problem of ethical variance, both within their tightknit communities and theoretically around the world. By employing this alternative approach and odd conversation partners, I hope to contribute to a trend in scholarship seeking to move us past the anachronistic divide between orthodoxy and heresy; the goal, therefore, is to appreciate without misleading bias the ingenuity of two early Christian texts struggling with the same social and theoretical problems and employing similar solutions.

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[123] For *Hermas'* origins in Rome, see **Chapter 5.** For the urban setting of the *ApocJn*, see Karen King, *Secret Revelation*, 9 – 17; I am not as confident as King, however, that we can securely place the *ApocJn* in Alexandria.
[124] *Hermas'* fundamental social structure, i.e., a late first or early second century house church, is not disputed. There are a number of excellent studies that consider the social circumstances (assumed to be house church) of *Hermas*: see Carolyn Osiek, *Rich and Poor in the Shepherd of Hermas: an Exegetical – Social Investigation* (Catholic Biblical Quarterly Monograph Series; Washington, DC: Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1983); eadem, *The Shepherd of Hermas*: *A Commentary* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999); Harry Maier, *The Social Setting of the Ministry as Reflected in the Writings of Hermas, Clement, and Ignatius* (Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1991); and Peter Lampe, *From Paul to Valentinus*.

## Social Deviants, Intellectual Recluses, or Christian House Churches?

In an article examining the social organization of the producers of a corpus of literature (including the *ApocJn*) called Sethian by most scholars,[125] Alan Scott concludes that these Sethians did not organize themselves into communities like early Christian house churches or congregations.[126] Instead, according to Scott, these Sethians, *if* they displayed *any* interest in communal organizations, resembled "audience cults," a model borrowed from Rodney Stark and William Sims Bainbridge's *The Future of Religion: Secularization, Revival, and Cult Formation*.[127]

> Among the distinctions made is one between so-called "cult movement," which "attempt to satisfy all the religious needs of converts," and exclude membership in other groups (p. 29), and "audience cults," which display "no formal organization" and "no organized group committed to a particular dogma," and so not make absolute claims on the loyalty of their adherents. The means of dissemination for audience cults for the most part is not some form of personal contact, but simply the mass media (pp. 209 – 10).[128] Cult movements and audience cults are both deviant, i.e., they are interested in "novel or exotic" religious prescriptions for individual beliefs and actions (pp. 26, 172), but there are different levels of group structure and individual commitment…instead of thinking of Sethianism as a cult movement, comparable to Paul's churches or to a later form of Gnosticism such as Manichaeism, perhaps it would be more accurate to describe it in terms of an audience cult phenomenon like astrology.[129]

One of the core contentions supporting Scott's argument is that the wide-ranging mythological diversity found among the texts called Sethian demonstrates their *lack* of social cohesion.[130]

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[125] See **Appendix**.
[126] Alan B. Scott, "Churches or Books?: Sethian Social Organization," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 3.2 (1995): 109 – 22.
[127] Berkeley: University of California, 1985.
[128] An obvious anachronism that Scott does not sufficiently address.
[129] Alan B. Scott, "Churches or Books?" citations from 112 and 116.
[130] Scott's other two arguments (1. Sethians are parasites; and 2. a lack of external witnesses to their social organizations) need not occupy us here; for a thorough dismantling of these two arguments, see Michael Williams, *Rethinking Gnosticism*, chapters 4 and 5; and idem, "Did Plotinus' 'Friends' Still Go to Church? Communal Rituals and Ascent Apocalypses," *Gnosticism, Platonism, and the Late Ancient World* (eds. Kevin Corrigan and Tuomas Rasimus; Leiden: Brill, 2013), 495 – 522.

It is important, however to note that Sethian is a modern, typological category that reflects a complex history of textual transmission and circulation among disparate epochs and communities. Though not a perfect parallel,[131] Scott's claims is as persuasive as claiming that 1 Enoch (or even just the *Book of the Watchers*), due to differences from other Enochian literature, could not be found among a community of practitioners who took it seriously, i.e., implemented some its teachings or practices.[132] The Dead Sea Scrolls and the community at Qumran demonstrate the fallacy of such an argument.[133] Although we should track similarities and differences within the corpus of texts typically grouped together as Sethian,[134] these are primarily questions of circulation and transmission.[135]

Our interest here is in two texts, *Hermas* and the *ApocJn*, that deploy a remarkably similar soteriological schema in response to cognate if not identical social circumstances and problems.[136] Is there any external, *ancient* evidence, however, that may corroborate my contention that social circumstances within their respective communities prompted *Hermas* and the *ApocJn* to devise soteriological hierarchies with usable conceptions of sinfulness and saintliness in order to accommodate ethical diversity? Again, although not a perfect parallel, the

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131 A notable point of difference would be usage v. composition for the *Book of the Watchers*. Although the community at Qumran copied it, the *Book of the Watchers* likely predates the formation of the community there. See further George Nickelsburg, *Jewish Literature Between the Bible and the Mishnah, 2nd Edition* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005).

132 Another parallel would be the New Testament canon, i.e., the diversity of a corpus later gathered together does not speak to the individual contexts directly surrounding the composition and early publication of each text.

133 So too does the Ethiopic Church's use of 1 Enoch. For surveys of the social locations and uses of Enochic literature, see Annette Yoshiko Reed, *Fallen Angels* and Peter Schäfer, *The Origins of Jewish Mysticism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011).

134 Hans-Martin Schenke lists ("The Phenomenon and Significance of Gnostic Sethianism," in *The Rediscovery of Gnosticism: Volume II Sethian Gnosticism* (ed. Bentley Layton; Leiden: Brill, 1981), 588 – 9): The *Apocryphon of John* (NHC II,1; III,1; IV,1; plus BG version), the *Hypostasis of Archons* (NHC II,4), the *Gospel of the Egyptians* or the *Holy Book of the Great Invisible Spirit* (NHC III,2; IV,2), the *Apocalypse of Adam* (NHC V,5), the *Three Steles of Seth* (NHC VII,5), *Zostrianos* (NHC VIII,1), *Melchizedek* (NHC IX,1), the *Thought of Norea* (NHC IX,2), *Marsanes* (NHC X), *Allogenes* (NHC XI,3), the *Trimorphic Protennoia* (NHC XIII, the *Untitled Treatise* of the *Bruce Codex*, Irenaeus, *Haer.* I.29, and Epiphanius, *Haer.* 26.39.40.

135 On the issue of textual circulation, see further my **Appendix** on Sethianism.

136 In a recent article, however, Michael Williams ("Plotinus' 'Friends,'"), addressing specifically the testimony of Plotinus (*En*. 2.9), persuasively demonstrates the existence and then explores the function of communal elements (namely rituals) found among the later, Platonizing Sethian treatises.

Jewish community dwelling at Qumran and responsible for some of the Dead Sea Scrolls is instructive. Discussing a diachronic shift within the Qumran community, Rosen-Zvi observed that when faced with the problem of sinners among the elect they too devised demonic explanations to account for this theoretical problem.[137] The theoretical difficulty of ethical variance among the elect may have also contributed to the shift away from egalitarian communal structures towards the reintroduction of hierarchical sub-groups on the basis of "merit."[138] Building on this comparison and the preceding section, *Hermas* and the *ApocJn*'s hierarchies of *salvation* are innovations that appear to be instances of what Thomassen called centralizing tendencies insofar as they address the social and theoretical difficulties of ethical variance both *within* their small communities but globally as well.

In addition to their soteriological hierarchies, *Hermas* and the *ApocJn*'s concern over apostates further attests to the communal setting of both texts. While *Hermas* and the *ApocJn* accommodate sinfulness within their communities, both agree that apostates will surely be damned. This implies at the very least a communal identity that expected solidarity and boundary maintenance.[139] Furthermore, the very idea of apostasy *conflicts* with the presuppositions of both texts, e.g., their ideas of angelic/demonic influence. Both texts ascribe a great deal of influence to external compulsion; so if someone has already obtained the support of the Holy Spirit, how could that person become so corrupted and utterly turned around as to deserve the damnation of an apostate? This theoretical tension can best be explained if both texts had to deal with the problem of actual apostasy.

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[137] Ishay Rosen-Zvi,*Demonic Desires*, 53.
[138] For this shift, see Martha Himmelfarb, *A Kingdom of Priests: Ancestry and Merit in Ancient Judaism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2006), 124 – 28.
[139] This boundary, however, was likely actualized through *communal* rituals of initiations, such as baptism; see above and **Chapter 5**.

Consequently, if *Hermas* and the *ApocJn* are both texts concerned with the communal problem of ethical variance, what is the type of community to which they belong? We can safely rule out an "audience cult." What would apostasy look like for such a group that makes no "absolute claims on the loyalty of their adherents"? How could one *be* an insider and then *reject* prized beliefs and/or practices and thereby *become* an apostate? Obviously, this model is incompatible with the social implications of apostasy. In a similar vein, rather than searching for correspondingly "deviant" social organizations in which to safely place the "heretics,"[140] a more pragmatic approach would be to consider what sort of early *Christian* social organization fits best. Thus, we should ask whether the *ApocJn* had more in common with a philosophical study circle, *a la* Clement or Justin, or a house-church, *a la* Paul or *Hermas*. In either case, we are speaking of a small group of committed early Christians meeting together.

The precise distinction between a study circle and a house church, however, is difficult to determine. It often assumes a ritual/liturgical v. scholastic/pedagogical divide where the church *may* have both but is certainly more concerned with the former; whereas, the study circle lacks ritual or liturgical practices.[141] As Allen Brent has demonstrated, however, even early Christians who fashioned themselves as philosophers and teachers, such as Justin Martin, met in domestic spaces[142] and practiced rituals, such as liturgies (*1 Apology* 61 – 67).[143] What is to be gained by

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[140] Scott repeatedly refers to Sethians/Gnostics as "deviant," making this one of their primary traits; see, for example, "Churches or Books," 113: "One of the interesting features of both Gnosticism in general and Sethianism in particular is precisely their attraction to a higher level of religious deviance." For a critical evaluation of this label, see Michael Williams, *Rethinking Gnosticism*, 113.

[141] Ismo Dunderberg, for example, applies this dichotomy to the Valentinian movement in his *Beyond Gnosticism: Myth, Lifestyle, and Society in the School of Valentinus* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 3.

[142] In his article examining the relationship between Justin Martyr's social and *spatial* context in second-century Rome and his writings, H. Gregory Snyder expertly draws readers into the close confines of second-century Christian meeting places throughout this crowded metropolis. The *Acts of Justin* reports that at his trial Justin located his residence, which also served as his place of instruction, above "the baths of Myrtinus." Extrapolating from this, Snyder provides a textured and rich description of the physical and social features of such a domicile, citing a wide range of literary and material evidence. See Snyder's excellent work that places Justin's writing within the "noisy, smelly, and crowded streets" of second-century Rome: "'Above the Baths of Myrtinus': Justin Martyr's "School" in the City of Rome," *Harvard Theological Review* 100.3 (2007): 335 – 62.

labeling the group that met in Justin's domicile a study-circle rather than a church and vice versa?[144] As Michael Williams rightly notes, the questions and categories we use will determine the sorts of answers we are most likely to find because they are the ones we were "open to hearing."[145]

Consequently, I imagine that the community responsible for first producing the *ApocJn* to be rather similar in its social organization and practices to Justin Martyr's, i.e., a small meeting of like-minded, intellectually engaged, and ritually observant Christians. This, however, raises the self-reflexive problem of what do we as scholars mean to do or signal when we use specific labels? Justin's community could be called either a study circle or house-church, and each label brings with it a tendency to focus on different sorts of *comparanda* and questions. The same is true for the *ApocJn*. As I have attempted to show throughout **PART II**, there is much to be gained when we compare *Hermas* and the *ApocJn* on equal footing.

For this purpose, then, and in the context of this dissertation, I think it is advantageous to refer to both *Hermas* and the *ApocJn* as belonging to house-churches. To this end, I have shown that they both display concern over the integrity and cohesion of their small, intimate social groups. Moreover, this label signals my interest in comparing the ethical problem-solving of two early Christian texts within the normative social context for their epoch. Nonetheless, we must continue to revise and clarify what we know of ancient house churches, e.g., how *small* (or large)

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143 Allen Brent, *Hippolytus and the Roman Church in the Third Century: Communities in Tension Before the Emergence of a Monarch-Bishop* (Brill: Leiden, 1995), 401 – 5.

144 This question takes on an additional layer of baggage when we turn to the *ApocJn*. As Geoffrey Smith recently argued, a potent and enduring early Christian polemical technique was to claim that an opponent belonged to a school rather than a/the church. Popularized by Irenaeus of Lyons, this rhetorical labeling created and fortified boundaries between insider and outsider by categorizing and aggregating opponents into a philosophical school (e.g., a *Gnostic Hairesis*), as opposed to the one, true, and catholic Church. An import of this has been to explain the ideas of the opponents of early heresiologists as philosophy run amuck and to situate these opponents within the social context of *secularized* study circles. See Geoffrey Smith, *Guilt by Association*, chapter 4.

145 Michael Williams ("A Life Full of Meaning and Purpose: Demiurgical Myths and Social Implications," in *Beyond the Gnostic Gospels: Studies Building on the Work of Elaine Pagels* (ed. Eduard Iricinschi, et al.; Tübingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 2013), 20.

were these communities? How *committed* did a member have to be? The first step in this ongoing process must be to approach and study all of the evidence from ancient (i.e., *circa* second-century) Christianity on equal footing and without misleading or anachronistic categories.

## Conclusion: Saints, Sinners, and the Damned in Early Christianity

Throughout **PART II**, we have considered another instance of higher and lower levels of salvation, one rather different from what we saw in Paul and John. Both the *ApocJn* and *Hermas*, I have argued, devised soteriological hierarchies to address the social and theoretical problem of ethical variance. In so doing, these texts extolled their highest ethical principles, accommodated those who could not abide by this highest standard, and crafted a concept of sinfulness that allowed for the reintegration of sinful yet penitent community members. This hierarchy of saints, sinners, and the damned, moreover, is an understudied branch of the early Christian soteriology that cuts across later divides of orthodoxy and heresy. In **PART III**, we will consider another instance of higher and lower levels of salvation, i.e., the hierarchy of salvation among the tripartite division of humanity (pneumatic, psychic, and hylic) promulgated by some Valentinian Christians. Just as we have seen in **PARTS I** and **II**, the Valentinian construction of higher and lower levels of salvation is not a continuation of a stable and static soteriological technology, but is rather an innovative solution meant to address a specific social and theoretical concern, i.e., the problem of missionary successes and failures.

# Appendix: What is Sethianism?

During the *ApocJn*'s extended theogonic and cosmogonic narrative, we are introduced to several characters and mythic elements that reappear in other texts that have been grouped together under the heading of a typological and/or religious movement called "Sethianism" (Epiphanius, *Pan*. 39). The most influential, early articulation of the contours of this category was the work of Hans-Martin Schenke.[1] Schenke delineated the "constellation of texts that clearly stand apart as a relatively close-knit group"[2] based on the recurrence of a set cast of mythic figures[3] and shared features[4] as well as the continuity in the portrayal and function of these specific elements.[5] According to Schenke, the Sethian system "is sufficiently characteristic that we can proceed in [identifying Sethian texts] like the specialist in ancient ceramics, who is able to reconstruct the original form of a vessel without difficulty from a surviving handle or fragment of a rim."[6] Consequently, despite acknowledging that the "outer contours of Sethianism have to be thought of as a bit soft," Schenke linked his systematic model of

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[1] Hans-Martin Schenke, "Das sethianische System nach Nag-Hammadi-Handschriften," in *Studia Coptica* (ed. Peter Nagel; Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1974): 165-73 and "The Phenomenon and Significance of Gnostic Sethianism," in *The Rediscovery of Gnosticism: Proceedings of the International Conference on Gnosticism at Yale, New Haven, Connecticut, March 28-31, 1978.* Vol. 2 (ed. Bentley Layton; Leiden: Brill, 1981): 588-616.

[2] The *Apocryphon of John* (NHC II,1; III,1; IV,1; plus BG version), the *Hypostasis of Archons* (NHC II,4), the *Gospel of the Egyptians* or the *Holy Book of the Great Invisible Spirit* (NHC III,2; IV,2), the *Apocalypse of Adam* (NHC V,5), the *Three Steles of Seth* (NHC VII,5), *Zostrianos* (NHC VIII,1), *Melchizedek* (NHC IX,1), the *Thought of Norea* (NHC IX,2), *Marsanes* (NHC X), *Allogenes* (NHC XI,3), the *Trimorphic Protennoia* (NHC XIII, the *Untitled Treatise* of the *Bruce Codex*, Irenaeus, *Haer.* I.29, and Epiphanius, *Haer.* 26.39.40. Hans-Martin Schenke, "Phenomenon," 588-9.

[3] For example, Seth, the Seed of Seth, the Supreme Trinity of the Father (Invisible Spirit), the Mother (Barbelo), and the Child (Autogenes), and the Four Luminaries (Harmozel, Oroiael, Daveithai, and Eleleth); see further John Turner's excellent and concise summary: John Turner, "The Sethian School of Gnostic Thought," in *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures* (ed. Marvin Meyer; New York: HarperCollins, 2007): 784 – 9.

[4] Hans-Martin Schenke, "Phenomenon," 593-4.

[5] Hans-Martin Schenke, "Phenomenon," 597– 602.

[6] Hans-Martin Schenke, "Phenomenon," 594.

Sethianism to an assumed and *singular* Sethian community in which the diversity among the sources is explained as diachronic change.[7]

In response to the creation of the typological category of "Sethianism," Frederik Wisse published his seminal article, "Stalking Those Elusive Sethians," in which he argued against the historicity of the Sethian movement by adopting the "zoological" reasoning used to disprove the historicity of a unicorn.[8] According to Wisse, in order for a religious sect (like the Sethians) to exist there must be a "standard of some internal cohesion and external distinctiveness."[9] Wisse further clarified this requirement by dividing it into the three specific types of evidence necessary to substantiate the existence of a sect, i.e., social organization, religious practices, and distinctive teaching or doctrine. Allegedly because "information about social makeup and religious practices is lacking," Wisse focused on whether there were any distinctively Sethian teachings which could indicate the existence of the Sethian sect.[10] After surveying the various associations and functions of Seth as well as Schenke's list of other shared mythological features and figures, Wisse concluded that these recurring mythological elements were neither consistently deployed nor distinctly Sethian, but instead were simply "free-floating mythologumena and theologumena which could be used as one saw fit." [11] As a result, Wisse asserted that there simply is not enough evidence to substantiate the existence of a Sethian sect delineated and defined by a core of coherent and distinct teachings.

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[7] Hans-Martin Schenke, "Phenomenon," 592, 596, 607ff; "The phenomenon and structure of our text group, its extent, the unity behind its variety, the varying density of what is essential, all this gives the impression that we have before us the genuine product of one and the same human community of no small dimensions…I cannot think of our documents as having no basis in a group of human beings, nor do I think of this basis as being artificial or short-lived." Ibid., 592

[8] Fredrik Wisse, "Stalking Those Elusive Sethians," in *The Rediscovery of Gnosticism: Proceedings of the International Conference on Gnosticism at Yale, New Haven, Connecticut, March 28-31, 1978.* Vol. 2 ed. by Bentley Layton (Leiden: Brill, 1981): 565 – 576.

[9] Fredrik Wisse, "Stalking," 564.

[10] Fredrik Wisse, "Stalking," 564.

[11] Fredrik Wisse, "Stalking," 575; see, for example, the varying views of and irregular appearance of the figure Seth himself.

In reaction to Wisse's critique, scholars have been forced to re-evaluate how and based on what evidence do claims about the historicity of a sect – both generally and with respect to the Sethians specifically – depend. In defense of the viability of Sethianism and the Sethain sect as a tradition of interpretation and sectarian community respectively, scholars have responded to each of Wisse's three criteria. Against the charge that there is no evidence of social organization or form, scholars have cited instances from the heresiologists that demonstrate both the circulation of extant Sethian texts[12] as well as provide the names of leaders affiliated with these texts.[13] Furthermore, there is both internal evidence from within the Sethian corpus[14] as well as external, anecdotal accounts which point to the presence and literary practices of a community of like-minded individuals affiliated with Sethian literature within the study circle of Plotinus in the third century.[15]

Similarly, scholars have rejected Wisse's claim that there is no consistent or coherent ritual practice among Sethians.[16] These scholars have emphasized the centrality of the baptism of the Five Seals throughout the Sethian corpus and its consistent salvific function as the means

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[12] For example, Irenaeus, *Haer*. 1.29 appears to be quoting or paraphrasing large portions of the *Apocryphon of John*.

[13] Epiphanius provides details about a Eutaktos who traveled to Palestine and learned from an elder monk Peter the doctrines of the "Archontics," which were remarkably similar to what is found in Sethian texts. Furthermore, these Archontics were said to have two "prophets" named Martiades and Marsianos. Epiphanius, *Pan*. 40.1.1-3; 40.1.8

[14] According to John Turner, *Zostrianos* (64,13 – 75,12) and Marius Victorinus' *Against Arius*, I 49,9- 50,21 both are dependent upon a common negative theological source that appears to be from the Middle Platonic, *Anonymous Commentary* on Plato's Parmenides. John Turner, "Sethian School," 788.

[15] Plotinus, *Enneads* II.9.5 and II.9.14; Porphyry's *Life of Plotinus,* 16: "Many Christians of this period—amongst them sectaries who had abandoned the old philosophy, men of the schools of Adelphius and Aquilinus—had possessed themselves of works by Alexander of Lydia, by Philocomus, by Demostratus and by Lydus, and exhibited also Revelations bearing the names of **Zoroaster (**possibly a reference to NHC II, 19.8ff), ***Zostrianus*** (NHC, VIII,1) Nikotheus, ***Allogenes*** (NHC XI,3), **Messus** ("Messos" is mentioned in *Allogenes* NHC XI possibly five times 50.1 (reconstructed); 50.19; 68.25-69.19) and others of that order… Plotinus frequently attacked their position at the conferences and finally wrote the treatise which I have headed *Against the Gnostics* (*Enneads* II.9)… I myself have shown on many counts that the Zoroastrian volume is spurious and modern, concocted by the sectaries in order to pretend that the doctrines they had embraced were those of the ancient sage."

[16] Jean-Marie Sevrin, *Le Dossier Baptismal Séthien (Études sur la Sacramentaire Gnostique* (Les Presses de l'Université Laval: Québec, 1986); John Turner. "Ritual in Gnosticism," in *Gnosticism and Later Platonism: Themes, Figures, and Texts* (ed. John Turner and Ruth Majercik; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2000), 83 – 139; idem, "The Sethian Baptismal Rite," *Coptic – Gnosica Manichaica: Mélanges offerts à Wolf-Peter Funk* (ed. Louis Painchaud and Paul-Hubert Poirer; Les Presses de l'Université Laval: Québec, 2006), 941 – 92.

through which one is "ritually begotten as a member of the race of Seth."[17] And finally, while Wisse's arguments against the uniqueness of Sethian teachings are methodologically valuable, his conclusion is largely unpersuasive insofar as he overplays the commonality of many of the Sethian motifs and figures in denoting them as "free-floating mythologumena," e.g., it is difficult to account for the four luminaries (Harmozel, Oroiael, Daveithai, and Eleleth), the Sethian triad (Invisible Spirit, Barbelo, and Autogenes), and the five seals of baptism apart from a common tradition of exegesis and speculation. Nonetheless, Wisse's critiques remain valuable for having shifted Sethian scholarship away from the tacit assumption of a one-to-one relationship between phenomenological categories and social history.

As a spiritual successor to both Schenke and Wisse, Tuomas Rasimus has produced a recent reappraisal of Sethianism.[18] Similar to Wisse, Rasimus has criticized the coherence of the very category of Sethianism; like Schenke, on the other hand, Rasimus' solution has been to refine and delineate this category into smaller sub-categories, i.e., Barbeloite, Sethite, and Ophite mythological traditions.[19] Whether these sub-categories are satisfactory replacements of the broader category of Sethianism remains to be seen; however, Rasimus' work is an exciting step forward and moves us towards better defining the relationships among the texts typically classified as Sethian.[20] Consequently, scholars have come to better appreciated the diversity

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[17] Michael Williams, "Sethianism," *Companion to Second Century Christian Heretics* ed. Antti Marjanen and Petri Luomanen (Leiden: Brill, 2008): 42; see also the foundational work by John Turner, *Sethian Gnosticism and the Platonic Tradition* (Québec: Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 2001).

[18] Tuomas Rasimus. *Paradise Reconsidered in Gnostic Mythmaking: Rethinking Sethianism in Light of the Ophite Evidence* (Leiden: Brill, 2009).

[19] For the clearest distillation of Rasimus' argument, see his Venn diagram on page 62 of *Paradise Reconsidered*.

[20] A criticism I do hold of Rasimus' work, however, is his blurring of the lines between typology and social history such that mythological coherence *sometimes* indicates social groups (e.g., the evolution of his Classic Gnostic myth) but *sometimes* does not (e.g., his argument that these terms are *solely* typological constructions). Perhaps a better and more consistent way to examine the recurrence and transmission of mythic elements would be to adopt the approach of scholars who have recently been examining the circulation of ancient texts through networks of friends. See further R. J. Starr, "The Circulation of Literary Texts in the Roman World." *Classical Quarterly* 37.1 (1987), 213-223; Harry Gamble, *Books and Readers in the Early Church. A History of Early Christian Texts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995); Kim Haines-Eitzen, *Guardians of Letters: Literacy, Power, and the Transmitters of*

within the so-called Sethian corpus as well as the varying contexts and "interpretative lens through which these myth(s) were read and re-read" in antiquity. [21]

*Early Christian Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); William Johnson, "Toward a Sociology of Reading in Classical Antiquity," *The American Journal of Philology* 121.4 (2001): 593-627; idem, *Readers and Reading Culture in the High Roman Empire*. *A Study of Elite Communities* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

[21] Michael Williams, "Sethianism," 57.

# Part III

## The Threefold Division of Humanity:

### Identity, Soteriology, and Moral Responsibility in the *Excerpts of Theodotus,* the *Tripartite Tractate*, and Heracleon's *Commentary on John*

# Chapter 7
# Valentinians and Valentinian Anthropogony

## Introduction: The Threefold Division of Humanity

Irenaeus of Lyons, in his five volume second-century heresy-finding and fighting work *Adversus Haereses* (hereafter, *AH*), claimed that Valentinian soteriology entails ethical indifference because merit is not required to be saved: a person is either made to be saved or made to be destroyed.

> If, on the other hand, some are by nature good and others are by nature bad, then neither the former ones are worthy of praise on account of their goodness, since they were created like this; nor the latter ones are worthy of blame, since they, too, were created like this. (*AH* 4.37.2)[1]

Especially dangerous, Irenaeus warns, is that these Valentinians justified their soteriology by constructing a threefold division of humanity that insidiously draws upon the writings and authority of scripture, in particular the Apostle Paul.

> They conceive, then, of three kinds of people: pneumatic, psychic, and hylic, represented by Cain, Abel, and Seth…Paul, too, very plainly set forth the hylic, psychic, and pneumatic, saying in one place: "As is the earthy, such as they also who are earthy" (1 Cor. 15:48) and in another place: "But the pneumatic judges all things," (1 Cor. 2:15) and "the psychic does not receive pneumatic things" (1 Cor. 2:14). (*AH* 1.7.5; 1.8.3)

Perhaps most offensive of all for the bishop of Lyons was that according to the soteriology of this tripartite division of humanity Irenaeus and the majority of his Christian flock, as the less advanced or psychics, were destined for a lower level of salvation.

> On this account, they tell us that it is necessary for us whom they call psychics…to practice continence and good works, that by this we might attain at length to the intermediate habitation…The pneumatic seed, having been divested of their souls, and having become intellectual spirits…shall enter into the Pleroma

[1] Translations of Irenaeus, albeit with some modifications, are from *The Ante-Nicene Fathers: Vol.* 1 (ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2004).

> and be bestowed as brides to those angels who wait upon the Savior…in the intermediate place [outside the Pleroma] shall be the souls of the righteous [i.e., good psychics], but nothing of these psychics shall find entrance into the Pleroma. (*AH* 1.6.4; 1.7.1)

Thus, according to Irenaeus, these dangerous rival preachers were misappropriating scriptures to bolster an offensive system (*hypothesis*) that was especially pernicious because it entailed soteriological determinism and would thus undermine the ethical basis of salvific deserts.

Obviously Irenaeus, as a hostile interpreter of Valentinian soteriology and anthropogony, recasts Valentinian beliefs and practices in a negative light; however, as he himself admits, these "Valentinians" were also members of his own congregations. So concerned was Irenaeus with these supposed wolves in sheep's clothing that he "performed interviews" and "read their commentaries (ὑπομνήματα)" in order to provide clear and convincing demonstration that their views were both foreign and dangerous:

> A clever imitation in glass casts contempt, as it were, on the precious jewel the emerald…unless it might come under the eye of someone able to test and expose the counterfeit. Or, again, what inexperienced person can with ease detect the presence of brass when it has been mixed with silver?" Lest, therefore, through my neglect, some should be carried off, even as sheep are by wolves when they do not perceive their true character because they dress in sheep's clothing… (*AH*, preface I.2)

In other words, these were not distant outsiders about whom Irenaeus could invent polemics without concern about their plausibility; instead, they were mixed among and throughout Irenaeus' own communities. One of the primary tasks of *AH*, as Irenaeus himself outlines it in his preface, was to expose what he thought were counterfeit Christians in his midst. Thus a constraint upon his polemical representations was that his descriptions, hostile though they might be, must also still be usable for the purpose of recognizing a contemporary sub-group of early Christians.

As we shall see, three Valentinian texts, the *Tripartite Tractate,* the *Excerpts of Theodotus,* and Heracleon's *Commentary on John*, each employ a threefold division of hylic (or choic), psychic, and pneumatic. What, if anything, was the relationship between this tripartite anthropology and soteriology? And was Irenaeus correct that this tripartite division of humanity precludes ethics?

Concluding our survey of higher and lower levels of salvation, in **PART III** we shall investigate this anthropogony of three classes and its association with a soteriology of higher and lower levels of salvation. Similar to what we found in the previous two **PARTS**, in which a social problem (the inclusion of Gentiles or sin after baptism) fueled theoretical speculation and soteriological innovation, I will argue that this soteriology and anthropology were meant to accommodate the successes but also account for lack thereof experienced by a group of missionizing second-century Christians. Similar to the Apostle Paul, these early Christians viewed themselves as having received a special calling and revelatory knowledge.[2] Moreover, Paul and his language of different types of persons supplied the terminology needed to describe and justify why some people might immediately accept, delay before being persuaded, or categorically and resolutely reject the proselytizing efforts of these spiritually elected individuals. Though, as we will see, they had limited social coherence due to rituals of initiation and perhaps even specialized training, these pneumatics, as they sometimes called themselves, were immersed within and part of larger Christian communities. Indeed, their social proximity likely fueled Irenaeus' alarm and his eagerness to label them unethical, soteriological determinists.

[2] Krister Stendahl, "Call Rather Than Conversion," *Paul Among Jews and Gentiles* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1976), 7 – 23; cf. my discussion in **Chapter 2**.

Yet, when we consider Valentinian texts, we find that they *are* concerned with ethical conduct and merit. In his groundbreaking work *Sin in Valentinianism*, Michel Desjardins challenged the then dominant scholarly view of a Valentinian movement that was indifferent to ethical concerns. Desjardins demonstrated that Valentinian literature contains a consistent interest in ethical conduct, and that this interest was often expressed by re-directing the attention of the audience towards obedience to the "will of the Father." Desjardins observed that

> these Christians – all of them – are intent on "doing the Father's Will." They are definitely not gnostics for whom actions have no significance and sin is of no concern whatsoever. Sin for them is an action not in keeping with the heavenly Father's will. They are worried about their salvation . . . and struggle to remain sinless in the hope that this will make the difference when they die.[3]

Frequently in these Valentinian texts, this injunction to do the "will of the Father" is connected with ethical directives. The *Gospel of Truth*, for instance, presents an extensive list of ethically minded imperatives motivated by doing the "will of the Father":

> Make firm the feet of those who stumbled and stretch out your hands to those who are ill. Feed those who are hungry and give repose to those who are weary, and raise up those who wish to rise and awaken those who sleep, for you are the understanding that is drawn forth. If strength acts thus, it becomes even stronger. Be concerned with yourselves; do not be concerned with other things which you have rejected from yourselves. Do not return to what you have vomited to eat it. Do not be moths. Do not be worms, for you have already cast it off. Do not be a (dwelling) place for the devil, for you have already destroyed him. Do not strengthen (those who are) obstacles to you who are collapsing, as though (you were) a support (for them). For the lawless one is someone to treat ill rather than the just one. For the former does his works as a lawless person; the latter as a righteous person does his works among others. So you do the Will of the Father, for you are from him. (*Gos. Truth* 33.1–32)[4]

These injunctions to do the will of the Father were possibly grounded in an exegesis of Matthew 7:21: "not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the Kingdom of

[3] Michel Desjardins, *Sin in Valentinianism* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990), 116.
[4] For the Coptic text and translation of the *Gospel of Truth*, I rely upon Harold W. Attridge, *Nag Hammadi Codex I*, vol. 1.

Heaven, but he who does the Will of my Father who is in Heaven."[5] As we will see, these Christians felt that doing the will of the Father meant accepting their special role to proselytize and give assistance to the less advanced.

This, however, leads us to a persistent scholarly impasse: is Irenaeus' testimony of Valentinian belief in higher and lower levels of salvation and three classes of humanity reconcilable with Valentinian interest in ethical conduct? Often scholars have said no: some have claimed that Irenaeus polemically altered and distorted the views of the Valentinians;[6] others, that those Valentinian texts concerned with ethical conduct were either reacting or accommodating to heresiological critics, like Irenaeus.[7] Still others have claimed that Irenaeus' account is fundamentally accurate, and that scholars have been misreading Valentinian texts by finding ethical concerns where, obviously, they could not be.[8] It should be a given that Irenaeus' writings reflect his background and commitments, that Valentinian literature did not exist in a vacuum, and that they were not *sui generis* aberrations or unique among ancient texts insofar as they had no concern for ethics.

As we shall see in **Chapters 8** and **9,** the *Excerpts of Theodotus,* the *Tripartite Tractate*, and Heracleon's *Commentary on John* all employed this tripartite division of humanity as part of their ethical map-drawing. Similar to what we have seen in **PARTS I** and **II**, these Valentinian

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[5] Michel Desjardins, *Sin in Valentinianism*, 78.

[6] For example, see the important article by Elaine Pagels: "Conflicting Versions of Valentinian Eschatology: Irenaeus' Treatise vs. the Excerpts from Theodotus," *HTR* 67 (1974): 35 – 53.

[7] Hippolytus (*Haer.* 6.42.1) already notes that some Marcosians were disputing Irenaeus' reports about them because – so Hippolytus claimed – they were instructed to hide their less palatable views. This portrait of Valentinian authors accommodating their minority views to the taste of the majority Church appears to underlie Harold Attridge's influential article on the *Gospel of Truth* as an gateway text as well as his and Pagels' commentary on the *Tripartite Tractate*. See Harold W. Attridge, "The Gospel of Truth as an Exoteric Text," *Nag Hammadi, Gnosticism, and Early Christianity* (ed. C.W. Hedrick and R. Hodgson; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1986), 239 – 55; and Harold W. Attridge and Elaine Pagels, *Nag Hammadi Codex I (The Jung Codex)* (Leiden: Brill, 1985), 2. 217 – 497.

[8] See for example Hans Jonas' heated response to Rowan Greer's "The Dog and the Mushrooms: Irenaeus' View of the Valentinians Assessed," *Rediscovery of Gnosticism*: *The School of Valentinus* (ed. Bentley Layton; Leiden: Brill, 1980), 146 – 175, 173 – 4 for Jonas' response.

texts dialectically fashioned certain roles in the drama of salvation history in light of their ongoing missionizing struggles and successes. This teleological approach privileged certain types of conduct and the overall linear progression of salvation history over and above other, *incompatible* ideological commitments (e.g., *voluntary* choices) held by some opponents of these Valentinians. Consequently, it is important to recognize that both, the Valentinians and their heresiological opponents, made *rational* arguments in support of *competing* ethical frameworks, thereby demonstrating the plurality of ethical frameworks in antiquity.[9] Furthermore, as we shall see in **Chapters 8** and **9**, differing literary genres (e.g., cosmological or commentarial texts) also affected how these Valentinian texts and authors articulated their ethical and soteriological views.

For example, the *Tripartite Tractate* is a totalizing narrative that begins with protology and concludes with the eschatological reunification of creation; in between it describes every successive benchmark on the linear path of salvation. As such, it is a teleological narrative that claims to show how things will turn out by explaining how they began and vice versa. Because the *Tripartite Tractate* narrates how things were, are, and will be, it is not interested in freedom for the sake of freedom, or how *things could be otherwise*.[10] By contrast, Irenaeus, Clement, and Origen, in part because of their opposition to Valentinian texts and their apparent language of fixed classes, privilege a limited sense of voluntariness in choice.[11] Thus, it is important, Clement claims, that a person be able to voluntarily assent or reject the teaching of the *logos*; otherwise, his or her actions could be neither praiseworthy nor blameworthy (*Stromata* II.11.1-2;

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[9] Jeffrey Stout, *The Flight from Authority*: *Religion, Morality, and the Quest for Autonomy* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 1981), 149 – 76; and Alasdair MacIntyre, *Whose Reason? Which Rationality?* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 1988).

[10] Heracelon's *Commentary on John*'s difference in genre may account for some of its apparently different views, in particular on the notion of fixed natures. See **Chapter 9**.

[11] Winrich Alfried Löhr, "Gnostic Determinism Reconsidered," *Vigiliae Christianae* 46 (1992): 381–90 and Elizabeth Clark, *Clement's Use of Aristotle: The Aristotelian Contribution to Clement of Alexandria's Refutation of Gnosticism* (New York and Toronto: Edwin Mellon Press, 1977).

V.1.3). As we will see, however, the issue is not the opposition of determinism vs. free will, but rather different authors privileging different rationales and commitments based both upon what they thought most important as well as the very genre in which they were writing.

Consequently, in **PART III** I will attempt to circumnavigate previous avenues of discussion about Valentinian soteriology and ethics, most notably discussions that revolved around questionable constructions of free will.[12] Instead, I will reframe the discussion by considering how and why the *Excerpts of Theodotus,* the *Tripartite Tractate*, and Heracleon privileged a tripartite division of humanity and what this meant to the soteriology and ethics of each text. As opposed to the old cliché of free will (patristic sources) vs. determinism (Valentinian and other heretics), we will find competing notions of moral responsibility. As I will demonstrate in **Chapter 8**, there were multiple ways to articulate moral responsibility in antiquity, not just the single paradigm of whether our choices were both voluntary and could have been otherwise. Thus, there is no logical contradiction for the *Excerpts of Theodotus* and the *Tripartite Tractate* to espouse and simultaneously balance higher and lower levels of salvation and fixed classes of humanity with expectations for ethical conduct; instead, these two texts, as we will see, privilege ethical frameworks suited for their totalizing and teleologically-oriented narratives.

In addition to addressing the soteriology and ethics of the *Excerpts of Theodotus*, the *Tripartite Tractate*, and Heracleon, **PART III** contributes to a growing number of studies in ancient ethics concerned with how and why different notions of the self and moral responsibility appear and come into conflict with one another. As we will see in the *Excerpts of Theodotus,* the *Tripartite Tractate*, and Heracelon's *Commentary on John*, a pneumatic has a specific psychological profile – recognizable in his or her reaction to the Savior – that differs from that of

[12] See also my previous treatment in **Chapter 6**.

psychics and hylics. In what follows, I will explore the theoretical rationales and practical effects of this the terminology of hylic, psychic, and pneumatic and how these relate to a soteriology of higher and lower levels of salvation.

To this end, I will first introduce and explain why I chose to focus on the *Excerpts of Theodotus,* the *Tripartite Tractate*, and Heracelon's *Commentary on John*. In **Chapter 8**, I will treat the issue of higher and lower levels of salvation, focusing on how the *Excerpts of Theodotus* and the *Tripartite Tractate* deploy this soteriology to reinforce their ethical ideal of proselytization. Finally in **Chapter 9**, I will consider Heracleon's *Commentary on John*. Of special interest will be his choice of genre, his *differing* views on the fixed nature of humanity, and a discussion of what this diversity of opinion might tell us about the Valentinian movement.

## Sources for this Threefold Division: The *Excerpts of Theodotus*, the *Tripartite Tractate*, and Heracleon's *Commentary on the Gospel of John*

Who were the Valentinians and what survives from them? Based on incomplete portraits and fragmentary texts, the Valentinians appear to have been a group of early Christian teachers, preachers, and prophets. The name "Valentinians" is meant to indicate their alleged dependence upon a poetic and speculative second century theologian named Valentinus.[13] "Valentinian," however, was not a self-designation, but rather an external and polemical label.[14] In fact, the majority of our information about the beliefs, practices, and social makeup of this Christian sub-

[13] Christoph Markschies has argued against linking later Valentinianism (in particular the system of Ptolemy's followers) with Valentinus due to, in his mind, its unbridgeable difference and distance from the fragments of Valentinus. In contrast, Einar Thomassen's extensive study of Valentinianism concludes that the fragments of Valentinus, though not fully elaborated and obviously fragmentary, nonetheless contain many of the elements of these later systems in inchoate form. See Christoph Markschies, *Valentinus Gnosticus? Untersuchungen zur valentinianischen Gnosis mit einem Kommentar zu den Fragmentem Valentins* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1992) and Einar Thomassen, *Spiritual Seed: The Church of the "Valentinians"* (Leiden: Brill, 2008).

[14] In addition to patristic sources, the Nag Hammadi tractate the *Testimony of Truth* also uses this label polemically. See further Geoffrey Smith, *Guilt by Association: Heresy Catalogues in Early Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015)

group is derived from hostile sources. At least eight "fragments" from their putative founder, Valentinus, survive, preserved by Clement of Alexandria and Hippolytus.[15] We also have reports of and citations from alleged students of Valentinus, such as Ptolemy, Heracleon, and Theodotus, preserved by Irenaeus, Hippolytus, Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, and Epiphanius.[16] While most of these citations are rather short, a few are extensive reports on Valentinian teachings and practices. Most notable of these are Irenaeus' account of the followers of Ptolemy, various other Valentinian teachers, and the so-called Marcosians (*AH* 1. 1 – 21), Ptolemy's Letter to Flora (Epiphanius, *Panarion* 33.3.1-10),[17] Heracleon's *Commentary on John* (preserved primarily in Origen's *Commentary on John*),[18] and Clement's *Excerpts of Theodotus*. In addition to these patristic sources, we have a half-dozen Coptic texts from Nag Hammadi that a consensus of scholars categorize as Valentinian: namely, the *Gospel of Truth* (I,3), the *Treatise on the Resurrection* (I,4), the *Tripartite Tractate* (I, 5), the *Gospel of Philip* (II, 3), the *Interpretation of Knowledge* (XI,1), and the *Valentinian Exposition* (XI, 2).

This state of the sources raises two related methodological questions. First, what makes a text Valentinian? Second, are some texts, such as the Coptic Nag Hammadi ones, *more* Valentinian than others or somehow more trustworthy? Let us first consider the former question: what makes a text Valentinian? Einar Thomassen – in an extremely erudite survey – provided an

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15 Six fragments are preserved by Clement and two by Hippolytus; there is an additional but likely "spurious" fragment listed as fragment 9 in Walther Völker's *Quellen zur Geschichte der christlichen Gnosis* (Sammlung ausgewählter kirchen und dogmengeschichtlicher Quellenschriften, Neue Folge 5; Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1932). For discussion of its spurious character, see further Christoph Markschies, *Valentinus Gnosticus*, 264 - 70 and Einar Thomassen, *Spiritual Seed*, 423.

16 In addition to these more famous Valentinian figures, Ismo Dunderberg (*Beyond Gnosticism: Myth, Lifestyle, and Society in the School of Valentinus* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 2) lists some of the lesser-known ones such as Florinus, Secundus, Axionicus, Ardeisanes, Theotimus, and Alexander. For a helpful summary of Valentinian prosopography, see Einar Thomassen, *Spiritual Seed*, 493 – 502.

17 Ismo Dunderberg (*Beyond Gnosticism*, 7) adds also a *Valentinian Letter of Instruction* (Epiphanius, *Panarion* 31.5 – 6). For an introduction and discussion of this letter, see Einar Thomassen, *Spiritual Seed*, 218 – 30.

18 There is an additional fragment or better "remark" from Heracleon preserved by Photius on John 1:17, and Clement (*Ecl*. 25.1; *Strom*. 4.9.71 - 72) preserves two additional fragments of Heracleon, neither of which appears to be from his commentary on the Gospel of John.

overview of the Nag Hammadi sources and assigned each a relative grade as to the likelihood of it being Valentinian: possible (*Exegesis on the Soul* and *Authoritative Discourse*), probable (*Treatise on the Resurrection* and the *Gospel of Truth*), and certain (*Tripartite Tractate*, *Gospel of Philip*, 1 *Apocalypse of James*,[19] *Interpretation of Knowledge*, and *Valentinian Exposition*). To these three, Thomassen adds a category for texts that may preserve Valentinian ideas but were not written by Valentinians[20] (*Prayer of the Apostle Paul* and *Eugnostos the Blessed*).[21]

Among the primary elements that Thomassen takes into account when evaluating a text's relative Valentinianism are its pleromatology, cosmology, anthropology, Christology, soteriology, and eschatology. In concrete examples, does a text refer to numbered aeonic pairs? Does it explain the derivation of matter via the mythical fall of Sophia? Does it associate the Son with the Name of the Father? Finally, does it claim that salvation is a matter of mutual participation between the saved and savior such that the savior must take on the conditions of the persons he is saving?

It is important to note that Thomassen is creating a typological category – Valentinianism – and this constructed category overwhelmingly privileges similarities of belief and doctrine.[22]

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[19] Thomassen has since changed his mind of the 1 *Apocalypse of James* and now considers it a non-Valentinian text preserving Valentinian ritual dicta. Einar Thomassen, "Is James Valentinian" paper delivered at the *Nag Hammadi and Gnosticism Network* Meeting at Princeton, NJ on May 22, 2012.

[20] This third category of tradents but non-adherents raises several additional questions: who are these tradents of Valentinian ideas, teachings, and practices? How did they encounter these ideas, teachings, and practices? And because what survives is purely textual, is this division between adherents and tradents a meaningful and recoverable difference? For a possible way forward, see the incisive and important paper by Pheme Perkins in which she applies recent research on reading networks and the circulation of texts in antiquity: "Valentinians and the Christian Canon," paper delivered at the *Conference on Valentinianism* held at the Norwegian School in Rome on October 17, 2013.

[21] Einar Thomassen, "Notes pour la délimitation d'un corpus valentinien à Nag Hammadi," in *Les textes de Nag Hammadi et la problème de leur classification* (ed. Louis Painchaud and Anne Pasquier; Québec: Les Presses de l'Univeristé Laval, 1995), 243–59, summary from 258.

[22] Some scholars have expressed doubts about the viability of this category. Though we should be cautious and question the utility of the category itself, the applicability of each feature listed, and the relative agreement between a text and this typological construction of Valentinianism, I am not persuaded that the category of Valentinianism is without utility or that it was unrelated to a social movement. The continuity of certain ideas and ritual practices in addition to the patristic evidence of named Valentinians teachers and reports of their literary production is

My interest in **PART III**, as in the preceding two **PARTS**, is not only the theoretical basis but also the social function of soteriology. Consequently, instead of exploring in detail the more abstract issues of pleromatology or the sophisticated mythological speculation underlying Valentinian cosmology and eschatology, my discussion will revolve around how this tripartite anthropology, found among both patristic and non-patristic sources (the *Tripartite Tractate*), resulted from and contributed to soteriological speculation and social practices among a specific sub-group of early Christians.

Turning to the latter question: are some sources *more* trustworthy or authentically Valentinian than others? In an important 1986 article, Michel Desjardins drew parallels between "primary" and "secondary" texts in Valentinian and New Testament studies.[23] The Nag Hammadi texts, Desjardins observed, were treated as "primary" sources for Valentinianism, in contrast to the polemical and therefore "secondary" heresiological sources. In the language of New Testament studies, these Coptic texts were analogous to the seven indisputable Pauline letters whereas the texts preserved among the heresiological authors were analogous to the less historical and less trustworthy Acts of the Apostles. This ranking of primary and secondary sources, Desjardins rightly argued, overlooks the circularity of these labels in which the identification of a primary source depends upon descriptions garnered from secondary texts:

> The primacy of the Nag Hammadi sources is questionable on internal and external grounds. Internally, it must be said that not one of these works claims to represent the views of Valentinus or to be Valentinian. The difficulty scholars have in agreeing upon which of these works is Valentinian reinforces this observation. 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

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compelling evidence of a social movement with recognizable patterns of practice and belief who were dubbed "Valentinians" by their opponents. See further Michel Desjardins' (*Sin in Valentinianism*, 5 – 7) response to Fredrik Wisse's "Prolegomena to the Study of the New Testament and Gnosis," in *The New Testament and Gnosis: Essays in Honour of Robert McL. Wilson* (ed. A. H. B. Logan and A. J. M Wedderburn; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1983), 138 – 45.

[23] Michel Desjardins, "The Sources for Valentinian Gnosticism: A Question of Methodology," *Vigiliae Christianae* 40 (1986): 342–47.

> the patristic accounts, so in effect the "primary sources" are only primary insofar as one accepts the claims made in the "secondary sources."[24]

Consequently, we must evaluate each text individually; neither assuming that the patristic sources are *a priori* less trustworthy, nor that the Nag Hammadi sources are more trustworthy.

In light of this caveat, I will consider the following three texts at length: the *Excerpts of Theodotus*,[25] the *Tripartite Tractate*, and Heracleon's *Commentary on John*. I have selected these three in recognition of their importance for scholarly debates concerning Valentinian ethics, soteriology, and social organization. Although there are intimations in other Valentinian texts of hierarchical classifications, these references are not as explicit or do not presuppose the full division into three distinct classes. For example, the *Gospel of Truth* mentions hylic (ϩⲩⲗⲏ) ones (NHC I, 31.4), and elsewhere employs the binary of psychic (ⲯⲩⲭⲓⲕⲟⲛ) and the pneuma (ⲡⲛⲉⲩⲙⲁ) or spirit, although without the third category, and only in reference to the descent and "cooling" of the fragrance of the Father (NHC I, 34.9 – 25). The *Treatise of the Resurrection* (NHC I, 45.40 – 46.1) and the *Interpretation of Knowledge* (NHC XI, 20 – 21) both employ the Pauline terminology of pneumatic, psychic, and *flesh*, but do not appear to use this tripartite hierarchy to refer to three classes of persons. The *Valentinian Exposition*, especially difficult to reconstruct due to its fractured state, appears to have only a straightforward binary between pneumatic and fleshly powers (NHC XI, 38). And finally, though the *Gospel of Philip* often deploys a tripartite and hierarchical categorization, it does so without resorting to the threefold division of pneumatic, psychic, or hylic:

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[24] Michel Desjardins, "Sources," 343.

[25] I will include discussions of Irenaeus where helpful; but his account from book 1 of *Against Heresies* and Excerpts 43.2 – 65 appear to share a common source. Since the *Excerpts of Theodotus*, especially 43.2 – 65 is a much more contested text among scholars, I will focus my attention on the *Excerpts of Theodotus.* Furthermore, I will not consider Tertullian's representation of this threefold division in *Adversus Valentinos* because it is dependent, as Tertullian notes (*Adversus Valentinos*, 5), upon Irenaeus' account.

> A person is either in this world, in the resurrection, or in the middle place. May I not be found there! In this world there is good and evil, but the good of the world is not really good and the evil of this world is not really evil. After this world is evil that is really evil: this is called the middle. The middle is death. As long as we are in this world, we should acquire the resurrection, so that when we take off the flesh we may be found in rest and not wander in the middle. For many go astray on the way. (NHC II, 66, 7 – 21; cf. 68; 69 – 70; 84 - 85)

Consequently, the *Excerpts of Theodotus,* the *Tripartite Tractate*, and Heracleon's *Commentary on John* not only have central importance for historical reconstructions of Valentinian ethics, soteriology, and practices generally, but are also the best surviving representatives of the theme of humanity's threefold division.[26]

As we shall see – due to genre, transmission history, and state of preservation – each text presents distinct interpretative challenges. The *Excerpts of Theodotus*, for example, are preserved among the writings of Clement of Alexandria in two codices, one of which is directly dependent upon the other.[27] The titular Theodotus is something of a mystery; although he is named in the *Excerpts*, we have no other patristic reports about him.[28] Furthermore, despite their attribution to "Theodotus and the so-called Eastern School,"[29] the so-called *Excerpts of Theodotus* appear to be a composite work from at least four different sources: (1) 1 – 28; (2) 29 – 43.1; (3) 43.2 – 65; (4) 66 – 86.[30] Robert Casey, one of the modern editors, claims that Theodotus himself was the source of only: 1.1-2; 2; 3; 17.1; 21; 22; 23; 24.1; 25; 26; 28; 29; 30.1; 31; 32; 33.1, 3-4; 34; 35;

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[26] See **note 25** above for my rationale for not focusing on Irenaeus' or Tertullian's accounts.
[27] The two manuscripts are Florence, Biblioteca Laurenziana, Laur. V.3 (11th century) and Paris, Bibliotheque Nationale, Suppl. graec. 250 (16th century). See the introduction by Robert Casey to his *Excerpta ex Theodoto of Clement of Alexandria* (ed. Robert Casey; London, et al.: Christophers, 1934).
[28] Hippolytus 7.35 and 7.36 likely do not refer to this Theodotus; see further François Sagnard, *Clément d'Alexandrie: Extraits de Théodote* (Paris, 1970; first edition 1948). 5 – 6.
[29] The division into two schools (Eastern and Western) is based upon various alleged doctrinal differences (e.g., is the savior's body pneumatic or psychic?). It is unclear whether and to what degree this division reflects internal and self-reflexively acknowledged Valentinian diversity or external and heresiologically designed polemics. The most clear and succinct overview, synthesis, and critical evaluation of the model of two schools and their essential characteristics is by Jean-Daniel Dubois, "La Sotériologie Valentinienne du Traité Tripartite (NH I,5)," in Painchaud and Pasquier, *Les textes de Nag Hammadi*, 221–32.
[30] François Sagnard, *Clément d'Alexandrie: Extraits de Théodote* (Paris, 1970; first edition 1948).

36.1; 37 – 41.[31] Furthermore, throughout the *Excerpts of Theodotus*, Clement of Alexandria interjects his own opinions or excurses.[32] Based on the at times haphazard nature of the *Excerpts of Theodotus*, scholars have described its genre as an "author's notebook" or "fragmentary counter-commentary."[33]

In **Chapter 8**, my focus will be the third major section (43.2 – 65), which appears to share a common source with Irenaeus' description of the followers of Ptolemy in book 1 of *AH*.[34] As we shall see, this section contains a sweeping narrative that begins with the pleroma, alludes to the fall of Sophia, and continues to describe the origins of matter, the creation of humanity, the advent of the Savior, and finally the eschatological restoration of the saved. Most importantly for my purposes, it contains a fully articulated division of humanity into three types and a soteriology of higher and lower levels of salvation.

> Now the pneumatic is saved by nature, but the psychic, having power over itself, is suited for faith and incorruptibility as well as for unbelief and corruption according to its particular choice, but the hylic is by nature destroyed… The psychics are raised and saved, but the pneumatics, having believed, have a superior salvation to theirs (*Exc.* 56.3; 61.8) [35]

This soteriology of higher and lower levels of salvation draws extensively upon Pauline ideas and language that were presumably useful for mobilizing committed and likeminded Christians towards missionary work.

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[31] Robert Casey, *Excerpta*, 5.
[32] See especially Judith Kovacs, "Clement of Alexandria and Valentinian Exegesis in the *Excerpts of Theodotus*," *Studia Patristica* 41 (2006): 187 – 200; eadem, "The language of grace: Valentinian Reflection on New Testament Imagery." *Radical Christian Voices and Practice: Essays in Honour of Christopher Rowland* (ed. Zoë Bennett and David B. Gowler; Oxford: OUP, 2012), 69 – 85
[33] See the helpful summary of various opinions by Judith Kovacs, "Clement of Alexandria and Valentinian," 188 – 89.
[34] First observed by Otto Dibelius, "Studien zur Geschichte der Valentinianer." *ZNW* 9 (1908), 230 – 47.
[35] In *Excerpts of Theodotus* 56 and following, neuter and masculine forms of the three classes of pneumatic, psychic, and hylic are used in complex and interrelated ways. See further **Chapter 8** for my discussion on the exegetical basis of these passages.

The *Tripartite Tractate* is one of the longest tractates of the Nag Hammadi Codices, occupying the final eighty-eight pages of Codex I.[36] Similar to *Excerpts of Theodotus* 43.2 – 65, it contains a totalizing narrative that begins with protology, cosmology, and anthropogony, and continues by describing the eschatological judgment and redemption for deserving humans, angels, and even aeonic powers. According to its soteriology, the Father providentially withheld perfection, and thus began the pedagogically driven fall and ultimate restoration of the whole of creation.

> The whole structure of the aeons, then, is yearning and seeking to find the Father perfectly and completely, and this is their irreproachable union. Although the Father does reveal himself, he did not want them to know him from eternity, but he presented himself as something to be reflected upon and sought after, while keeping for himself that by which he is inscrutably preexistent. For the Father gave the aeons as a starting point and a root, so that they are stations on the calm road leading to him, as to a school of good conduct; for he spread out faith and prayer for what they do not see, a firm hope in what they do not comprehend, a fertile love longing for what they do not behold, an eternally receptive understanding of the mind, a blessing that it is richness and freedom, and, for their thoughts, the wisdom of one whose desire is the glory of the Father. (*Tri. Trac*. 71.7–35)

Similarly, the expulsion of humanity from the Garden of Eden and the contingent emergence of death were providentially orchestrated as part of the Father's *oikonomia* or salvific

[36] For the Coptic text of the *Tripartite Tractate*, I rely on two critical editions: Harold W. Attridge and Elaine Pagels, *Nag Hammadi Codex I (The Jung Codex)* (2 vols.; Leiden: Brill, 1985), vol 1., and Einar Thomassen, *Le Traité tripartite* (NH I, 5): *Texte établi, introduit et commenté par Einar Thomassen; traduit par Louis Painchaud et Einar Thomassen* (Québec: Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 1989).

ordering of the cosmos.[37] Thus, there is an emphasis on the deliberateness and providential guidance of all cosmic levels and all episodic periods of salvation history.[38]

As a tractate found among the Nag Hammadi codices, the *Tripartite Tractate* presents unique issues regarding the circumstances of its composition and transmission. Einar Thomassen has persuasively suggested that the *Tripartite Tractate* originated as a mid-third century text composed in Greek.[39] Its current form, however, is that of a fourth or fifth century Coptic translation; as such, it reflects the exigencies of this transmission process. Nonetheless, without additional copies of the *Tripartite Tractate* it cannot be anything more than pure speculation to engage in redaction criticism aimed at isolating the interpolations of so-called later or foreign ideological content.[40] Though some ideas may be conducive to later theological debates (thus explaining their preservation), we cannot persuasively isolate scribal interventions into the text without additional copies or textual seams. Thus, we shall avoid the perils of speculating as to whether these ideas may have been present at the earliest stage of the *Tripartite Tractate* or may have been added later. Treating the *Tripartite Tractate* as a coherent whole, however, does not mean that we can use the text *uncritically* as evidence of second or third-century Christianity, despite close parallels with the *Excerpts of Theodotus* and Irenaeus *AH* 1.

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[37] *Tri. Trac.* 107.20–108.12: "This is the expulsion they made him suffer, when he was expelled from the pleasures of those who belong to the imitation and those who belong to the likeness. It is, however, a work of providence, in order that it may be realized that the enjoyment the human being may have for such pleasures is short compared with the eternal existence of the place of rest. It was a work the Spirit had ordained, because it had planned in advance that the human should experience that great evil which is death . . . because of the transgressions of the first human, death reigned. It accompanied all humans in order to kill them as long as its [rule] remained, which it possessed and was given [for a] kingdom because of <the> economy of the Father's Will, of which we have spoken before."

[38] Even the passion-filled fall of the Sophia-like figure, the Logos, was providential, according to the *Tripartite Tractate*, insofar as it was in accordance with the will of the Father and his divine *oikonomia* or salvific ordering of the cosmos: "It was not without the Will of the Father that his Logos had been brought forth, nor that he should rush forward; rather, the Father brought him forth for the things that he knew must take place." (*Tri. Trac.* 76.23 – 30)

[39] Einar Thomassen and Louis Painchaud, *Le Traité tripartite,* 18 – 20.

[40] It is, however, possible and highly interesting to examine the *scribal* habits of the hand responsible for the *Tripartite Tractate*, in particular the use of *diplai* and other reading marks that demonstrate a point of interest among its monastic scribes and readers (e.g., on page 119). I thank René Falkenberg for pointing this out to me.

As a result, while I advocate treating the text as a whole, I am also aware that the text itself poses distinct difficulties, such as garbled or corrupted translations, which need to be addressed on an *ad hoc* basis.

In contrast to Theodotus, Heracleon is mentioned by a number of ancient authors. Origen refers to him as a pupil of Valentinus (*Commentary on John* 2.100); Clement of Alexandria calls him the most famous of all the branches of the Valentinian school (*Stromata* IV.9.71); other heresiologists, like Irenaeus (*AH* II. 4.1), Tertullian (*Val*. 4:2), and Hippolutus (*Haer*. VI 4, 29:1; 35:6), say little about Heracleon except to mention him as a prominent Valentinian teacher alongside Ptolemy. His major surviving work is a *Commentary on the Gospel of John*, one of if not *the* earliest Christian commentary on a New Testament text (Origen, *Commentary on John* 6.92).[41] Heracleon's commentary survives only in fragments preserved in Origen's own fragmentary *Commentary on the Gospel of John* (hereafter, *CJ*).[42] Even though a hostile tradent, Origen grudgingly acknowledges that some of Heracleon's exegetical solutions are "ingenious." (*CJ* 6.199) Forty-eight fragments survive of Heracleon's *Commentary* as part of Origen's *CJ*: 3

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[41] *Pace* Pier Franco Beatrice ("Greek Philosophy and Gnostic Soteriology in Heracleon's 'Upomnemata,'" *Early Christianity* 3.2 (2012): 188 – 214) who concludes via an argument from silence, i.e., since Origen preserves only 48 fragments, that Heracleon only *wrote* 48 fragmentary opinions on the Gospel of John; consequently, according to Beatrice, Heracleon did not in fact compose an *actual* and *whole* commentary. Instead, Beatrice avers (195 - 96), Heracleon composed a "gnostic" and non-commentarial treatise that "eisegetically," "arbitrarily," and "violently" distorted the meaning of scripture in order to support his own theological beliefs. Origen then extracted all passages referring to parts of the Gospel of John from this "violently eisegetical" work and placed them into his own *Commentary on John*, thereby creating the illusion that Heracelon had ever composed a *Commentary on John* himself. While there are several points at which Beatrice's argument fails to convince, I will single out only three: 1. Beatrice's argument from silence overlooks the fragmentary state and haphazard transmission of Origen's own *Commentary*; put quite simply we cannot know how many passages from Heracleon Origen ultimately knew or cited because not all of Origen survives. 2. Origen himself was writing a *Commentary on John*; nowhere does he say his aim in so doing was to slavishly preserve every line of Heracleon's opus. 3. Beatrice's survey of the term *upomnemata* demonstrated the diversity of the term, but not its incompatibility with the genre of a Gospel commentary; see further Ansgar Wucherpfennig, *Heracleon Philologus, passim*.

[42] Timothy Pettipeice sums up the difficulties of studying Heracleon with a nice turn of phrase: "The examination of the teaching and thought of a figure such as Heracleon involves looking at a broken object through a broken lens, since all that remains of Heracleon's work are fragments within fragments." Timothy Pettipiece, "The Nature of 'True Worship': Anti-Jewish and Anti-Gentiles Polemic in Heracleon (Fragments 20 – 24)," in *L'Évangile selon Thomas et les Textes de Nag Hammadi* (ed. Louis Painchaud and Paul-Hubert Poirer; Québec: Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 2007), 377.

on John 1:3 – 1:18 (the Prologue), 7 on John 2:21 – 1:29 (John the Baptist), 6 on John 2:12 – 2:20 (Jesus' travels to the Temple), 24 on John 4:12 – 53 (the Samaritan woman and the healing of petty king's son), and 8 on John 8:21 – 50 (hostility to Jews as children of the Devil).[43]

Heracleon presents an alternative view of whether the threefold division of humanity is fixed or mutable. Moreover, in what survives, he does not describe higher and lower salvific rewards. We will consider to what degree Heracleon might have been engaged in intra-Valentinian debate, and to what degree his divergent views were a product of genre. Regardless, however, Heracleon agrees with both the *Excerpts of Theodotus* and the *Tripartite Tractate* about what constitutes good ethical conduct: the more advanced (pneumatics) are obligated to lend assistance and imitate the saving actions of the Savior towards less advanced, but likely receptive individuals (psychics). In this way, these three texts and their tripartite anthropology offer evidence of an underappreciated strand of early Christian missionary activity and soteriology.

Consequently, we will first consider the ethics and soteriology of the threefold division of the *Excerpts of Theodotus* and the *Tripartite Tractate*'s threefold division of humanity in **Chapter 8**. I will argue that through this threefold division and soteriology of higher and lower levels of salvation, the *Excerpts of Theodotus* and the *Tripartite Tractate* both promote an ethical ideal in which the more advanced were responsible for the less advanced. In **Chapter 9**, I will examine Heracleon's views on the threefold division of humanity. Ultimately, despite theoretical differences among these three texts, I will conclude that each deploys the threefold division of humanity to encourage committed individuals (pneumatics) towards their ethical ideal of missionizing and saving others.

[43] See the extremely helpful table found in Einar Thomassen's "Heracleon" *The Legacy of John: Second Century Reception of the Fourth Gospel* (ed. Tuomas Rasimus; Brill: Leiden, 2010), 176.

# Chapter 8[1]
# Salvation and Society:
## The Social and Ethical Dimensions of Higher and Lower Levels of Salvation in the *Tripartite Tractate* and the *Excerpts of Theodotus*

There is an ongoing debate among scholars over how best to interpret the language of soteriological and anthropological difference espoused in a few Valentinian sources: some have argued that the language of hylics, psychics, and pneumatics referred to ritual categories and fixed eschatological ends that emerged from theoretical speculation about the composition of the cosmos and the derivation of matter; others have argued that these three classes were pedagogical stages of moral development through which a person advanced.[2] To highlight the crux of this disagreement: these Valentinians either believed a person was "saved by nature," and thus salvation had little to do with ethical merit; or these Valentinians were just like many other early Christian authors who connected ethical growth and salvation, and they differed from their peers only insofar as they used Pauline terminology to describe benchmarks along this pedagogical path.[3] Drawing upon insights from both camps, I will carve out a middle position

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[1] **Chapter 8** reproduces for the most part my forthcoming article "The Ethics of Higher and Lower Levels of Salvation in the *Excerpts of Theodotus* and the *Tripartite Tractate*" *Conference Proceedings on Valentinianism* (ed. Einar Thomassen and Christoph Markschies; Leiden: Brill, forthcoming).

[2] For the most recent instances of these two views, see the competing 2013 articles by Einar Thomassen and Ismo Dunderberg: Einar Thomassen, "Saved by Nature? The Question of Human Races and Soteriological Determinism in Valentinianism," 129 – 49 and Ismo Dunderberg, "Valentinian Theories on Classes of Humankind," 113 – 28 in "*Zugänge zur Gnosis*: *Akten zur Tagung der Patristischen Arbeitsgemeinschaft vom 02.-05.01.2011 in Berlin-Spandau* (ed. Christoph Markschies and Johannes van Oort; Leuven – Walpole, MA: Peeters, 2013).

[3] Both camps, however, especially the recent work of Thomassen and Dunderberg, can often come very close to agreeing with each other in terms of a final portrait of Valentinians, despite privileging very different *comparanda* (Thomassen: Neo-Pythagorean metaphysics; Dunderberg: Hellenistic, especially Stoic, study circles) in their discussions. In addition to the two previous cited articles, see also Einar Thomassen, *The Spiritual Seed*: *The Church of the 'Valentinians'* (Leiden: Brill, 2006); idem, "Valentinian Ideas about Salvation as Transformation," *Metamorphoses: Resurrection, Body, and Transformative Practices in Early Christianity* (ed. Turid Karlsen Seim and Jorunn Økland; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2009), 169 – 87; Ismo Dunderberg, "The School of Valentinus," *A Companion to Second Century Christian "Heretics"* (ed. Antti Marjanen and Petri Luomanen; Leiden: Brill, 2005), 64-99; idem, *Beyond Gnosticism: Myth, Lifestyle, and Society in the School of Valentinus* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008); and idem, "Stoic Traditions in the School of Valentinus," *Stoicism in Early Christianity* (ed. Tuomas Rasimus, Troels Engberg-Pedersen, and Ismo Dunderberg; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2010), 220 – 38.

that affirms that some Valentinians deployed a soteriology with multiple and fixed levels of salvation, but that they also maintained standards for ethical conduct and moral responsibility by means of this soteriology.

To this end, I will consider two Valentinian texts: the *Excerpts of Theodotus* and the *Tripartite Tractate*.[4] I agree with the first camp that in the case of these two texts the three classes are ritually differentiated categories of people with fixed salvific ends. As such, both texts use compelling visual and spatial metaphors drawn from biblical sources to articulate these soteriological distinctions. Their tripartite anthropogony and its apparent devaluation of choice does not, however, preclude ethical responsibility and practice.[5] Instead, both the *Excerpts of Theodotus* and the *Tripartite Tractate* deploy a version of moral responsibility that privileges *causal* moral responsibility. According to causal moral responsibility, an agent is morally responsible if there is a causal relationship between the agent and his or her actions, i.e., it is the agent and not something else that brought about the action.[6] As we will see, the *Excerpts of Theodotus* and the *Tripartite Tractae* tailored their notion of moral responsibility to balance their commitments to a teleological and predetermined narrative of salvation history with ongoing expectations of proper conduct. By interpreting their notion of moral responsibility as motivated by their ideological commitments and a specific social context, I contend that the *Excerpts of*

[4] It is important to note that in **Chapter 8** I am considering only one current of Valentinian anthropology and soteriology. Heracleon's *Commentary on John*, for example, differs from the *Excerpts of Theodotus* and the *Tripartite Tractate* in its treatment of this tripartite division of humanity, especially membership in classes.
[5] Alexander Kocar, "'Humanity Came to Be According to Three Essential Types': Ethical Responsibility and Practice in the Valentinian Anthropogony of the Tripartite Tractate (NHC I, 5)." in *Jewish and Christian Cosmogony in Late Antiquity* (ed. Lance Jenott and Sarit Kattan Gribetz; Tübingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 2013), 193 – 221.
[6] Causal responsibility is often associated with ancient Stoics and their interests in preserving the autonomy of an agent in spite of universal causation and the overriding power of Fate. See especially Susanne Bobzien, *Determinism and Freedom in Stoic Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998); eadem, "The Inadvertent Conception and Late Birth of the Free-will Problem," *Phronesis* 43.2 (1998): 133 – 75.

*Theodotus* and the *Tripartite Tractate* rhetorically highlight their self-identity as a sub-group of Christians called to special missionary practices.

In the course this **Chapter**, I will first introduce passages pointing to belief in higher and lower salvation in the *Tripartite Tractate* and the *Excerpts of Theodotus*.[7] Following this, I will briefly summarize how scholars have interpreted these passages differently, i.e., as either final eschatological ends or progressive stages of advancement. Moving beyond the false binary that Valentinian anthropology is either indifferent to ethical merit or refers only to transient stages of moral development, I will conclude instead that both the *Excerpts of Theodotus* and the *Tripartite Tractate* privilege a different framework, causal responsibility, for ascribing moral praise and blame. As we will see, both the *Excerpts of Theodotus* and the *Tripartite Tractate* appeal to higher and lower levels of salvation to justify and motivate committed readers towards their ethical ideal of proselytizing and saving others.

## Higher and Lower Salvation

According to the *Excerpts of Theodotus* and the *Tripartite Tractate*, there are three classes of people (choic or hylic, psychic, and pneumatic), and each has a distinct salvific end. Both the *Excerpts of Theodotus* and the *Tripartite Tractate* contain the classic formulation of this tripartite division, which adopts and synthesizes into a single hierarchical anthropology Paul's rhetorical classification of pneumatic, psychic, and earthly types of people, thereby combining

[7] I focus especially on the third major section of the *Excerpts of Theodotus* (43.2 – 65) since it has been at the center of the debate surrounding Valentinian soteriology. I will not discuss Heracleon's *Commentary on John* in this section because it does not explicitly describe soteriological ends and its commentarial genre requires additional considerations. On the constraints and impact of the commentarial genre on Heracleon's anthropology, see further Elaine Pagels, *The Johannine Gospel in Gnostic Exegesis*: *Heracleon's Commentary on John* (SBLMS 17; Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1973); Jeffrey Trumbower, *Born from Above: The Anthropology of the Gospel of John* (Tübingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 1992); Ansgar Wucherpfennig, *Heracleon Philologus: Gnostische Johannesexegese im zweiten Jahrhundert* (WUNT 142; Tübingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 2002); and Einar Thomassen, "Heracleon" *The Legacy of John: Second Century Reception of the Fourth Gospel* (ed. Tuomas Rasimus; Leiden: Brill, 2010), 173 – 210.

chapters 2 and 15 from Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians.[8] Furthermore, each of the three classes has a different salvific profile:

> The pneumatic race will receive complete salvation in every respect. The hylic race will perish in every respect, as happens to an enemy. The psychic race, however, since it is in the middle by virtue of the way it was brought forth as well as by virtue of its creation, is double according to its assignment to good as well as to evil… (*Tri. Trac.* 119.16 – 24)[9]

Similarly, the *Excerpts of Theodotus* also contains a threefold division of humanity and ascribes different soteriological profiles to the pneumatic, psychic, and hylic:

> Now the pneumatic (τὸ πνευματικόν) is saved by nature, but the psychic (τὸ ψυχικόν), having power over itself, is suited for faith and incorruptibility as well as for unbelief and corruption according to its particular choice, but the hylic (τὸ ὑλικόν) is by nature destroyed. (*Exc.* 56.3)[10]

Elsewhere, this hierarchical stratification of hylic, psychic, and pneumatic is further accentuated by descriptions of the higher and lower levels of salvific reward enjoyed by pneumatics and psychics respectively, as well as by the different roles they play over the course of salvation history. One of the Valentinian authors preserved in the *Excerpts of Theodotus* appeals to a sophisticated scriptural metaphor to illustrate the compatibility of greater and lesser rewards within shared salvation. *Excerpts of Theodotus* 56 – 58 deploys Paul's metaphor of the olive tree from Romans 11 to describe the dynamic process through which two groups – the Gentiles, representing the psychics, and Israel, representing the pneumatics – are both saved.

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[8] See further Irenaeus (*AH* I.8.3) who observes that the Valentinian anthropology merged 1 Cor. 2:14 – 15 ("Those who are psychic do not receive the gifts of God's spirit…because they are spiritually (*pneumatically*) discerned. Those who are pneumatic discern all things…") with 1 Cor. 15:48 ("As was the man of earth, so are those who are earthly…").

[9] All translations are my own unless otherwise indicated.

[10] In *Excerpts of Theodotus* 56 and following, neuter and masculine forms of the three classes of pneumatic, psychic, and hylic are used in complex and interrelated ways. Though it has been suggested that the three neuter terms were salvifically autonomous from their eponymous classes of people, this, as I will show below, misconstrues the overall meaning of the text. As I understand these terms: *pneumatika*, for example, refers not only to the distinctive *part* of a person (a *pneumatikos*) but also corporately to a class of persons (the *pneumatikoi*). See below for my discussion of the exegetical justification of this interpretation.

> When, therefore, the psychic ones (τὰ ψυχικά) "are engrafted on the olive tree" (Rom.11:24) into faith and incorruptibility and share "the richness of the olive tree" (Rom. 11:17) and "when the Gentiles come in," then "thus shall all Israel." (Rom. 11:25 – 26) (*Exc.* 56.4)[11]

Yet, although both are saved, hierarchy persists in this olive tree as our Valentinian author refers to the elect or pneumatics as the root and the called or psychics as the shoots (*Exc.* 58.1 – 2). In this way, our author imports Paul's hierarchy of the sure salvation of all of Israel and the secondary salvation of Gentiles to underscore the superior status of the pneumatic over and above that of the psychic.[12] Therefore, according to our Valentinian author, different salvific statuses await psychic and pneumatic types:

> For when the body died and death was lord over it, the Savior sent forth the ray of power which had come upon him and destroyed death and raised up the mortal body which had put off passion. In this way, therefore, the psychic ones (τὰ ψυχικά) are raised and saved, but the pneumatic ones (τὰ πνευματικά), having believed, have a superior salvation to theirs, because they received their souls as 'wedding garments.' (*Exc.* 61.7-8)

In addition to containing the same tripartite division of humanity, the *Tripartite Tractate* posits two separate but interrelated eschatological timelines: on the one hand, a realized eschatology enacted ritually through baptism for the pneumatics, and on the other, a final day of judgment for hylics and psychics.[13] In this vision of salvation history, the church, consisting of pneumatics (*Tri. Trac.* 123.3 – 12),[14] is set apart from the rest of

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[11] For Pauline exegesis in the *Excerpts of Theodotus,* see further Elaine Pagels, "The Valentinian Claim to Esoteric Exegesis of Romans as the Basis for Anthropological Theory," *Vigiliae Christianae* 26.4 (1972): 241 – 58; Judith Kovacs, "Echoes of Valentinian Exegesis in Clement of Alexandria and Origen: The Interpretation of I Cor. 3: 1- 3," *Origeniana Octava* (ed. L. Perrone; Leuven: Peeters, 2003): 317 – 29; eadem, "Clement of Alexandria and Valentinian Exegesis in the *Excerpts of Theodotus*," *Studia Patristica* 41 (2006): 187 – 200; eadem, "The language of grace: Valentinian Reflection on New Testament Imagery." *Radical Christian Voices and Practice: Essays in Honour of Christopher Rowland* (ed. Zoë Bennett and David B. Gowler; Oxford: OUP, 2012), 69 – 85; for a possibly parallel use of Romans 9 – 11 in the *Tripartite Tractate*, see Alexander Kocar, "Humanity," 212 – 16.

[12] Cf. *Excerpts of Theodotus* 56.5, which continues to identify pneumatics with Israel: "But Israel allegorizes the pneumatic (ὁ πνευματικός), the one who sees God, the son of faithful Abraham, true-born of a free-woman."

[13] Einar Thomassen, *Spiritual Seed*, 182 – 86; Alexander Kocar, "Humanity," 212 – 16.

[14] While some scholars suggest that psychics are included in the "members" of the ecclesial body that require a school (*Tri. Trac*. 123.12), this interpretation is not certain. The interpretative dispute regarding this passage is over the identity of the "perfect man" and the "members" of the Savior mentioned in *Tri. Trac*. 123.3–12.

humanity by ritually participating in the body of the Savior as a "preliminary" unification prior to the final restoration that will occur only after the reunification of the Pleromatic realms.[15] This preliminary unification of the pneumatics is described in symbolic language emerging from the use of Pauline baptismal formulae in ritual practice: "The Election is consubstantial with the Savior and of one body with him. Because of its oneness and union with him, it is like a bridal chamber." (*Tri. Trac.* 122.12–17). Following this initial or preliminary unification, the pneumatics, according to the *Tripartite Tractate*, will escape beyond the powers of the hylic (those on the left) and psychic (those on the right) by receiving the complete redemption which:

> …was not only the release from the domination of the left ones, nor was it only [escape][16] from the powers of those of the right…but the redemption is also an ascent [to] degrees which are in the Pleroma and [to] those who have named themselves according to the power of each of the aeons, and an entrance into what is silent, where there is no need for voice…but where all things are light, while not needing to be illumined. (*Tri. Trac.* 124.3 – 25)

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According to Harold Attridge and Elaine Pagels, the perfect man refers to the pneumatic portion of the "Man of the Church" (*Tri. Trac*. 122.30), and so the "members" are the psychics who still require instruction after the pneumatic portion of the community "immediately received knowledge and returned to its unity" (*Tri. Trac*. 123.4–7). In support of identifying the perfect man with the pneumatic component of the community, Attridge and Pagels note that his "immediate" response is characteristic of pneumatics. Furthermore, the fact that the "members" need instruction demonstrates, according to Attridge and Pagels, that pneumatics – who "receive gnosis immediately" – cannot be these "members" who require instruction. In contrast, Einar Thomassen argues that the perfect man is the Savior (*Spiritual Seed*, 55); in addition, Thomassen ("Valentinian Ideas") provides instances in which pneumatics need and/or receive instruction. Moreover, the following section of the *Tripartite Tractate*, which focuses on the link between the restoration of the Church and the Aeons, sets the members of the community in opposition to the dominion of those on the left *and* right, i.e., psychics (*Tri. Trac*. 123.23–124.25), thereby suggesting that the Church community and its "members" are most easily identified as pneumatics. See Attridge and Pagels, *Nag Hammadi Codex I (The Jung Codex)* (Leiden: Brill, 1985), 2:460–64; Thomassen, *Le Traité tripartite* (NH I, 5): *Texte établi, introduit et commenté par Einar Thomassen; traduit par Louis Painchaud et Einar Thomassen* (Québec: Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 1989, 436–37. In contrast, see *Exc.* 58.1, which states the Church consists of both the pneumatic elect and the psychic called.

[15] "The Pleroma possesses a first mutual concord and union, which is the concord belonging to the Father, and through which the members of the All receive [his] countenance from him. The final restoration is at the end after the All is manifested in him who is the Son – the one who is the redemption, who is the road toward the incomprehensible Father, who is the return to the preexistent – and after the members of the All have been manifested in him who is truly the inconceivable, ineffable, invisible, and ungraspable, so that the All obtains its redemption." (*Tri. Trac*. 123.23–124.3)

[16] For a clear discussion about the likely corruption of ⲦⲞⲨⲰ to ϯϩⲱ, see Attridge and Pagels, *Nag Hammadi Codex* I, 2: 468.

While it is clear that these Valentinians used biblically inspired categories to differentiate among types or natures – hylic, psychic, and pneumatic – the social and salvific implications of these different classes are still hotly contested. As we have seen, the pneumatics are unquestionably saved; the hylics are unquestionably damned; but the fate of the psychics is uncertain. (*Tri. Trac.* 119.16 – 24; *Exc.* 56; cf. Irenaeus, *AH* I.7.5) Will psychics be saved, and if they are, is it to the *same degree* as pneumatics? In other words, are psychics in a preliminary stage, like catechists, and will ultimately become pneumatics, or are they permanently differentiated from pneumatics and thus cannot enjoy the highest level of salvation?

A microcosm of the contours of the debate surrounding Valentinian soteriology are the contrasting views of Elaine Pagels and James McCue, who clashed over how best to interpret the accounts of Valentinian soteriology preserved by two early Christian polemicists, Irenaeus of Lyons and Clement of Alexandria.[17] According to Pagels, Irenaeus polemically altered his summary of Valentinian soteriology in order to claim that Valentinians excluded ordinary ("psychic") Christians from full inclusion and co-equal celebration alongside the Savior at the eschatological celebration.[18] In contrast, James McCue argued that Irenaeus' account, while certainly polemical, is nonetheless reliable.[19] Moreover, while there may be an "equalization" among pneumatic and ordinary (psychic) Christians at the penultimate eschatological stage of the wedding feast, it is clear, according to McCue, that both Irenaeus' and the *Excerpts of*

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[17] Elaine Pagels, "Conflicting Versions of Valentinian Eschatology: Irenaeus' Treatise vs. the Excerpts from Theodotus," *HTR* 67 (1974): 35 – 53; James McCue, "Conflicting Versions of Valentinianism? Irenaeus and the *Excerpta ex Theodoto*," in *The Rediscovery of Gnosticism* vol I (ed. Bentley Layton; Leiden: Brill, 1980), 404 – 416.
[18] Comparing *Exc.* 63.1f and *AH* I. 7.1, Pagels ("Conflicting Versions," 44 – 45) claims: "If we reject the attempt to harmonize the two accounts, recognizing that they contain irreconcilable differences, we can see what Theodotus clearly states: that '*all* who are saved' – pneumatics and psychics alike – are joined together until 'all are made equal and come to know each other' in reciprocal communion."
[19] James McCue, "Conflicting Versions," 404.

*Theodotus*' versions of Valentinian soteriology agree that ordinary Christians do not participate in the highest eschatological reward, symbolized by the bridal chamber.[20]

Undergirding much of Pagels' and McCue's disagreement were their opposing responses to the question: according to the Valentinians, could a person change his or her "nature" in order to earn a different salvific desert? Central to their debate is the account of the eschatological celebration beginning at *Excerpts of Theodotus* 63.

> Now the repose of the pneumatics (τῶν πνευματικῶν) on the Lord's Day is in the Ogdoad, which is called the Lord's Day, and is with the Mother who keeps the souls, the wedding garments, until the end; but the other faithful souls are with the Creator, but at the end they also go up into the Ogdoad. Then comes the marriage feast that is common to all of those who are saved until all might be made equal (ἀπισωθῇ) and know each other. Afterwards, the pneumatic ones (τὰ πνευματικά), having put aside the souls, are led by the mother, who is guiding the bridegroom, and these same ones [lead] bridegrooms, i.e., their own angels, and go into the bridal chamber beyond the Limit and go towards the vision of the spirit/*pneuma*, having become intellectual aeons through the intellectual and eternal marriages of the syzygy." (*Exc.* 63 – 64)

On the basis of the *Excerpts of Theodotus* 63 – 64, Pagels proposed that psychics could and would be saved in the end, claiming that the difference between ordinary (psychic) and Valentinian (pneumatic) Christians is only "provisional" since it will be "obliterated" during the eschatological celebration, wherein psychics and pneumatics receive the same salvific reward.[21] In reply, McCue contended that the wedding feast of *Excerpts of Theodotus* 63 - 64 refers only to a preliminary eschatological reward. The logic of Valentinian soteriology, McCue argued, is such that the composition of one's nature indicates how high one can climb on the eschatological ladder of rewards, i.e., pneumatics, who possess pneumatic, psychic, and hylic elements, can,

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[20] Ibid, 415: "The equalization must take place among all those who are to be saved, the psychics as well as the pneumatics. Given the radical difference between the psychic and pneumatic elements, which Pagels does not contest, the only sense that I can make of this is that *at this penultimate stage*, i.e., at the wedding feast, they are equal; they sit down, so to speak as equals. But immediately after, they are again differentiated."
[21] Elaine Pagels, "Conflicting Versions," 44 – 53, see especially 50 – 51.

once stripped of the lower two elements, ascend to the rewards of pneumatic elements.[22] In contrast, psychics, who lack the pneumatic elements, simply cannot ascend into the final bridal chamber described in *AH* I.7.1, 5 and *Exc.* 64 – 65.[23]

> "Afterwards, the pneumatic ones (τὰ πνευματικά), having put aside the souls… go into the bridal chamber beyond the Limit… having become intellectual aeons through the intellectual and eternal marriages of the syzygy. And the "master" of the feast who is the bridesmaid for the ceremony, "and the friend of the bridegroom, standing in front of the bridal chamber and hearing the voice of the bridegroom, rejoices greatly." (John 3:29) This is "fullness of his joy" and his repose (John 3:29). (*Exc.* 64 – 65)

From this, McCue concluded that the difference between psychics and pneumatics is not provisional, but is a fundamental distinction that continues to separate Valentinians from ordinary Christians forever.[24]

To adjudicate between these two competing interpretations, we must explain the presence of both masculine and neuter categories (e.g., οἱ πνευματικοί v. τὰ πνευματικά), determine who is present at the final stage of the bridal chamber, and decide whether and to what degree Valentinian soteriology preferred radical equality or salvific hierarchy. As we shall see, both the *Excerpts of Theodotus* and the *Tripartite Tractate* express ideological commitments to eschatological unity; this does not mean, however, that salvation in either text is a simple binary between the saved and the damned. Nor are the *Excerpts of Theodotus* and the *Tripartite Tractate* the only ancient texts that attempt to simultaneously maintain equality and hierarchy. One need look no further than the Apostle Paul to find the uneasy tension of extolling equality among ritual initiates while simultaneously maintaining hierarchical relationships among

[22] James McCue, "Conflicting Versions," 413, referring to *Exc.* 54 – 58.
[23] James McCue, "Conflicting Versions," 415.
[24] Einar Thomassen similarly argues that salvation is a physical reaction enacted through "consubstantiality" (like responding to like) and "*syngeneia*" ("Saved by Nature," 135, 138).

members.[25] Moreover, the phenomenon of higher and lower rewards within shared salvation is not unique to the *Excerpts of Theodotus* or the *Tripartite Tractate*. The Shepherd of Hermas,[26] Clement of Alexandria,[27] and even Irenaeus[28] all describe higher and lower levels of reward within shared salvation. For these authors, as well as for the *Excerpts of Theodotus* and the *Tripartite Tractate*, the phenomenon of higher and lower levels of salvation was a useful technology that could help maintain expectations for ethical conduct, but could also help account for moral shortcomings.

Let us examine an important point of contention: is the distinction between psychic and pneumatic a permanent division or is it merely provisional? In support of her view that all difference between pneumatics and psychics will be obliterated, Pagels argued that natures or elements, in the neuter (e.g., τὸ πνευματικόν / τὰ πνευματικά), were fundamentally distinct from classes of people, in the masculine (e.g., ὁ πνευματικός / οἱ πνευματικοί).

> According to Theodotus, it is not the "pneumatics (οἱ πνευματικοί) who "leave off their souls" and enter into the pleroma, but the pneumatic elements (τὰ πνευματικά). Since after the equalization "psychics" and "pneumatics" no longer exist as distinct species, the πνευματικά can only be the pneumatic seed or τὰ ἀγγελικά of both those who previously were pneumatic and psychic (cf. *Exc.* 21 and 39).[29]

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[25] Dale Martin, *The Corinthian Body* (Yale University Press, New Haven, Connecticut, 1995).

[26] "All those who have repented have a dwelling place in the tower. All those who *repent more slowly* will dwell within the walls. But those who do not repent but remain in their deeds will certainly die." (*Sim* 8.7; cf. *Sim*. 8.6 – 8; *Vis*. 3.5; and *Man*. 6.2)

[27] "As then the remotest particle of iron is drawn by the influence of the magnet…so too through the attraction of the Holy Spirit are the virtuous drawn to dwell in the highest room, and the others are organized one after another until the last room." (*Stromata* VII.2.9; cf. *Stromata* IV.18.114; VI.13.107; and VI.14.111, 114)

[28] "And thus the Lord declared, 'In my Father's House there are multiple rooms." (John 14:2) For all things belong to God, who supplies all with a suitable dwelling-place; even as his Word says, that a share is allotted to all by the Father, according to how each person is or will be worthy." (Irenaeus, *AH* V. 36; Translation from *The Ante-Nicene Fathers* (ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2004), vol. 1.

[29] Elaine Pagels, "Conflicting Versions," 46; James McCue ("Conflicting Versions," 405 – 7) disputed Pagels' claim that this twofold emission of the pneumatic seed was available to both the pneumatics and the psychics who were attending the eschatological celebration (*Exc.* 63 – 65) by observing that Pagels had homogenized earlier sections of the *Excerpts of Theodotus* (*Exc.* 21 and 39) with 43.2 – 65; most scholars, McCue noted, consider these passages to come from different and at times incompatible sources.

Thus, in *Excerpts of Theodotus* 56 and following,[30] the roadmap of salvation outlined above describes the salvific fate of different "elements" or "seeds," but not classes of people.[31] As I will show below, however, both the "pneumatic elements" and "seeds" are uniquely and exclusively connected with pneumatic persons and the salvation of pneumatics as a corporate class.

Similarly supporting the view that Valentinian soteriology is concerned with saving certain elements or parts of a person but not classes of people, Ismo Dunderberg observed that the *Excerpts of Theodotus* 50 - 57 is building on an extended exegesis of Genesis 1 – 2 and the composite creation of Adam.[32]

> "Taking a clump from the earth" (Gen. 2:7) not of dust but from a portion of matter of various parts and colors, he fashioned an earthly and hylic (ὑλικήν) soul, irrational and consubstantial with the one (i.e., the soul) of the beasts. This is the human being "according to the image" (Gen.1:26). But the one "according to the likeness" is the one that the Demiurge himself "breathed into" (Gen. 1:26; 2:7) and in which he sowed and placed something consubstantial with himself through angels. (*Exc*. 50.1 – 2)

After differentiating between two types of souls (the hylic or earthly and the psychic or divine soul), [33] the *Excerpts of Theodotus* 53 – 54 describes a third soul, the logical or heavenly soul, that comes to be after Wisdom sows the spiritual seed into Adam.[34] After listing his three (hylic, psychic, and pneumatic) souls, the *Excerpts of Theodotus* mentions an additional component, a leathery cloak of earthly material, which surrounds Adam (*Exc.* 55.1-2). In summary, Adam's

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[30] *Exc.* 56.3: "Now the pneumatic is saved by nature, but the psychic, having power over itself, is suited for faith and incorruptibility as well as for unbelief and corruption according to its particular choice, but the hylic is by nature destroyed."

[31] Elaine Pagels, "Conflicting Versions," 44 – 6; Ismo Dunderberg, *Beyond Gnosticism*, 139 – 40.

[32] Ismo Dunderberg, *Beyond Gnosticism*, 139.

[33] "This is the human being then, 'psychic' in 'earthly,' not part by part, but as a whole united altogether by God's ineffable power…this is the meaning of 'this is now bone of my bones.' (Gen. 2:23): it hints at the divine soul which is hidden in the flesh, solid, impassive, and very powerful." And "flesh from my flesh" [hints] at the material soul (τὴν ὑλικὴν ψυχὴν) which is a body for the divine soul." (*Exc*. 51.1 – 2)

[34] "Thus Wisdom first put forth a pneumatic seed into Adam in order that it should be "the bone" (Gen. 2:23), the logical and heavenly soul, not empty but full of pneumatic marrow…" (*Exc.* 53.5).

anthropology is an elaborate dualism between earthly flesh and immaterial soul, wherein there are three types of soul (hylic, psychic, and pneumatic). Extrapolating from this narrative of the composite creation of Adam, Dunderberg claims that at the eschatological celebration a person would be separated again into these component parts.[35] In other words, these "elements," in the neuter, are distinct from classes of persons, in the masculine, and it is these "elements" that receive different salvific rewards.[36]

This is a significant observation and an important distinction; however, this rigid dichotomy between elements and classes of people overlooks the Pauline exegetical inter-texts motivating and undergirding this portion of the *Excerpts of Theodotus*.[37] Thus, in order to clarify the overlapping referents of the neuter singular and plural forms of pneumatic, psychic, and hylic and their eponymous anthropological classes, it is necessary to uncover and explain their underlying exegetical framework, in particular Pauline metaphors of sowing and the corporate body of the Savior. As we will see, our Valentinian author composed a complex and exegetically driven narrative. In this way, the *Excerpts of Theodotus* accounts for how different people emerge by analogy to the sowing of disparate seeds, and it illustrates their corresponding salvific deserts via the body of the Savior and its internal hierarchy. It is not coincidence that the three types of souls have the same names as the three classes of humanity. The physiological hierarchy of the paradigmatic and first human (Adam) is a blueprint of the salvific hierarchy of

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[35] *Exc.* 64: "[After the marriage feast], the pneumatic (τὰ πνευματικά), having put aside the souls (τὰς ψυχάς), are led by the mother, who is guiding the bridegroom, and these same ones [lead] bridegrooms, i.e., their own angels, and go into the bridal chamber beyond the Limit… (*Exc.* 64)."

[36] Ismo Dunderberg, *Beyond Gnosticism,* 139: "[After the eschatological marriage banquet], the spiritual element (*ta pneumatika*) will be separated from the souls and it will leave them. It is this element – strikingly not the spiritual beings (*hoi pneumatikoi*) – that is allowed to enter the 'bridal chamber within the Limit,' that is, the Fullness, and to see the Spirit…the salvation envisioned here in this passage means that the believers belonging to the psychic class attain the very same salvation as spiritual beings." Cf. Elaine Pagels, "Conflicting Versions," 46.

[37] As I will show in the second half of this paper, it also overlooks how Valentinians deployed a single, naturalistic discourse to explain all physical, ethical, and eschatological difference. See further Brad Inwood's article on the rhetorical appeal of naturalistic explanations: Inwood, "Moral Causes: The Role of Physical Explanation in Ancient Ethics," *Thinking About Causes: From Greek Philosophy to Modern Physics* (ed. Peter Machamer and Gereon Wolters; Pittsburg: University of Pittsburg Press, 2007), 14 – 36.

the three classes of humanity, and the salvific destinies of each class are illustrated by their eponymous level in the corporate body of the Savior, which is modeled after Adam.

Let us look more closely at this Pauline exegesis, beginning with the metaphor of sowing. Expanding upon its exegesis of Genesis, *Excerpts of Theodotus* 53 also claims that the sowing of different seeds (σπέρμα), a neuter noun, accounts for the differences among Adam's three sons: Cain, Abel, and Seth.

> From Adam three natures were begotten: first the irrational, which was Cain's, the second the rational and just, which was Abel's, and third the pneumatic, which was Seth's. And the one that is earthly is "according to an image," and the psychic "according to a likeness" with God, and the pneumatic according to [God's] own property. (*Exc.* 54.1 – 2)

The *Excerpts of Theodotus* exegetically blends the story of Adam and his progeny with Paul's metaphor of sowing and his terminological distinction between psychic and pneumatic from 1 Corinthians 2 – 3.[38] This metaphor of sowing seeds illustrates how difference arose and was obliquely transmitted.

> Therefore, Adam sows neither from the pneumatic nor from "that which was breathed into [him]" (Gen. 2:7). For both are divine and both sprout through him but not by him. But his hylic is energetic towards seed and generation, as though blended with its seed and unable to separate from this merging in life… And if Adam had sown from the psychic and the pneumatic just as he had from the hylic, everyone would have been equal and righteous and everyone would have the teaching. Therefore, many are the hylics (οἱ ὑλικοί), not a lot are the psychics (οἱ ψυχικοί), and a few are the pneumatics (οἱ πνευματικοί) (*Exc.* 55.1 – 56.2)

In the same way that we do not interpret Paul's seeds as autonomous or separate entities from their current manifestation as his congregation members, so too we should not obscure the

[38] Harmonizing Paul's language in 1 Cor. 2 – 3 with Luke 2:40, the *Excerpts of Theodotus* 61 differentiates between psychics and pneumatic by claiming pneumatics need wisdom, whereas psychics, as children, require growth. Judith Kovacs has convincingly shown that Clement of Alexandria went to great lengths to respond to precisely this sort of Valentinian exegesis of 1 Corinthians 2 – 3; see especially Clement's extended and complex exegetical argument at *1 Paed.* 6. Judith Kovacs, *Clement of Alexandria and the Valentinian Gnostics* (Ph.D. Dissertation: Columbia University, 1978); eadem, "Echoes of Valentinian Exegesis."

meaning of the narrative in the *Excerpts of Theodotus* by creating an absolute distinction between these seeds and their manifestation.

This sowing metaphor has several important interpretative implications: first, there is a causal relationship between these seeds and the emergence of different types of people. Importantly, this relationship is not strictly biological or predictable; instead, the differences represented by these seeds are transmitted obliquely.[39] The imagery of a seed, which disappears and whose contents (i.e., its future maturation and actualization) are unknown before it reappears, is particularly useful because it can convey both theoretical fixity as well as sociological fluidity.[40] In theory, Valentinian soteriology has fixed, or predetermined salvific classes; yet in practice there is sociological fluidity in how persons might discover their true identities and accept the codes of conduct attendant to their roles in the ongoing drama of salvation history. Thus in practice, the imagery of a seed, the true nature of which is only later revealed, places the emphasis on the actualization of these seeds because it is only after a person is identified as one of the three classes that the cause, his or her seminal nature, is retrospectively realized.[41] In this way, these seeds function as Aristotelian-like causes insofar as they are explanatory, i.e., with hindsight they can be appealed to in order to explain the actualization of

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[39] *Exc.* 55.2*:* "Therefore, Adam sows neither *from* (ἀπὸ) the pneumatic nor *from* (ἀπὸ) 'that which was breathed into [him]' (Gen. 2:7). For both are divine and both sprout *through* him (δι' αὐτοῦ) but not by him (ὑπ' αὐτοῦ)." Interestingly, according to Origen (*CJ* 2.14.102), Heracleon, in his interpretation of John 1:3 ("All things came to be through him, and without him not one thing came into being"), makes use of similar prepositional distinctions to describe the relationship of the Logos/Savior to the creation of the world: "The one who provided the demiurge with the cause for the genesis the world, that is the Logos, is not the one 'from whom,' (ἀφ' οὗ) or 'by whom,' (ὑφ' οὗ), but the one 'through whom' (δι' οὗ)." For a meticulous discussion of this passage and its different modes of agency, see further, Ansgar Wucherfpennig, *Heracleon Philologus*, 139 – 51; for analogous language in the *Tripartite Tractate*, see further Harold Attridge, "Greek Equivalents of Two Coptic Phrases: CG I, 5. 65. 9 – 10 and CG II, 2. 34. 26," *Bulletin of the American Society of Papyrologists* 18 (1981): 27 – 32.

[40] For this two sided dynamic of fixity and fluidity, see further Denise Kimber Buell, *Why This New Race? Ethnic Reasoning in Early Christianity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 6 – 7.

[41] Cf. Aristotle, *NE* X.9 (1179b20 – 30) who similarly uses the imagery of seeds and growth to note that the fortunate "through some divine causes" (διά τινας θείας αἰτίας) have superior natures and are thus better suited for virtue.

different sorts of people.[42] Finally, the metaphor of a seed works only in one direction: it describes how certain people emerge as a result of their seeds. It does not, however, work in the opposite direction such that a person can change or transform his or her seed; such an interpretation would destroy the power and clarity of the metaphor.

In addition to this metaphor of sowing, the *Excerpts of Theodotus* is also drawing upon the Pauline imagery of the corporate body of the Savior. The *Excerpts of Theodotus* 63 – 65 describes the higher level of salvific reward awaiting the pneumatic (τὰ πνευματικά) in the bridal chamber, and some scholars have similarly interpreted this passage as indicating that the highest level of salvation is rewarded not to pneumatic people, but to pneumatic elements. This interpretation, however, overlooks the Pauline metaphor of a corporate ecclesial body constructed from differing members.[43] At *Excerpts of Theodotus* 58.1, "the Great Champion, Jesus Christ" "takes up" the church, consisting of the pneumatic elect (τὸ ἐκλεκτόν) and the psychic called (τὸ κλητόν), and saves them according to the logic of participation.[44] According to this salvation by participation, the "Great Champion Jesus Christ," becomes a composite whole made of differing parts, and will save the different classes of humanity by redeeming that respective and consubstantial part of himself manifested by each class:

> Jesus Christ took up through his own power the Church, the elect and the called; the former is the pneumatic (τὸ πνευματικόν**)** from the Mother, and the latter is the psychic (τὸ ψυχικόν) through the salvific organization (ἐκ τῆς οἰκονομίας). He saved and bore up what he had taken up and through them also what was consubstantial. 'For if the first fruit is holy, the dough will be also; and if the root is holy, the branches will be also.' (Romans 11:16)" (*Exc.* 58.1-2)

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[42]For an overview of Aristotle's (in particular *Metaphysics* VI) discussion of cause, explanation, and necessitation, see Richard Sorabji, *Necessity, Cause, and Blame*: *Perspectives on Aristotle's Theory* (Chicago: University of Chicago University Press, 1980).

[43] See further Judith Kovacs, "Clement of Alexandria and Valentinian Exegesis," who outlines how Clement and the Valentinians deployed the compelling Pauline imagery of the Church as the Body of Christ.

[44] Einar Thomassen, *Spiritual Seed*, 66: "This notion rests…on a logic of mutual participation between the Saviour and the *salvandi*. The Saviour submits himself to the condition from which he saves…"

As at 56.4, *Excerpts of Theodotus* 58.2 mines Romans 11 for imagery that conveys hierarchy within shared salvation.

Moreover, our Valentinian author appeals to the composite nature of the Savior in order to explain that apparently incongruent sayings of the Lord emerged from these different parts of his corporate body (*Exc.* 61:1-8; cf. Irenaeus, *AH* I.7.3). Drawing upon several scriptural inter-texts, these parts of the composite Savior are personified differently, referencing the hierarchy of bodily members and the corresponding hierarchy among its eponymous classes of people:

> Now the psychic Christ sits at the right hand of the creator, just as David said: "Sit at my right hand," (Ps. 110.1) and so on. And he sits until the completion, "in order that they may see whom they pierced." (John 19:37) But they pierced the appearance, which was the flesh of the psychic. For it says "not a bone of his shall be broken." (John 19:36) Just as in the case of Adam, the prophecy allegorizes bone as the soul. (Gen. 2:23) For the soul deposited itself into the hands of the father while the body of Christ suffered, but the pneumatic in the bone is not yet deposited, but he preserves it. (*Exc*. 62.1 – 3)

By the time we arrive at the eschatological celebration, our Valentinian author is juggling several scriptural inter-texts, most importantly for our current purposes are Adam's composite creation and Paul's ecclesial body with multiple members. We have a description of a single, paradigmatic person composed of various parts; but we also have a corporate body, which is made up of different members, and each represents a whole class of people. The soteriology of this blended exegesis maintains that corporate salvation works analogously to the hierarchy of the single, paradigmatic human being and vice versa.[45] Therefore, τὰ πνευματικά does not *exclusively* refer to either the highest part of an individual or to a corporate class of people, but rather to both.

[45] David Aune makes notes of similar analogical reasoning in Paul and some of Paul's near-contemporaries in his "Two Pauline Models of the Person," *The Whole and Divided Self* (ed. David Aune and John McCarthy; Cross Road Publishing Company: New York, 1997), 89 – 114.

Moreover, this interpretation, which highlights that people and not just elements are saved, makes better sense of the descriptions of the higher salvific award reserved for the bridal chamber:

> Afterwards, the pneumatic ones, having put aside the souls, are led by the mother, who is guiding the bridegroom, and these same ones [lead] bridegrooms, i.e., their own angels, and go into the bridal chamber beyond the Limit and go towards the vision of the spirit/*pneuma*, having become intellectual aeons through the intellectual and eternal marriages of the syzygy." (*Exc.* 64)

Though some scholars have interpreted the "equalization" that occurs at the dinner celebration as a radical transformation of all guests into a single substance or element (τὰ πνευματικά), this does not account for other passages that emphasize the varying statuses of the wedding attendees.[46] Foreshadowing this eschatological scene where "the pneumatic ones put aside the souls," these souls are referred to as the "wedding garments" for the pneumatic ones (*Exc.* 61.8; 63.1). Thus, although the marriage festival is celebrated co-equally by the participants – psychics and pneumatics alike – this coequal marriage feast does not entail a complete merging between the dinner guests (psychics) and the bridal party (pneumatics). Instead, it is quite the opposite: because of what happens in the bridal chamber, there is a stripping off of the wedding garments (souls), and thus the celebration therein consists exclusively of the pneumatics (and their syzygies) without the garments of their souls.[47] The exclusiveness of this reward is further

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[46] A central point that Professor Pagels and I still disagree upon is whether the clause "until all might be made equal and know each other" (ἄχρις ἂν ἀπισωθῇ πάντα καὶ ἄλληλα γνωρίσῃ) entails a transformation where all the saved become equal and thus τὰ πνευματικά (*Excerpts of Theodotus* 63). Pagels has argued in favor of this interpretation ("Conflicting Versions," 46 – 51). In contrast, I prefer to interpret *Exc.* 63 not as referencing an ontological equalization or complete erasure of difference but rather as a brief co-equal celebration before the saintly pneumatics depart to ascend to the bridal chamber (Exc. 64). In addition to the reasons I have provided above and below, another argument in support of interpreting *Exc*. 63 as I recommend is that it retains the rhetorical play on and overall *coherence* of the naturalistic origins of different types of people, i.e., what makes a pneumatic a pneumatic is inseparable from the cosmological, anthropological, soteriological, and ethical significance of τὰ πνευματικά; cf. **note 81** below. Although I do disagree with Pagels' interpretation on *Exc*. 63, my entire argument, i.e., the Valentinians were not a-ethical determinists, is dependent upon and would have been impossible without her pioneering work.

[47] This passage is unclear, but "souls" likely has multiple referents, i.e., both a part of a person (which a pneumatic, like a psychic, possesses) as well as to the class of persons who are "faithful souls" (*Exc.* 63.1), which based on the

underscored by the spatial metaphor in play, i.e., the highest salvation is limited because a bedroom is a private place and is not spacious enough to accommodate the entire dinner party of the saved.

In addition to the passages outlined above, the specific terms deployed in this eschatological scene to demarcate higher and lower levels of salvation may provide additional evidence of the soteriological hierarchy between psychics and pneumatics in the *Excerpts of Theodotus*. For example, the higher and lower salvific levels are characterized by different and gradated sensory experiences: the pneumatics in the bridal chamber *see*, whereas those standing outside the bridal chamber only *hear* the sounds of celebration (*Exc*. 64 – 65). We find this same sensory hierarchy between pneumatics and psychics in the *Tripartite Tractate* (118 – 119), where pneumatics receive knowledge through revelation and the psychics are instructed by means of voice.[48]

Moreover, at this final eschatological phase, only the pneumatic passes beyond the Limit and become pure aeons through "the marriage of the syzygy." Though from another part of the *Excerpts of Theodotus* and likely from a different author/source,[49] *Excerpts of Theodotus* 21 – 22 and 35 – 36 state that the angelic syzygies required to cross the Limit and enter into the Pleroma are available only to pneumatics.[50] This unifying syzygy, *Excerpts of Theodotus* 35 - 36 declares, not only redeems the pneumatics themselves, but it also restores angels to the Pleroma

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μέν and δέ contrast with *pneumatika* likely refers to the *psychika*. It is important to note, however, that there is no explicit reference to psychic salvation after 61.8, at which point the *Excerpts of Theodotus* states simply that psychics enjoy an inferior salvation to that of the pneumatics. See also Einar Thomassen ("Saved by Nature," 140) who similarly points to the ambiguity and likely overlap of meanings between "soul" and "psychic."

[48] *Excerpts of Theodotus* 56.5 also allegorically characterizes the pneumatic as "Israel…the one who *sees* God."

[49] I follow Sagnard's division of the *Excerpts of Theodotus* into four main sections/sources: (1) 1 – 28; (2) 29 – 43.1; (3) 43.2 – 65; (4) 66 – 86. François Sagnard, *Clément d'Alexandrie: Extraits de Théodote* (Paris, 1970; first edition 1948).

[50] Einar Thomassen, *Spiritual Seed*, 377 – 83.

through their reenactment and participation in the Savior's baptism.[51] Consequently, through these ritualized unions, pneumatics play a different and much more active role than psychics in the ongoing drama and salvation history, i.e., one intimately involved with the restoration of the cosmos and the salvation of others, including even *angels*:[52]

> For, as they [angels] are bound for the sake of a part [of themselves**]** and, though being restrained in their desire to enter on account of us they plead and beg remission for us in order that we might enter together with them. For it is almost as if they need us in order to enter, since without us they are not permitted (on account of this not even the mother has entered without us, they say), probably because they are bound for our sake. (*Exc*. 35.3 – 4)

In summary, although it consists of several Valentinian sources, the *Excerpts of Theodotus* repeatedly maintains that pneumatics and psychics are distinct and play different roles in the drama of salvation history. This does not mean that psychics cannot be saved, but rather within the shared salvation of pneumatics and psychics, pneumatics enjoy greater rewards and honors: "The psychic ones are in this way raised and saved, then, but the pneumatic ones, having believed, receive a higher salvation..." (*Exc*. 61.8)[53]

We find a similar soteriology of higher and lower rewards within shared salvation in the *Tripartite Tractate*. Drawing on the radical equality of the Pauline baptismal formula found in Galatians 3, the author claims that there will be a return to the primordial unity such that all differences shall be abolished.

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[51] *Exc.* 36.2: "Since we had been divided, Jesus was baptized on account of this, so that the undivided [our angels] be divided until he should unite us in the Pleroma in order that we, the many, having become one, should all be united with the one who was divided for us."

[52] To put as fine point on this as possible: in some Valentinian texts, pneumatics can save others through the ritual of baptism; in contrast, psychics are either saved by others or can save themselves, but they never save others. See further Alexander Kocar, "Humanity," 213 and 220 for my suggestion that Pauline exegesis fuels the contention that pneumatic baptism hastens the Pleromatic restoration in the *Tripartite Tractate.*

[53] *Pace* Ismo Dunderberg (*Beyond Gnosticism*, 140) who states that there is a strict binary between the saved and the damned with no gradients of salvation: "In consequence, although there are three different essences present in humankind, there are only two destinies for humans: either salvation, reserved for both the spiritual beings and the faithful souls, or destruction, reserved both for the hylics and the unfaithful souls."

> For if we confess the kingdom that is in Christ it is an abolishment from all multiplicity, inequality, and change. For the end will receive a unitary existence just as the beginning is unitary – the place where there is neither male nor female nor slave nor free, nor circumcised nor uncircumcised neither angel nor man, but all in all is Christ. (*Tri. Trac.* 132.16 – 28; cf. 127.19 – 25)

Nonetheless, the *Tripartite Tractate* goes on to clarify that, while all the saved – angels and humans – will obtain the Kingdom, the confirmation, and salvation, "some are exalted because of the *oikonomia*, having been set up as causes for the things that happened…" (*Tripartite Tractate* 133.8 - 10).[54] Consequently, although the *Tripartite Tractate* imagines a final apokatastatic return to unity (133; 135-6), there are still persistent indications of difference.[55] Moreover, this original unity to which the saved will return is the Pleromatic union, and that unity is comprised of the concord of aeons of various stations and powers. It is likely, therefore, that this imagined eschatological ideal will resemble the hymning aeons of the Pleroma who form a "union, a mutual intermingling, and oneness" through their hymns despite *individually* remaining different and having different powers.

> "But every name that is thought or is spoken about him is brought forth in glorification as a trace of him according to the power of each of those who glorify him." (*Tri. Trac.* 65.39 – 66.5; cf. 68. 20 – 28; 70. 8 – 19)

Consequently, although differing from the *Excerpts of Theodotus*, the *Tripartite Tractate,* nonetheless, similarly expresses a belief in soteriological hierarchy.

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[54] Einar Thomassen ("Saved," 144) argues that some markers of salvific difference are abrogated at the eschatological finale, e.g., the rewards of the bridal chamber are made available to saved psychics. Thomassen's interpretation, however, is uncertain since it depends entirely on a reconstruction of the text: "And the Church will remember them as good friends and faithful servants once it has been redeemed, and [it will give them] (ⲉ̣[ⲥⲛⲁ†] ⲛ̣[ⲛⲉⲩ ⲛ̄) the rewards consisting of the joy that reigns in the bridal [chamber] (*Tri. Trac.* 135.25 – 31). In contrast, Attridge and Pagels render this passage differently: "The Church will remember them as good friends and faithful servants, once she has received the redemption [from the one who gives] (ⲁ̣[ⲃⲁⲗ ϩ]ⲛ̣ [ⲡⲉⲧⲥⲓ]) requital. Then the [grace] which is in the bridal [chamber]…" In either case, what follows this passage (*Tri. Trac.* 136.11 – 28) maintains a hierarchy of deserts and honors among the saved, tailoring salvific rewards to the relative praiseworthiness of different soteriological roles. Consequently, as Attridge and Pagels observed, the pneumatic Church mirrors the saving power of the Savior such that "just as the revelation of the Savior provided exaltation to the spiritual Church (124.3 – 25), [so too does] the spiritual Church provide some form of salvation to the beings who serve her." Attridge and Pagels, *Nag Hammadi Codex I*, 2: 496.

[55] For other instances of salvific hierarchy in the *Tripartite Tractate*, see 119.20–120.14; 121.25–38; 125.24–127.25; 131.14–133.15.

Ultimately then, if the *Excerpts of Theodotus* and the *Tripartite Tractate* did devise a soteriology consisting of predetermined levels of salvation and different classes of humanity, were they indifferent, as some heresiologists claimed, to ethics and moral responsibility? As we will see, such allegations presuppose a model of ethical responsibility that privileges voluntariness and the choice between alternatives. This model, however, was not the only notion of moral responsibility deployed in antiquity. Instead and similar to earlier Stoic philosophers, the Valentinians employed a model of causal moral responsibility. This observation makes two contributions to the study of Valentinianism: first, it enables us once and for all to put aside the heresiological cliché that Valentinians were unethical determinists.[56] Secondly, by extrapolating from what practices Valentinians privileged through their model of causal responsibility, we can reconstruct the ethics of higher and lower salvation, i.e., the idealized portrait of what a pneumatic ought to do.

## Responsibility and Ethics

In the second part of **Chapter 8**, I will introduce two types of moral responsibility: causal and two-sided. Both are heuristic categories designed to illustrate that ancient thinkers could privilege different theoretical and social commitments while still retaining moral accountability. Following this overview, I will argue that the *Excerpts of Theodotus* and the *Tripartite Tractate*'s fixed anthropogony and eschatology preserve moral responsibility insofar as agents, due to either their essence or nature, are still the cause of their moral or immoral actions. Finally, I will examine what discrete ethical practices the *Excerpts of Theodotus* and the *Tripartite Tractate* expect pneumatics to enact. I will conclude that, according to the *Excerpts of Theodotus* and

[56] See further the excellent summary of this enduring cliché provided by Michael Williams in *Rethinking Gnosticism: An Argument for Dismantling a Dubious Category* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996), 189 – 212.

the *Tripartite Tractate*, a pneumatic is morally responsible for missionizing to and saving others.

Over the past two decades, Suzanne Bobzien, an expert on determinism and freedom in ancient philosophy, has persuasively demonstrated that there were different modes or ways of articulating moral responsibility in antiquity.[57] An agent is morally responsible when moral praise or blame can be assigned to the agent on the basis of his or her moral choices and actions.[58] Too often we have reduced moral responsibility to the question: did an agent use his or her free will for good or for evil? However, as numerous studies have shown, a "free will" as an autonomous, governing psychological faculty, distinct from reason, was (and still is) a complex and often elusive concept; moreover, it did not coalesce until rather late in antiquity, and even then it was not consistently formulated.[59] A better question for determining moral responsibility is to ask: "what is up to or dependent upon us?" Based upon their differing interests and presuppositions, however, ancient theorists disagreed about what precisely *is* up to us, and for what, therefore, we are morally responsible as agents.

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[57] Susanne Bobzien, "Inadvertent Conception," 135.

[58] For moral praise and blame and their conditions, see especially Susanne Bobzien, "Choice and Moral Responsibility in *Nicomachean Ethics* iii, 1 – 5," *Cambridge Companion to Nicomachean Ethics* (ed. Ronald Polansky; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 81 – 109.

[59] The most influential study remains Albrecht Dihle's teleological narrative in which he concludes that the modern notion of the will was not "discovered" until the writings of Augustine. See Albrecht Dihle, *The Theory of Will in Classical Antiquity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982). Dihle's study has since been updated by subsequent scholars who have privileged competing conceptions of a will and freedom: Charles H. Kahn, "Discovering the Will: From Aristotle to Augustine," *The Question of 'Eclecticism': Studies in Later Greek Philosophy* ed. John Dillon and A. A. Long (Berkeley, et al.: University of California Press, 1988): 234-59; Susanne Bobzien, "Inadvertent Conception"; eadem, "Did Epicurus Discover the Free Will Problem?" in *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy XIX* (ed. David Sedley; Oxford University Press, 2000): 287–337; and Michael Frede, *A Free Will: Origins of a Notion in Ancient Thought* (ed. A. A. Long; Berkeley, et al.: University of California Press, 2011).

In light of those disagreements, Bobzien delineates two types of moral responsibility.[60] In the first case, described as causal moral responsibility, an agent is morally responsible when the agent is causally the source for an action or choice, i.e., it is the agent and not something else that brought about the action. In this first case, the primary concern is that the agent be autonomous and free from external compulsions. As we see in Cicero's *De Fato*, causal moral responsibility is associated with the views of Stoics, in particular Chrysippus who was attempting to balance universal causation with moral accountability. Chrysippus' solution was to claim that events are co-determined by external and internal causes, and that even if external or auxiliary causes are fated, an agent is still responsible for the internal or principal cause.[61]

> Some causes,' [Chrysippus] says 'are perfect and principal, others auxiliary and proximate. Thus, when we say that everything happens by fate owing to antecedent causes, what we wish to be understood is not perfect and principal causes, but auxiliary and proximate causes." (Cicero, *De Fato* 41)

As we will see below, causal moral responsibility posits an agent (or "self") that is foreign to many modern readers because it does not subdivide him or her into competing, internal faculties; rather, an agent is causally responsible when he or she, treated as a whole, is the source of an action or decision.[62]

In Bobzien's second type of moral responsibility, an agent can be praised or blamed only if he or she could have done otherwise; in other words, there is not a strong belief in universal causation, and thus there is an element of indeterminateness to our choices and actions. In this

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[60] In the following **three paragraphs**, I am simplifying and synthesizing Bobzien's "Inadvertent Conception," *Stoic Determinism*, and "Did Epicurus Discover" to create for heuristic purposes a clear dichotomy between causal and "two-sided," (i.e., could do otherwise) models for moral responsibility.

[61] Chrysippus explains the difference between internal and external causes by analogy to the spinning of a cylinder or a top: an external cause provides the force necessary to spin the objects, but it is internal cause (i.e., the nature of the cylinder or top) that determines the manner and duration of their spinning. (Cicero, *de Fato 42 – 43;* cf. Gellius, *NA 7.2* [*SVF* 2.1000]).

[62] For an illustration of just how pervasive and ultimately influential the internally divided conception of the self has been, see further Krister Stendahl's seminal article against the "introspective" Paul, "The Apostle Paul and the Introspective Conscience of the West," in *Paul Among Jews and Gentiles* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1976), 78 – 96.

second case then, autonomy from external compulsion is not the primary concern; instead, to be morally accountable, I must have made a voluntary and deliberate choice between the alternatives of x and not x.[63] Emblematic of this second type of moral responsibility, the second to third century Peripatetic Alexander of Aphrodisias describes *prohairesis* as a choice between alternatives that is not predetermined by preceding causes.

> For we assume that we have this power in actions, i.e., we can choose the opposite, and not that everything which we choose has causes laid down beforehand on account of which it is not possible for us not to choose it. (Alexander of Aphoridisas, *De Fato* 180.26 – 28)

In this way, Bobzien sets out two competing notions of moral responsibility by asking "what is up to us?" In the first case, an action depends upon us if the cause for the action originated in us and not elsewhere;[64] in the second case, we are responsible for an action only if we voluntarily chose it and could have chosen otherwise. These two models privilege different concerns and construct moral agents differently.

Accordingly, there are also different formulations for what constitutes the "us" in the programmatic question, "what is up to us?" Causal responsibility often depends upon a notion of self that Bobzien refers to as "the whole person" model; on the opposite end of the spectrum is a notion of the self that is divided into parts or mental faculties in conflict with one another.[65] According to the "whole person model," a person's choices and actions result from his or her disposition and character and are entwined with his or her past experiences and memories. The "divided self," on the other hand, frequently portrays decision-making as a contest of rival parts

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[63]"It is clear even in itself that 'what depends on us' is applied to those things over which we have the power of also choosing the opposite things." (Alexander of Aphrodisias, *De Fato* 181.5 translated by R.W. Sharples, *Alexander of Aphrodisias on Fate* (London: Duckworth, 1983).

[64] Importantly, actions or choices that result from our own character and dispositions are still said to have originated in us because our internal quality (character and disposition) is never *external* to ourselves. Ricardo Salles, *The Stoics on Determinism and Compatibilism* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2005), 47

[65] In addition to the Bobzien works listed **above**, especially "Did Epicurus Discover," 290 – 92, see also Christopher Gill, *The Structured Self in Hellenistic and Roman Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

or separate faculties, wherein the "I" that decides is distinguishable from beliefs, experiences, and character. For the purpose of this **Chapter**, it is important to keep in mind that an agent is causally responsible when he or she, treated as an aggregate whole, is the source of a decision or action. Because any decision or choice is contingent upon the type of person I am, I could not have done otherwise because there is no additional faculty or "I" separable from the type of person I am. As we will see, the Valentinian soteriology of higher and lower levels of salvation has striking parallels with both Bobzien's two models of responsibility and different types of selves. In what follows, I will appeal to Bobzien's heuristic categories in order to describe with greater clarity the ethics and moral psychology underlying the Valentinian soteriology of higher and lower levels of salvation.

Much of the previous research and discussion about Valentinian ethics and soteriology has been influenced by the heresiological cliché that Valentinians, without the capacity to choose otherwise, were determinists with no sense of moral accountability.[66] As a result, subsequent scholars have debated the veracity of this polemic, disputing whether it was a deliberate mischaracterization or an accurate description. Rather than playing a zero-sum game of right or wrong, I think it more advantageous to consider Valentinians and their opponents as espousing competing and at times incompatible ideologies.[67] In other words, the Valentinians *privileged* different commitments, and even different rationales, than their opponents.[68] Once we uncover

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[66] Cf. Irenaeus, *AH* 4.37.2: "If, on the other hand, some are by nature good and others are by nature bad, then neither the former ones are worthy of praise on account of their goodness, since they were created like this; nor the latter ones are worthy of blame, since they, too, were created like this."

[67] For a discussion of the problem of incompatible ethical systems in modern moral philosophy, see Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981).

[68] In making this claim, I depend upon the discussions of embedded or situated rationality in Jeffrey Stout, *The Flight from Authority*: *Religion, Morality, and the Quest for Autonomy* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 1981), 149 – 76; and Alasdair MacIntyre, *Whose Reason? Which Rationality?* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 1988).

these underlying commitments and rationales, we can better understand the social position and ethical ideals of Valentinians and their opponents.

For example, Clement of Alexandria was an influential promoter of the claim that Valentinians, due to their absence of voluntary choice, were unethical determinists. In *Stromata* II, Clement characterizes the Valentinians as soteriological determinists who believe they are saved by nature and concludes, therefore, that they have no regard for ethical accountability. Without the ability to assent to or reject God voluntarily, Clement asserts, we are simply "…lifeless puppets controlled by natural forces and led involuntarily by predetermined impulse… and moved by external cause" (*Strom*. II.11.1-2). Clement's critique mirrors anti-Stoic polemics that claimed that if an action was the exclusive result of external causes, then there could be no room for moral accountability.[69] Moreover, although Clement himself does not endorse a completely voluntary portrait of moral psychology, he, nonetheless, strategically deploys Peripatetic terminology to privilege the voluntariness of the choice between obedience and disobedience as part of his polemic against Valentinian soteriology.[70] Choice, as Clement uses the term, does not possess the indeterminate sense of a deliberative choice from all possible sets of alternatives; instead, it is functionally synonymous with a single choice between the alternatives of offering or withholding *sugkatathesis* or assent to God.[71]

As result, "what is up to us," according to Clement, is often described as the moral choice between obedience or disobedience to the commandments of God and the instruction of the *Logos*: "What is in our power is readiness for education and obedience to the commandments" (*Strom.* II.15.62; cf. *Prot.* 11.115.1; *Paed.* I.12.100.2; *Strom*. II.20.115). Such an emphasis on a

[69] Winrich Alfried Löhr, "Gnostic Determinism Reconsidered," *Vigiliae Christianae* 46 (1992): 381–90.
[70] Elizabeth Clark, *Clement's Use of Aristotle: The Aristotelian Contribution to Clement of Alexandria's Refutation of Gnosticism* (New York and Toronto: Edwin Mellon Press, 1977).
[71] *Strom.* IV. 24.153.1; cf. II.6.27.4; II.12.55.1-2; V.1.3; V.13.86; VI.17.156.2; and VII.15.91.

person's preparedness and willingness for instruction makes sense from an individual, such as Clement, who made his living as a teacher.[72] In this way, Clement's construction of moral psychology is an expression of his own ideological commitments, including his social position as a professional instructor.[73]

For their part, the *Excerpts of Theodotus* and the *Tripartite Tractate* deploy a soteriology that privileges naturalist (physical) explanations of ethical difference and a causal model for ethical responsibility. Moreover, this soteriology not only encourages correct behavior, as we will see below, but it also can help explain moral shortcomings. For example, *Excerpts of Theodotus* 56.3, which I introduced above as evidence of Valentinian belief in higher and lower levels of salvation, also provides a tantalizing psychological portrait of psychics:

> Now the pneumatic is saved by nature, but the psychic, having power over itself,[74] is suited for faith and incorruptibility as well as for unbelief and corruption according to its particular choice, but the hylic is by nature destroyed. (*Exc* 56.3)

According to *Excerpts of Theodotus* 56.3, psychics have a limited range of choice: they can select between the alternatives of "faith and incorruptibility as well as unbelief and corruption."[75]

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[72] Scholars often question Eusebius' (*HE* VI.6.1) claim that Clement was the head of the Alexandrian catechetical school; as such, a debate continues over whether Clement might have been a private household teacher as opposed to Eusebius' propagandist portrait of him as a successive link in the chain of instructors at the Alexandrian catechetical school. See further, Alain Le Boulluec, "L' école d'Alexandrie. De quelques aventures d'un concept historiographique," *Alexandrina: Hellénisme, judaïsme et christianisme à Alexandrie: Mélanges offerts à Claude Mondésert* (Paris: Cerf, 1987), 402 – 17; idem, "Aux origines, encore, de l'école d'Alexandrie," *Adamantius* 5 (1999): 7 – 36; Roelof van den Broek, "The Christian 'School' of Alexandria in the Second and Third Centuries," *Studies in Gnosticism and Alexandrian Christianity* (ed. Roelof van den Broek; Leiden: Brill, 1996), 197 – 205; Annewies van den Hoek, "The 'Catechetical' School of Early Christian Alexandria and its Philonic Heritage," *Harvard Theological Review* 90.1 (1997): 59 – 87; David Dawson, *Allegorical Readers and Cultural Revision in Ancient Alexandria* (Berkeley et al.: University of California Press, 1992), 219 – 22; and Anthony Grafton and Megan Williams, *Christianity and the Transformation of the Book: Origen, Eusebius, and the Library of Caesarea* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2006), 70 – 78.

[73] In recognizing the significance of the social and ideological context for ancient thinkers, I am indebted to the insightful article by Brent Shaw, wherein he examined Stoicism as an ideology that was dynamic and interconnected with the social and political situations in which its "propagators" lived. See Shaw, "The Divine Economy: Stoicism as Ideology," *Latomus* 64 (1985): 16–54.

[74] This translation for αὐτεξούσιον avoids the problem of importing the ideological foreign language of a "will." Cf. Epictetus use of αὐτεξούσιον in his "On Freedom," (*diss.,* IV.1).

Merging several disparate scriptural passages, the *Excerpts of Theodotus* 51 – 52 describes in detail the inner turmoil and psychological struggles of these divided persons:

> This is the meaning of 'this is now bone of my bones.' (Gen. 2:23): it hints at the divine soul which is hidden in the flesh, solid, impassive, and very powerful." And "flesh from my flesh" [hints] at the material soul (τὴν ὑλικὴν ψυχὴν) which is a body for the divine soul. (Gen. 2:23) Concerning these two [the material and divine souls], the Savior says: "one must fear the one able to destroy that soul and that psychic body in Hell." (Mt. 10:28) For the Savior calls the flesh an "adversary" (Mt. 5:25), and Paul calls it a "law warring against the law of my mind," and the Savior urges us "to bind" and "to plunder the property as of a rich man," (Mt. 12:29) who was warring against the heavenly soul… (*Exc.* 51. 2 – 52.1) [76]

Taken together, *Excerpts of Theodotus* 51 – 52 and 56 portray the psychics as internally divided and struggling between the alternatives of faith and unbelief. This is a useful caricature, underscoring the capriciousness of psychics, and thus can account for good and bad psychic conduct vis-à-vis pneumatics.[77] Moreover, as we will see, the *Excerpts of Theodotus'* contrast between the internal instability of the psychics and the ethical consistency of pneumatics helps justify their soteriological hierarchy as well as remind pneumatics of ethical expectations.

In contrast to these psychics who are internally conflicted about whether to choose faith or unbelief, certain Valentinian sources, in particular the *Tripartite Tractate*, portray pneumatics as holistic agents who are causally responsible, due to their nature or essence, for their correct conduct. As I outlined above, someone is causally responsible if it is through the agent and not something else that an action is brought about. In the case of the early Stoic Chrysippus, the

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[75] Cf. *Tri.Trac*. 119.20 - 24: "The psychic race, however, since it is in the middle by virtue of the way it was brought forth as well as by virtue of its creation, is double according to its assignment to good as well as to evil."

[76] For a more thorough discussion of the contemporary philosophical debates relating to Romans 7 and its formulation of an internal, psychological conflict, see further Emma Wasserman's *The Death of the Soul in Romans 7*: *Sin, Death, and the Law in Light of Hellenistic Moral Psychology* (Tübingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 2008).

[77] Cf. *Tri. Trac.* 121. 25 – 121. 38: "For those on the right [good psychics] who will be saved, the road to eternal rest leads from humility to salvation. After they confessed the Lord, the thought as to what is good for the Church, and the song of the humble with the Church, they will, for all the good they have been able to do for it, sharing its afflictions and sufferings like people who have consideration for what is good for the Church, they will share her hope."

primary concern was reconciling universal causation or "fatalism" with his belief that a person can still be held morally responsible. To accomplish this, Chrysippus distinguished between two types of causes – internal or *perfect* and external or *auxiliary* – and argued that, though events might be fated to happen, they are nonetheless also codetermined by internal responses to external causes. Therefore, "what is up to us," is how we respond, either giving or withholding assent, to external impressions.

The *Tripartite Tractate* presents an instance of this co-determinism that is strikingly similar to the Stoic account of internal and external causes:[78]

> Now, humanity came to be according to three essential types – pneumatic, psychic, and hylic – reproducing the pattern of the three kinds of dispositions of the Logos, from which sprung hylic, psychic, and pneumatic beings. The essences of the three kinds can each be known by its fruit. They were nevertheless not known at first, but only when the Savior came to them, shedding light upon the saints and revealing what each one was. (*Tri. Trac.* 118.14–29)

According to the *Tripartite Tractate*, how people reacted to the advent of the Savior is causally linked to their "essence" and thus indicates to which class of humanity they belong, that is, whether they are pneumatic, psychic, or hylic. In this way, the anthropogonic section has structural parallels to Stoic compatibilism and causal moral responsibility. The advent of the Savior acts like an impression to which people respond, and the manner in which each individual responds reflects his or her moral quality.

> The pneumatic race is like light from light and like spirit from spirit. When its head appeared, it immediately rushed to it. At once it became a body for its head. It received knowledge straightaway from the revelation. The psychic race, however, being light from fire, tarried before recognizing the one who had appeared to it, and still more before rushing to him in faith. And it was instructed only by means of voice…the hylic race, however, is alien in every respect: it is like darkness that avoids the shining light because it is dissolved by its manifestation. (*Tri. Trac.* 118.29–119.13)

[78] For a fuller treatment of the parallels between Stoic moral psychology and the *Tripartite Tractate*, see further Alexander Kocar, "Humanity."

Consequently, each race's essence is identified with the appropriate *diathesis* of the Word, and their essences are shorthand for the types of actions and agency each race will display.[79] In addition to emphasizing the *causal* relationship between an agent's essence and action, the *Tripartite Tractate* also represents agents holistically, that is, an agent's past experiences and present dispositions are not separable.[80] In the *Tripartite Tractate*, how an agent responds to the Savior is not determined by an autonomous decision-making faculty, but rather is the product of the whole person and is indicative of his or her soteriological class. To summarize its anthropogonic section, the *Tripartite Tractate* assigns ethical praise or censure on the basis of whether an agent gave or withheld assent to a deserving external cause, in this case – the advent of the Savior. Thus, from the point of view of causal responsibility the pneumatic is morally praiseworthy because it is through and on the basis of his or her essence and its *diathesis* that he or she responded favorably to the Savior.

In what sense, then, is a person morally responsible for his or her nature or essence? Although less explicit than the *Tripartite Tractate* about the moral psychology of pneumatics, the *Excerpts of Theodotus*, as we have seen, provocatively claims that they are "saved by nature." (*Exc.* 56.3) In his recent article, Einar Thomassen observed that Valentinian texts deploy naturalistic language to unify disparate topics, such as the composition of the world, the emotional discharges of the *logos/sophia*, the gradated parts of a person, and whole types of

[79] Alexander of Aphrodisias preserves a similarly naturalistic account of conduct: "…and the things that are brought about by each thing come about in accordance with its nature – those of a stone in accordance with that of a stone, those by fire in accordance with that of fire and those by a living creature in accordance with that of a living creature…for it is not possible for a stone, if it is released by some height, not to be carried downwards, if nothing hinders. Because it has weight in itself, and this is the natural cause of such a motion, whenever the external causes which contribute to the natural movement of the stone are also present, of necessity the stone is moved in which it is its nature to be moved…and as it is in the case of inanimate things, so it is also the case for living creatures. (Alexander of Aphrodisias, *De Fato*, 181.18 – 182.6, translated by Sharples.)

[80] See further Christopher Gill, *Structured Self*, 1.4 – 1.5 and Susanne Bobzien, "Did Epicurus Discover," passim.

humanity, into a single physical discourse.[81] In addition to the Pauline exegetical interests outlined above, the Valentinians also devised their naturalistic cosmogony and anthropogony in order to economically provide the same explanation for material difference as for ethical difference. Consequently, the *Excerpts of Theodotus*, like the *Tripartite Tractate*, employs these multifaceted terms to denote a person's constitution, ethical profile, and even his or her eschatological destiny. Moreover, as the *Excerpts of Theodotus* asserts 53 – 54, pneumatic conduct comes about because of one's nature. Thus, pneumatics are causally responsible for their conduct because it originates in them and not elsewhere. Also, as we will see, since pneumatic nature *qua* agency is entirely rational, pneumatics can be held morally accountable for their conduct, even if they could not choose otherwise, i.e., act against their nature.[82]

As the *Excerpts of Theodotus* describes them, pneumatics do not appear to have an "I" separable from their rational, pneumatic nature. As a result, a pneumatic's agency and self is synonymous with his or her eponymous nature. Furthermore, the rational marrow of the pneumatic seed and pneumatic soul operating throughout his or her body is structurally reminiscent of the Stoic *hegemonikon* or "control center" of the person, which is infused into and dispersed throughout the pneumatic's body (*Exc.* 53).[83]

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[81] See Thomassen's list ("Saved by Nature," 130) of the three different contexts for the threefold classes: "First it has a place in the etiological myth that is a fundamental feature of the Valentinian system and which explains the origins of the substances (*ousiai*) of matter, soul, and spirit. Second, the theme also appears in the context of descriptions of how the Saviour's revelation of saving *gnosis* was differently received among humankind. A third context is eschatology: the accounts of the ultimate fates reserved for each of the three human kinds."

[82] According to at least one strain among the ancient debates over moral responsibility, this would be enough for assigning moral praise or blame because "what happens through us according to our nature depends upon us," since we are responsible for such conduct when it comes about through our nature as persons, which is rational. (Nemesius, *On the Nature of Man* 106.3- 4) Attributing this claim to the late Stoic Philopator, Bobzien (*Determinism,* 386) explicates that the linchpin for moral accountability for Philopator was that an action "come about through us," where the "us" is rational; cf. Ricardo Salles, *Stoics*, 52 – 54.

[83] Christopher Gill, *Structured Self,* 33 – 34.

> …therefore the soul is found to be natural breath (*naturalis igitur spiritus anima esse invenitur*) …the soul's parts flow from their seat in the heart, as if from the source of a spring, and spread throughout the whole body. They continually fill all the limbs with vital breath, and rule and control them with countless different powers – nutrition, growth, locomotion, sensation, impulse to action. The soul as a whole dispatches the senses (which are its proper functions) like branches from the trunk-like commanding-faculty to be reporters of what they sense, while itself like a monarch passes judgment on their reports. (Calcidius 220 (*SVF* 2.879) translated by LS, 53 G; cf. LS, 53 H, K - M)

The *Excerpts of Theodotus* employs an eclectic, exegetically motivated, and naturalistic narrative of salvation history committed to a recurrent hierarchy of terms, which are thus strained to encompass all material, anthropological, psychological, and ethical difference. From the perspective of the *Excerpts of Theodotus* and its teleological narrative, pneumatics, on the basis of their pneumatic nature, are both destined to and responsible for a specific soteriological role and will, accordingly, receive their appropriate salvific reward.[84] It is not necessary for a pneumatic to have been able to act otherwise in order to be worthy of praise.[85]

Therefore, *that* the *Tripartite Tractate* and the *Excerpts of Theodotus* could reasonably assign moral praise or blame despite privileging such naturalistic explanations for difference is now clear.[86] But just what sort of conduct should a pneumatic embrace? The *Excerpts of Theodotus* and the *Tripartite Tractate* both describe the *types* of characters who play specific

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[84] As modern readers, we might question whether a pneumatic is truly morally responsible without an account justifying how an agent is causally responsible for his or her own internal dispositions; the *Excerpts of Theodotus*, however, does not appear to address itself to this issue. Instead, the *Excerpts of Theodotus*, like the *Tripartite Tractate*, contains a totalizing and teleological narrative of salvation history, wherein past, present, and future events are all told through the lens of knowing precisely how everything will eventually turn out. Consequently, though there are very real theoretical difficulties, e.g., internal determinism, that arise from this narrative of salvation history and its predetermined types of persons and soteriological ends, this does not mean that the *Excerpts of Theodotus* or the *Tripartite Tractate* advocated internal determinism; rather, this was likely an unintended (and likely unrecognized) outcome of their choice of literary genre and their preceding ideological commitments. For more on "internal determinism," see further Susanne Bobzien, "Did Epicurus Invent?"

[85] For example, see Aristotle (*NE* III.5), who argues that it is not necessary for a virtuous person to be able to have done vicious actions for him or her to be morally responsible for his or her virtuous acts.

[86] This is, however, only in *theory* and based upon the logic internal to the *Tripartite Tractate* and the *Excerpts of Theodotus*. In practice, there was likely a great deal of fluidity and uncertainty.

roles in the drama of salvation history in the past, present, and future. Although these are, of course, highly imaginative and idealistic descriptions, pneumatics *could* be held accountable for whether or not they embodied the ethical ideals expressed in these texts.[87] For example, the *Tripartite Tractate* represents pneumatics as perpetuating the savior's saving actions by caring for the fallen, preaching the good news, and teaching those who need instruction:

> …they have been appointed to care for those who have fallen. These are the apostles and the evangelists. They are the disciples of the Savior and are the teachers for those who need instruction. (*Tri. Trac.* 116.15 – 20)

Moreover and based on the importance of typology in the logic of salvation throughout the *Tripartite Tractate*, it is likely that conduct expected of pneumatics was patterned in part after analogous types that appear at other cosmic levels. For example, the aeon of the images, which is analogous to pneumatics in the tripartite division of the aeons and is similarly designated as a church comprised of pneumatic powers (*Tri. Trac.* 97.5–27), may represent ethical expectations for an ideal community which is "filled with everything agreeable – brotherly love and great generosity" (*Tri. Trac*. 96.35–97.3). Consequently, the pneumatics who emerge alongside the incarnation of the Savior (*Tri. Trac*. 116.1–5) were expected to care for the fallen, teach those who needed instruction, and preach the special revelation that leads to the redemptive unity of the cosmos (*Tri. Trac*. 116.7–117.23).[88]

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[87] See Michel Desjardins' seminal *Sin in Valentinianism* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990). See also the twofold ethical imperatives in the *Gospel of Truth* (33.1–32). These ethical imperatives could not only encourage missionary actions, e.g., "Make firm the feet of those who stumbled and stretch out your hands to those who are ill. Feed those who are hungry and give repose to those who are weary," but they also could simultaneously reinforce ethical ideals among community member so that adherents would not revert to previous sins, e.g., "do not return to what you have vomited." For an analysis of the *Gospel of Truth* that highlights the paraenetic function of these ethical imperatives, see further Philip Tite, *Valentinian Ethics and Paraenetic Discourse*: *Determining the Social Function of Moral Exhortation in Valentinian Christianity*. (Leiden: Brill, 2009).

[88] This compassionate concern and care for others, especially those who are less advanced, is a major, motivating concern throughout the *Tripartite Tractate*. In this way, the *Tripartite Tractate* programmatically portrays advanced persons and aeons as lending assistance to others in order to guide them towards perfection/unity. For example, see *Tri. Trac.* 85.33–86.18: "For the aeons of the Father of the All, who had not suffered, took upon themselves the fall that had happened as if it were their own, with concern, goodness, and

Similarly, a Valentinian author preserved in the *Excerpts of Theodotus* 76 deploys the missionizing language of Matthew 28:19 to encourage adherents to actively save others through proselytizing and baptism:

> For the one baptized into God, advanced towards God, and has received "authority to tread on scorpions and snakes," (Luke 10:19) of the powers of the evil ones. And he commanded his Apostles, "Go and preach, and baptize those who believe in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit," (Mt. 28:19) in whom we have been born again, having come to above all the other powers. (*Exc.* 76. 2 – 4) [89]

Moreover, prior to these missionary activities, the *Excerpts of Theodotus* 83 - 84 enumerates the lengthy training, culminating in baptism, that is required in order to ensure "that only one who is pure goes down into the water. There are fasts, supplications, prayers, laying on of hands, genuflections because a soul is saved from the world and 'mouths of lions' (Ps. 22:21)." Once the initiate has proven his or her commitment and, as *Excerpts of Theodotus* 78.2 indicates,[90] has undergone the proper instruction, he or she is baptized.[91] The *Tripartite Tractate* 127 – 29 also may provide evidence of a similar process of catechetical training in which an initiate must "come to believe what has been said to them are real," before receiving baptism (*Tri. Trac.* 128.1 – 2). Everett Ferguson links this passage and its apparent recitation of previous instruction and profession of faith with Tertullian's claim from *Against Valentinians* 1 that "the perfect disciples" of the Valentinians required five years of training

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great sweetness… They gathered together and prayed to the Father with a useful mind that help might come from above, from the hand of the Father, for his glory…"

[89] Cf. the missionary practices contained in Heracleon's *Commentary on John* in which pneumatics, represented by the Samaritan woman, are expected to engage in missionary work by proclaiming the advent of the Savior: "She returned to the world, proclaiming the coming of Christ to the 'Calling.' For through the Spirit and by the Spirit the soul is brought to the Savior. 'They went out of the city,' i.e., out of their former worldly way of life; and through faith they came to the Savior.'" Heracleon §27 (cf. §37), trans. Robert M. Grant, *Gnosticism: A Sourcebook of Heretical Writings from the Early Christian Period* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1961): 195–208.

[90] *Exc.* 78.2: "It is not, however, the bath alone that makes us free, but the knowledge of who we were; what we have become; where we were; where we have been placed; where we are going; from what we have been cleansed; what birth is and what is rebirth."

[91] See Einar Thomassen, *Spiritual Seed*, 333 – 41 for a discussion of initiatory rites present in the *Excerpts of Theodotus*, 66 – 86.

and instruction.[92] As a result, these initiates were highly trained and committed to the Valentinian view of the cosmos; moreover, by accepting their roles as missionaries they fulfilled the part they had discovered they were meant to play.

Consequently, ethics and soteriology were intimately linked and mutually reinforcing in the *Excerpts of Theodotus* and the *Tripartite Tractate*. Although the *Excerpts of Theodotus* and the *Tripartite Tractate* do claim that pneumatics are saved by nature or essence and that their salvific rewards are superior to psychics, this does not entail ethical indifference; rather the *Excerpts of Theodotus* and the *Tripartite Tractate* expect pneumatics to be actively engaged in saving others. As a result, these specialized and highly committed ritual initiates are charged with a special and salvifically important task. To a hostile observer like Irenaeus, in contrast, such self-important missionaries would likely resemble pompous, preening roosters:

> For this is the subterfuge of false persons, evil seducers, and hypocrites, as they act who are from Valentinus…such a one is puffed up to such an extent that he thinks he is neither in heaven nor on earth, but that he has passed within the Pleroma; and having already embraced his angel, he walks with a strutting gait and a supercilious countenance, possessing all the pompous air of a cock. (Irenaeus, *AH* 3.15.2)

But from the perspective of the *Excerpts of Theodotus* and the *Tripartite Tractate*, these soteriological distinctions would motivate ongoing missionary practices and explain the difficulties and resistance these pneumatic missionaries might encounter. Thus, through a soteriology of higher and lower levels of salvation, the *Excerpts of Theodotus* and the *Tripartite Tractate* both promote an ethical ideal in which the more advanced were responsible for the less advanced.

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[92] Everett Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church: History, Theology, and Liturgy in the First Five Centuries* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 2009), 284; See also Einar Thomassen, *Spiritual Seed*, 353 – 55.

# Chapter 9
# The Threefold Division and Exegesis:
## Ethics and Soteriology in Heracleon's *Commentary on John*

**Introduction: Putting the Pieces of Heracleon Back Together**

In this final **Chapter**, we shall examine the language of difference from a third Valentinian text, Heracelon's *Commentary on John*.[1] Heracelon's surviving fragments are notoriously ambiguous; so much so that various scholars have cited him as both a supporter and as a detractor of the tripartite anthropology and higher and lower levels of salvation outlined in the preceding **Chapter**.[2] While there is evidence of both the tripartite division of humanity and the ethical expectation that the more advanced pneumatics are responsible for and obligated to help save psychics, there is no evidence in Heracleon of higher and lower levels of salvation.[3]

In what survives, Heracleon deploys a threefold division of humanity in a manner reminiscent of the *Tripartite Tractate* and the *Excerpts of Theodotus*, but with important variations. Heracleon uses this hierarchical language to describe allegorically different characters and regions in John's Gospel; he does not, however, at least in what survives, use it to

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[1] Michael Kaler and Marie–Pierre Bussières recently argued that scholars are mistaken in calling Heracleon a Valentinian. Their argument, however, as demonstrated by Einar Thomassen ("Heracleon," in *The Legacy of John: Second Century Reception of the Fourth Gospel* (ed. Tuomas Rasimus; Leiden: Brill, 2010), 173), is unconvincing and makes errors of both omission (overlooking *testimonia*) and philological interpretation (interpreting Origen's phrase at *CJ* 2.14.100 "τὸν Οὐαλεντίνου λεγόμενον εἶναι γνώριμον Ἡρακλέωνα" as Origen distancing himself from the claim that Heracleon was a Valentinian as opposed to its more likely meaning, i.e., emphasizing that "Heracleon was said to be *personally a pupil* of Valentinus"). Moreover, as Ismo Dunderberg notes (*Beyond Gnosticism: Myth, Lifestyle, and Society in the School of Valentinus* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 210 n.34), even if we follow Kaler and Bussières' interpretation of Origen's phrase, it is a huge leap to conclude that Origen claimed Heracleon was *not* a Valentinian. In fact, it is clear that Origen consistently interpreted Heracleon against the backdrop of a "Valentinianism" similar to that found in Irenaeus' report of the followers of Ptolemy. See Michael Kaler and Marie – Pierre Bussières, "Was Heracleon a Valentinian: New Look at Old Sources," *Harvard Theological Review* 99.3 (2006): 275 – 89.

[2] See the bibliography of both sides supplied by Einar Thomassen, "Heracleon," *The Legacy of John: Second Century Reception of the Fourth Gospel* (ed. Tuomas Rasimus; Leiden: Brill, 2010), 182 nn. 36 – 39.

[3] This absence of higher and lower levels of salvation is not evidence that Heracleon has rejected this soteriology; rather, among the surviving fragments there simply is no mention of what salvation will resemble. Thus, we should adopt a much more agnostic approach, i.e., the absence of reference to higher and lower levels of salvation is not evidence that Heracleon has rejected this belief. As a cautionary example, see fragment 36, which implies that salvation may be tailored to specific tasks.

elucidate protological, Christological, or anthropological origins or soteriological ends as the *Excerpts of Theodotus* and the *Tripartite Tractate* do. Moreover, Heracleon, like the *Excerpts of Theodotus* and the *Tripartite Tractate*, describes different ethical profiles by means of these three classes, in particular their different reactions to the advent of the Savior; in contrast to the *Excerpts of Theodotus* and the *Tripartite Tractate*, however, there appears to be greater sociological fluidity – despite allusions to ritualized practices such as angelic syzygies (frag. 12) – among these types or categories. On the basis of Matthew 10:28,[4] Heracleon also concludes that souls can be destroyed (frag. 40). This provocative claim has led some scholars to interpret Heracleon as promoting a soteriology in which psychics, if saved, *become* pneumatics.[5] In short, Heracleon's use of this tripartite hierarchy is an important witness to diversity among the various Valentinian students and tradents.

In what follows, I will consider Heracleon's tripartite division of humanity and the social and theoretical implications of his construction of three different types of persons. To this end, I will first introduce Heracleon's commentarial genre and the interpretative difficulties it presents. Next, I will consider Heracleon's views, insofar as they are preserved, on the issue of these three classes, especially how each class responds differently to the advent of the Savior. After this focused survey of the threefold division of humanity, I will examine the appearance of *physis* (nature) and *ousia* (substance) in the fragments of Heracleon as well as his claim that souls could be destroyed. I will suggest that although Heracleon differs from his Valentinian peers on the issue of anthropological difference, it is unclear whether his views may have resulted from deliberate intra-Valentinian debate or from his choice of inter-texts and literary genre. In either

[4] Mt. 10:28: "Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell."
[5] See Ismo Dunderberg, *Beyond Gnosticism*, 144; Einar Thomassen is more reticent in making this claim, and so a tension emerges where he both claims that there is no logic of transformation ("Heracleon," 183) as well as notes the psychics cannot be saved *qua* psychics ("Heracleon," 190).

case, Heracleon's *Commentary on John* complicates as well as supports some of the conclusions we arrived at in the preceding **Chapter**, and it also provides additional insights into the diversity of this early Christian missionizing movement.[6]

What do scholars mean when they say that Heracleon was one of it not *the* first Christian author to write a commentary (ὑπομνήματα) on a New Testament text (cf. frag. 4; *CJ* 6.15.92)? The term ὑπομνήματα has a wide range of possible meanings from medical or scientific treatises to biblical commentaries to classroom notebooks.[7] It appears that Heracleon's ὑπομνήματα was a commentary of biblical *lemmata,* i.e., it is a collection of exegetical statements on individual phrases or words from the Gospel of John. As such, each fragment is based upon a selected text from the Gospel of John, to which Heracleon affixes an exegetical discussion of the meaning and significance of specific terms or the passage as a whole.

In addition to glossing unfamiliar terms and providing supplementary information, Heracleon's commentary often offers allegorical interpretations and thus explores deeper levels of meaning lurking beneath the surface of John's Gospel. For example, in fragment 18, which is based upon John 4:16 ("Go and call your husband"), Heracleon directs our attention to a referent beyond the literal text:

> For [the Savior] was not speaking about a worldly husband (ἀνδρὸς κοσμικοῦ), when he told her to call [her husband] because he was not ignorant that she did not have a lawful husband…[when] the Savior said: "Call your husband and come here," it refers to her syzygy [spouse] from the pleroma. (frag. 18; *CJ* 13.11.67 – 68)

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[6] Tertullian attacked Valentinian teachers for precisely this apparent diversity of opinions and their constant invention of new beliefs and practices (*Against the Valentinians,* 4). I thank Geoff Smith for reminding me of this passage.

[7] Pier Franco Beatrice, "Greek Philosophy and Gnostic Soteriology in Heracelon's 'Upomnemata,'" *Early Christianity* 3.2 (2012): 191 – 97; Ansgar Wucherpfennig, *Heracleon Philologus: Gnostische Johannesexegese im zweiten Jahrhundert* (WUNT 142; Tübingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 2002), 32 – 38; Einar Thomassen, *Spiritual Seed: The Church of the "Valentinians"* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 13 – 14 n.11.

Unfortunately, Heracleon's allegorical interpretations are frequently brief and enigmatic; as such, they are difficult to satisfactorily explicate.

Moreover, it is unclear how large a work Heracleon's *Commentary on John* was. Based upon Origen comments, we can infer that Heracleon did not compose an exhaustive commentary on every single line of John's text.[8] After concluding his treatment of John 4:32 ("But he said to them, 'I have food to eat you do not know about.'"), Origen complains that Heracleon did not address this passage at all (frag. 29; *CJ* 13. 34. 225). Despite these apparent gaps, Heracleon's *Commentary on John*, as Ansgar Wucherpfennig has argued in great detail, was a detailed, scholarly work.[9] As such, and analogous to contemporary commentaries on Homer, it engaged rigorous philological issues, like determining semantic divisions, historical referents, and rhetorical constructions.[10]

As we saw in **Chapter 7**, Heracleon's *Commentary on John* survives only in selected fragments preserved in Origen's own incomplete *Commentary on John*.[11] Adding a further degree of difficulty, Origen's commentary is often hostile towards the "impious" Heracleon (*CJ* 6.199). If the fourth-century historian Eusebius' report is accurate, Origen's patron, Ambrose, was formerly an admirer or perhaps even a Valentinian himself before Origen "illuminated" him, and Ambrose "declared allegiance to the teachings of the orthodox church" (Eusebius, *HE* VI.18.1). Based on this background, scholars have speculated that Ambrose may have commissioned and "zealously encouraged" Origen to compose a commentary on John in part to

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[8] Elaine Pagels (*The Johannine Gospel in Gnostic Exegesis*: *Heracleon's Commentary on John* (SBLMS 17; Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1973), 47) suggests that Heracleon wrote a commentary focused on cosmic concerns and thus omitted verses, like John 1:1 – 2, that occurred *prior* to the cosmos.

[9] Though speculative, the likeliest social context for Heracleon's exegetical and ethically minded *Commentary on John* is that he provided it to his own study circle/house church community. Cf. **Chapter 6**.

[10] Ansgar Wucherpfennig, *Heracleon Philologus*, *passim*.

[11] Origen's *Commentary on John* consisted of at least 32 books, of which only 9 now survive: 1, 2, 6, 10, 13, 19, 20, 28, 32. See further Ronald E. Heine, "Can the Catena fragments of Origen's Commentary on John be trusted?" *Vigiliae Christianae* 40.2 (1986): 118 – 134.

refute his own former beliefs (*HE* VI.23.1-2). Origen himself sporadically alludes to Ambrose goading him into writing his *CJ*. When, for example, he had already completed four volumes and not yet finished his treatment of John's prologue, Origen comically laments that because Ambrose has pressured him into writing on these "divine matters," Origen has fallen victim to the danger Solomon (*Eccl*. 12:12) warned about: once you begin writing too much, you cannot stop (*CJ* 5.1.1). In any case, Origen's *Commentary on John* often engages with portions of Heracleon's commentary; however, it is not always clear where Heracleon's fragmentary commentary ends and Origen's (hostile) interaction with it begins.

A significant instance of this phenomenon is fragment 13, long interpreted as evidence that Heracelon endorses a doctrine of higher and lower levels of salvation (*CJ* 10.33.210 - 215). Yet, this is likely a misreading of the fragment insofar as it conflates Origen's citation of Heracleon with Origen's own epexegetical comments. While interpreting John 2: 13- 16,[12] Heracleon applies the spatial hierarchy of the temple to make the soteriological claim that both psychics and pneumatics require the Savior to be saved: "He found them in the temple (ἱερῷ), not in the inner sanctuary (νάῳ),[13] so that it might not be supposed that simple 'calling,' apart from the Spirit, is assisted by the Lord." (*CJ* 10.33.211) In other words, the saving actions of the Savior, described later in this fragment as the cleansing of the Temple, apply both to the psychic

[12] John 2:13 – 16: "After this he went down to Capernaum with his mother, his brothers, and his disciples; and they remained there a few days. The Passover of the Jews was near, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. In the temple he found people selling cattle, sheep, and doves, and the moneychangers seated at their tables. Making a whip of cords, he drove all of them out of the temple, both the sheep and the cattle. He also poured out the coins of the moneychangers and overturned their tables. He told those who were selling the doves, 'take these out from here! Stop making my Father's house a marketplace!'"

[13] See Ansgar Wucherpfennig, *Heracleon Philologus* 52 n.21 for an explanation of the corruption of τῷ νάῳ to τῶν ἄνω, which is the manuscript reading.

"called" and the pneumatic elect. In the spatial terms of the temple, the Savior did not come just to the sanctuary (the pneumatics) but to the temple as a whole (pneumatics and psychics).[14]

> The passage, however, continues:
>
> For the temple (τὸ ἱερόν) is the Holy of Holies, into which only the High Priest enters (Heb. 9:7), where the pneumatics come. But the area of the forecourt (τὰ δὲ τοῦ προνάου) of the temple, where the Levites also are, is a symbol of the psychics outside of the Pleroma who are found to be in salvation… (*CJ* 10.33.211)

Wucherpfennig contends that important sections from this passage do *not* come from Heracleon, but instead were inserted by Origen who is supplying the references to higher and lower levels of salvation.[15] Thus, according to Wucherpfennig, it is Origen, not Heracleon, who reads higher and lower levels of salvation into the description of the temple space. Applying Wucherpfennig's argument, Einar Thomassen distinguishes between Heracleon (marked in bold) and Origen's comments:

> "**the temple" is, on the one hand, the Holy of Holies, where only the High Priest enters** – that is where the spirituals end up, I think he is saying – **and on the other hand, the area of the forecourt, where the Levites are as well**, is a symbol of the psychics, who will attain a salvation outside of the Pleroma."[16]

Consequently, according to Wucherpfennig and Thomassen, once we identify and isolate Origen's editorial comments, we find that Heracleon does not describe higher and lower levels of salvation in this passage nor anywhere else in what survives from his *Commentary on John*.

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[14] Einar Thomassen ("Heracleon," 184 – 85) outlines the spatial dynamics of the temple in the following way: "*Hieron* designates the whole temple and not just the inner sanctuary, the *naos*. It includes the forecourt (*pronaos*), where the Levites go, as well as the Holy of Holies, where only the high priest may enter."

[15] Ansgar Wucherpfennig, *Heracleon Philologus*, 52; 67 – 72.

[16] Einar Thomassen, "Heracleon," 185 n.50; *CJ* 10.33.211: ἡγεῖται γὰρ τὰ μὲν ἅγια τῶν ἁγίων εἶναι τὸ ἱερόν, εἰς ἃ μόνος ὁ ἀρχιερεὺς εἰσῄει, ἔνθα οἶομαι αὐτὸν λέγειν τοὺς πνευματικοὺς χωρεῖν· τὰ δὲ τοῦ προνάου, ὅπου καὶ οἱ λευῖται, σύμβολον εἶναι τῶν ἔξω τοῦ πληρώματος ψυχικῶν εὑρισκομένων ἐν σωτηρίᾳ.

**Tripartite Anthropology**

If we accept Wucherpfennig and Thomassen's division of the text, it appears that unlike what we saw in the *Excerpts of Theodotus* and the *Tripartite Tractate*, Heracleon, at least in what survives of his *CJ*, does not explicitly link the threefold division of humanity with three different salvific profiles. Heracleon, nonetheless, does employ this threefold division to characterize three types of worship, distinguishing among the Greeks, Jews, and pneumatics on the basis of John 4:21 ("Woman believe me, the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem."):[17]

> The mountain means the devil or this world (κόσμος), since the devil is one part of the whole of matter (τῆς ὕλης), but the world (κόσμος) is on the whole a mountain of evil, a desert dwelling of beasts, which all prior to the law and the Gentiles worship; Jerusalem is the creation of the creator, whom the Jews worship. In a second sense the mountain is the creation, which the Gentiles worship; and Jerusalem the creator, whom the Jews serve. You, therefore, as pneumatics (οἱ πνευματικοί), will worship neither creation or the demiurge, but the Father of truth. (*CJ* 13.16.95 – 97)

In this way, Heracleon uses the threefold division to describe three types of conduct in the world. As we will see, this threefold division is particularly important for Heracleon insofar as it corresponds to humanity's three different responses to the Savior.[18]

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[17] Interpreters of Heracleon's social circumstances have sometimes been led astray by his commentarial genre (*Pace* Ismo Dunderberg, *Beyond Gnosticism,* 141 and Timothy Pettipiece, "The Nature of 'True Worship': Anti-Jewish and Anti-Gentiles Polemic in Heracleon (Fragments 20 – 24)," in *L'Évangile selon Thomas et les Textes de Nag Hammadi* (ed. Louis Painchaud and Paul-Hubert Poirer; Québec: Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 2007), 391). Heracleon expresses social and ideological distance through characters mined from his exegetical commentary; however, it does not seem likely that he is drawing the same boundary lines or targeting the same opponents as, for example, the Gospel of John was, i.e., unbelieving (especially Pharisaic and priestly) Jews. Consequently, we must be cautious and avoid importing ethnic or historical opponents, e.g., Pharisaic Jews, when upon closer analysis Heracleon uses these characters as rhetorical *exempla*. See further Philip Tite's overview of the use of moral *exempla* in the Greco-Roman world (*Valentinian Ethics and Paraenetic Discourse*: *Determining the Social Function of Moral Exhortation in Valentinian Christianity*. (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 147–64) and also Elaine Pagels, *Johannine Exegesis*, 67 – 68.

[18] *Pace* Ansgar Wucherpfennig, *Heracleon Philologus*, 333 – 53 and Ismo Dunderberg, *Beyond Gnosticism*, 141 – 44. Einar Thomassen (Heracleon, 198 – 99) summarizes this point nicely: "[The characters in the Gospel of John] are generally regarded as types, personifying various responses to the Saviour in accordance with an established scheme. The Samaritan woman represents the spiritual person, or the spiritual church; the petty king is the demiurge, his servants are the demiurge's angels and his son is the psychic human being; the hostile Jews of John 8

Moreover, although Heracleon outlines the corresponding conduct of each class, he does not appeal – in contrast to the *Excerpts of Thedotus* and the *Tripartite Tractate* – to sweeping cosmological and mythical narratives about the origins of matter or the creation of humanity. In fact, whether out of deliberate disagreement with other Valentinian teachers or due to the constraints of a Gospel commentary, Heracleon seldom intimates an overarching Valentinian theoretical framework, e.g., he does not explicitly refer to the fall of a *Sophia/Logos* figure, and he uses the term *choic* only once in his surviving fragments (fragment 46).[19] Instead, Heracleon was much more interested in rhetorically classifying typological characters according to a threefold scheme of conduct, epitomized by their reactions to the Savior and subsequent proselytizing.

Our first typological character is the Samaritan woman who is a type of the pneumatic. As such, she reacts to the Savior with immediate faith (τὴν ἀδιάκριτον πίστιν) and receives from above "[water] gushing forth, which leads to eternal life for others" (frag. 17; *CJ* 13.10.62 – 63). Following her interaction with the Savior, the Samaritan woman goes forth to proselytize to the "calling," i.e., psychics:

> She left [the water-jug; cf. John 4:28] with [the Savior]…and she turned back to the world (τὸν κόσμον), proclaiming the good news (εὐαγγελιζομένη) to "the calling" (τῇ κλήσει) of the *parousia* of Christ. For the soul is led to the Savior through the spirit (διὰ τοῦ πνεύματος) and by the spirit (ὑπὸ τοῦ πνεύματος). (frag. 27; *CJ* 13.31.187)

For Heracleon, pneumatics are those who immediately accept the Savior and then go forth to preach the good news of his coming to the psychics.

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are person who have given themselves over to matter and evil; the traders in the temple are evil spirits. Likewise, the words spoken by each of these characters, and the acts they preform, are explained as being typical of, and as demonstrating their respective natures. Finally, Heracleon loses no opportunity to comment on various objects handled by the characters in the text, on the topographical contexts of the action or on other items mentioned in the course of the narrative, in order to exploit their symbolic potential."

[19] Moreover, this may be an insertion from Origen; see Einar Thomassen, "Heracleon," 191 – 2 n.74.

Heracleon further underscores and encourages this proselytizing ethic through his allegorical interpretation of John 4:39 ("Many Samaritans from that city believed because of the testimony of that woman"):

> Hereacleon takes "out of the city" to mean "out of the world," and "because of the testimony of the woman," to mean "because of the pneumatic church." And "many" signals that there are many psychics; but he says there is one imperishable nature for the elect that is uniform and single. (frag. 37; *CJ* 13. 51.341)

In this way, Heracleon interprets the preaching of the Samaritan woman as a type of the corporate activity of the whole pneumatic church and its proselytizing mission to psychics.

Psychics, according to Heracleon, are those to whom pneumatics proselytize and are symbolically represented by the petty king, who is also a type for the demiurge, and his ill son, who, as a psychic, belongs to the Demiurge (ὁ ἴδιος αὐτοῦ ἄνθρωπος; frag. 40; *CJ* 13.60. 416).[20]

> Heracleon says the royal officer (βασιλικός) represents the demiurge, since he rules over those beneath him. Because his kingdom is small and temporary, Heracleon says, he was named a "royal officer" as though he was some petty king having been set over a small kingdom by a universal king. His son in Capernaum is described as being in lower part of the middle area beside the sea, that is, in the part joined together with matter. (frag. 40; *CJ* 13. 60. 416)

In contrast to the Samaritan woman who believes immediately and with uncritical faith, Heracleon contends that John 4:48 ("Jesus said to him, 'unless you see signs and wonders you will not believe.'") characterizes the psychics who, in contrast to pneumatics, must be persuaded to believe through works and sense perception (frag. 40; *CJ* 13.60.419).[21]

As Einar Thomassen convincingly argues, an important distinction between pneumatics and psychics, according to Heracleon, is that they come to believe through different means.[22] Sociologically, we can imagine these two terms *may* have applied to community members

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[20] Einar Thomassen, "Heracelon," 188 – 90.
[21] Tertullian (*Adversus Valentinianos*, 1) similarly remarks that Valentinians persuade men before instructing them.
[22] Einar Thomassen, "Heracleon," 189- 90; see also Elaine Pagels, *Johannine Exegesis,* 85.

involved in different activities and possessing disparate levels of prestige as a result.[23] Drawing upon Pauline studies, the difference between pneumatics and psychics might resemble the distinction among Paul's churches between certain elite preachers and teachers and their less advanced community members.[24]

Finally, Heracleon speaks of the children of the devil (frag. 44; *CJ* 20.20.168), who are functionally synonymous with choics or hylics[25] (as well as damned psychics) and are typologically represented by the hostile Jews in John 8:44 ("You are from your father the devil, and you choose to do your father's desires [καὶ τὰς ἐπιθυμίας τοῦ πατρὸς ὑμῶν θέλετε ποιεῖν]. He was a murderer from the beginning and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks according to his own property [ἐκ τῶν ἰδίων λαλεῖ], for he is a liar and the father of lies."):

> Heracleon, for his part, replies that the reason they are unable to listen to Jesus or understand his speech is explained by the line "you are from your father the devil." He says in these very words: "And why can you not hear my word, except

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23 On this issue generally, see Ismo Dunderberg, *Beyond Gnosticism*, *Part II*.

24 Cf. 1 Corinthians 2 – 3. Whether we imagine the pneumatics as wandering charismatics, a la Gerd Theissen, or local scribal elites, a la Arnal, this dichotomy between these specialized individuals (preachers or scribes) and the general community helpfully illustrates what the social and theoretical hierarchy among these communities *may* have resembled. See further Philip Tite, *Valentinian Ethics*, chapter 7; cf. Gerd Theissen, *Sociology of Early Palestinian Christianity* (trans. John Bowden; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978); William Arnal, *Jesus and the Village Scribes: Galilean Conflicts and the Setting of Q* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001).

25 Provocatively, Angsgar Wucherpfennig (*Heracleon Philologus*, 332 – 57) questions whether we should import the three classes (hylic/choic, psychic, and pneumatic) for the three characters of the Samaritan woman, the petty king, and the hostile Jews. Most persuasive of his three criticisms is his reluctance to call those who are the children of the devil "choics" since the term only appears in fragment 46 and was most likely inserted by Origen as a gloss. Though Wucherpfennig is rightfully critical of importing foreign labels into Heracleon (especially where they are not explicitly claimed!), he nonetheless goes too far by first making arguments from absence (e.g., since there are no concrete allusions to the myth of the fall of Sophia) into positive claims (e.g., Heracleon does not abide by or endorse a Valentinian system). This sort of argumentation disregards the fragmentary and irregular preservation of Heracleon's fragments, and also assumes that Heracleon's *Commentary* would have been amenable to such theoretical discussions (thus their exclusion was deliberate). Furthermore, Wucherpfennig treats these labels (choic/hylic, psychic, and pneumatic) as fossilized and fixed typological categories, each with a *single form*; thus, because Heracleon's use of the threefold division of humanity differs from *the* typological construction of these categories (which Wucherpfennig assembled from other Valentinian accounts), Wucherpfennig concludes that Heracleon did not endorse *the Valentinian* threefold division of humanity. It is better, however, to avoid such homogenizing typologies, and instead we should conclude that Heracleon was a member of a diverse and adaptive tradition based around Pauline exegesis, and that he deployed *a* threefold division of humanity tailored for and informed by ongoing missionizing practices. In this way, Heracleon emphasized what was most important: there are *three* types of conduct, epitomized by *three different reactions to the Savior*.

> that you are from your father the devil? This means "from the substance of the devil," (ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας τοῦ διαβόλου) thus revealing the nature (τὴν φύσιν) of those ones. And he had rebuked them because neither were they the children of Abraham – for they would not have hated him – nor were they children of God – for they did not love him. (frag. 44; *CJ* 20.20.168)

In contrast to the immediate faith of the pneumatics and the delayed acceptance by good psychics, the hostile Jews are the children of the devil insofar as they resolutely reject the Savior. Thus, as in other Valentinian texts, we have a tripartite division of humanity that emphasizes three typological responses to Savior: immediate acceptance, delayed belief, and finally resolute rejection.

**Nature and Substance**

Immediately following his citation of Heracelon (frag. 44), Origen elucidates what he finds objectionable about his interpretation of John 8:44:

> Now if the line "you are from your father the devil" was taken as we explained above, and he said "because you are *still* from the devil you are unable to listen to my word," we would have accepted his interpretation. But it is clear now that he is saying that some people have the same substance (ὁμοουσίους) as the devil and, as those who follow him believe, they have different substances from those whom they call psychic or pneumatic. (*CJ* 20.20. 169 – 170)[26]

Furthermore, Origen claims that if people's actions are exclusively the result of substance, then there is no moral culpability since his or her actions would be predetermined; consequently, actions are neither praiseworthy nor blameworthy since they are the result of the relative quality of one's substance, and do not depend upon choices and moral growth:

> [Heracleon's claim] appears to be similar to those that state there is a different substance (ἑτέραν οὐσίαν) for an eye that overlooks [something] and another that sees, and also a different substance for an ear that mishears and [another substance for ears that] hear soundly. (*CJ* 20.23.199)

[26] Though obscured by Origen's comments, it is important to note that Heracleon only mentions substance as regards those who are the children of the devil; whatever the difference is between psychics and pneumatics, it is not, according to what survives from Heracleon, a difference of substance.

Similar to what we saw in **Chapter 8**, Origen has painted Heracelon into a corner rhetorically. By suggesting that Heracleon's use of *ousia* precludes voluntary choice or action, Origen can conclude that Heracleon's beliefs are *incompatible* with assigning praise or blame and thus cannot hold anyone ethically accountable. When we consider Heracleon's own views, however, it appears that Origen is accusing him of commitments that he simply does not hold.[27]

What, then, does Heracleon think about nature (*physis*) and substance (*ousia*), and what is their relationship with his threefold division of conduct? Does Heracleon's usage, as Origen maintains, entail some notion of a-ethical predeterminism?[28] And finally, do these two terms relate in any way to the perennial question: are the three classes of pneumatic, psychic, and hylic fixed or mutable/transitory? To answer these questions, let us consider how Heracleon *actually* uses the terms *ousia* and *physis*.[29]

After citing Heracleon's interpretations of the hostile Jews from John 8 as children who "share the substance of the devil," (frag. 44; *CJ* 20.20. 168), Origen, as we just noted, lambasts what he considers to be the determinist implications of attributing a specific substance to the devil and, by extension, to his children:

> Often we have said that if this impossibility be allowed – I mean that the devil possesses another substance incapable of experiencing better things – we will devise a defense for him from all responsibility for wickedness, and we will saddle the one who gave substance to and created him with the charge of wrongdoing, which is most absurd of all. (*CJ* 20.24.202)

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[27] For example, Heracleon, at least in what survives, does not explain all material, moral, and cosmological difference by analogue to the hierarchical relationship among three natures/substances.

[28] See further Jeffrey Trumbower, *Born from Above: The Anthropology of the Gospel of John* (Tübingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 1992), 22 – 30.

[29] As we will see, Heracleon uses the term nature (physis) 19 times (frag. 17; frag. 19; frag 24; frag. 37; frag. 40 (4x); frag. 44; frag. 46 (6 times); frag. 47 (4 times)); whereas, he uses the term substance (*ousia*) only twice: the same line, "'You are from your devil the father' means "you are from the substance of the Devil.'" ("'ὑμεῖς ἐκ τοῦ πατρὸς τοῦ διαβόλου ἐστέ' ἀντὶ τοῦ 'ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας τοῦ διαβόλου'") appears in both frag. 44 and 46; cf. *CJ* 20.20.168; Origen supplies the term (ousia) in frag. 43 and frag. 45, likely as an allusion to this line. It should be noted, however, that it is not clear whether this connection is Heracleon's interpretation or Origen's polemical extrapolation.

Upon closer examination, however, Heracelon's use of both nature (*physis*) and substance (*ousia*) appears quite different from Origen's polemical representation. Unlike the author(s) of the *Excerpts*, Heracleon does not appear to use *physis* to mean origins or first principles that are causally responsible for subsequent action.

*Physis* appears in the fragments of Heracleon for the first time when the Samaritan woman responds with immediate faith that was *alien to her nature* (κατάλληλον τῇ φύσει ἑαυτῆς; frag. 17; *CJ* 13.10.63). Thus, her nature was not the *archê* or source of her actions. Quite the opposite, the Samaritan woman acted *against* her nature.[30] Furthermore, once the Samaritan woman acknowledged and reacted favorably to the Savor, she acts *as suits her nature* (ὡς πρεπόντως τῇ αὐτῆς φύσει), but not because of it (frag. 19; *CJ* 13.15.92). Consequently, although there is a correlation between *physis* and conduct, *physis* is not *causally* responsible for a specific type of conduct. One's nature or *physis* appears to refer to the common traits shared by *a class,*[31] e.g., the Samaritan woman acts against her nature because prior to the advent of the Savior no one was a member of a class that could have had the characteristics of responding favorably to the Savior.[32] In this way, Heracleon uses *physis* in a way that recalls how Paul uses the term in Romans 11:21 – 24:

> For if God did not spare the natural branches (τῶν κατὰ φύσιν κλάδων), neither will he spare you…For if you have been cut from what is by nature (κατὰ φύσιν) a wild olive tree and grafted, against nature (παρὰ φύσιν), into a cultivated olive

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30 This is an interesting and possibly significant moment in the development of various ancient ethical theories of responsibility and freedom; for an alternate view to Heracleon, see *TriTrac* 116, 122. In this passage, Heracleon provocatively describes the structural inversion of what we considered in Chapter 6 when we examined the problem of *apostasy* in the *Apocryphon of John*. A great deal more could be said about this (and I hope to do so in the future); however, further discussion falls outside the scope of this dissertation.

31 In this way, *physis* appears to have a similar rhetorical range (theoretical fixity and sociological fluidity) that Denise Kimber Buell attributes to "race" in her *Why This New Race? Ethnic Reasoning in Early Christianity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005).

32 Einar Thomassen ("Heracleon," 182) claims that everyone was therefore psychic.

> tree how much more will these natural branches be grafted back into their own olive tree (οὗτοι οἱ κατὰ φύσιν ἐγκεντρισθήσονται τῇ ἰδίᾳ ἐλαίᾳ).[33]

Like Paul, uses *physis* to refer to the establishment of certain types/classes, characterizing each class by specific traits.[34] Since a person can act *against* his or her own nature, Heracleon's usage of *physis* does not connote the causal and predeterminist register that Origen attributes to it. Furthermore, and importantly for questions of transformation, *physis* is not concerned with particular *individuals*, but encompasses the characteristics shared by a whole class.

If *physis* is not causally responsible, how does it relate to the threefold division of humanity? And related to this, could someone transform his or her own nature? Since Heracleon suggests that a person, e.g., the Samarian woman, can act against her nature and later be characterized as having a *new* nature, his exegesis seems to emphasize her change of *conduct* rather than her nature. In this case, her nature *epitomizes* but does not *cause* her actions. Furthermore, it is the Savior's advent that catalyzes this change. Analogous to what we saw in **Chapter 8** on the moral psychology of the *Tripartite Tractate*, a pneumatic (the Samaritan woman) responds immediately and favorably to the advent of the Savior; in this way, moral responsibility depends upon how one reacts to the external impression of the Savior.[35] After this decisive moment, the Samaritan woman's conduct is characterized by the traits and dispositions of the pneumatic nature, which prior to the advent of the Savior did not and could not have had

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[33] Interestingly, *Ousia* appears only twice in the New Testament (Luke 15:12, 13) and there it refers to the "property" or "possessions" of Luke's Prodigal Son. In contrast, *physis* and its cognates appear 11 times in the New Testament, e.g., Romans 1:26 (2x); 1:27; 11:21; 11:24 (3x); 1 Corinthians 11:14; James 3:7; 2 Peter 2:12; Jude 10.
[34] See further **PART I** for a fuller discussion of this passage from Paul and its centrality to his own soteriology of higher and lower levels of salvation.
[35] Much more, however, is implicit with Heracleon and so we do not know for sure how he constructs agency and the sense of self, i.e., who/what is in charge of giving or withholding assent.

any members. *Physis*, therefore, is *not* what is transformed, and the full range of *three* natures did not come into existence *until* the advent of the Savior. [36]

After the Savior's arrival, however, Heracleon depicts the three natures as static and indicative of the three specific social positions and traits, e.g., missionaries, receptive targets, and finally steadfast opponents. A person, in contrast, can act against his or her nature, and thus different labels might be applicable to a person at various stages over his or her life:[37]

> At first people are led to believe in the Savior by other people, but when they read his words, they no longer [believe] on account of human testimony alone, but believe on account of the truth itself. (frag. 39; *CJ* 13.53.363)

Here, Heracleon may be describing the transition of an individual from a missionized (psychic) person to a committed missionary (pneumatic). In any case, this emphasis of the threefold division of humanity on responses to the Savior supports our portrayal of Heracleon as invested in missionizing practices, just as we in the *Excerpts of Theodotus* and the *Tripartite Tractate*.

From the point of view of boundary drawing, then, those characterized as children of the devil, are those who resist these ongoing proselytizing efforts. Thus, this category of damned individuals encompasses both what other texts would call choics/hylics as well as *bad* psychics, insofar as the defining trait for both is their persistent rejection of the message of someone like Heracleon.[38] An interpretative puzzle, however, is the sudden intrusion of the term *ousia*. "'And why can you not hear my word, except that you are from your father the devil?' (John 8:44) This

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[36] In this way, *natures* are consistent and not "manifested." (*Pace* Wucherpfennig, 347); moreover, *Pace* Trumbower (*Born from Above,* 25) who says that the complete threefold division existed prior to the advent of the Savior. See Einar Thomassen, ("Heracleon," 182) who claims pneumatics did not exist prior to the Savior.

[37] Cf. the language of radical transformation following baptism preserved in the *Excerpts of Theodotus* 78.1: "Until baptism Fate is real, but after it the astrologers are no longer right." See also Tatian, *Oratio* 9.2.

[38] *Pace* Einar Thomassen ("Heracleon," 191 – 92) who rejects the idea that psychics could be the children of the devil; however, when we consider the disputed passage, its description is well suited to describe the psychological profile of bad psychics who choose to do the desires of the devil and become his children by adoption (frag. 46; *CJ* 20.24.211 – 13). Thus, although the devil may not be able to *produce* children himself, people can become his children via inclination or merit (psychic and hylic respectively?). Thus when these damned psychics have the same nature (i.e., a distinctive sort of conduct) as the devil (frag. 47; *CJ* 20.28.252), which is error and ignorance (ἐκ πλάνης καὶ ἀγνοία), the responsibility is their own.

means 'from the substance of the devil,' (ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας τοῦ διαβόλου)." (Frag. 44; *CJ* 20.20.168) At first glance, *ousia* appears to be synonymous with *ousia* insofar as both evoke the distinctive traits of a *group* of people. This, however, is not entirely correct.

While the sudden inclusion *ousia* as well as its absence from the remainder of Heracleon's *CJ* should raise some suspicion that the term may have been inserted by Origen, we are not justified in ejecting the term as merely an interpolation.[39] *Ousia* appears exclusively during Heracelon's exegesis of John 8:44, i.e., his discussion of the children of the Devil (fragments 43, 44, 45, and 46). Heracleon himself uses the term twice (in fragments 44 and 46), both times repeating the phrase "you are from substance of the Devil."[40] The other two instances of *ousia* are epexegetical insertions by Origen clarifying what *Origen accuses* Heracleon of meaning (frag. 43 and 45); yet these clarifications, due to their polemical intent, do not assist us much in understanding what Heracleon might *actually* have meant by his use of *ousia*.

Two observations, however, can help clarify Heracleon's use of this term. First, it is only in the context of the Devil that Heracleon employs the term *ousia*; thus, it is not a positive or even neutral term but possesses a negative valence for Heracleon.[41] Secondly, these children of the Devil *acquire* the substance of the Devil by doing his works (fragment 46; *CJ* τὰ ἔργα τοῦ διαβόλου ποιοῦντες ὡμοιώθησαν αὐτῷ). Perhaps dependent upon the mechanics of Pauline participation, Heracleon draws upon the *materiality* of a term like *ousia* in order to claim that

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[39] It is difficult to tell for certain. Origen's predeterminist polemics specifically target the notion of substance; though certainly polemically, Origen's rebukes would make little sense if Heracleon did not also use the term *ousia*. This does not mean, however, that Heracleon used *ousia* in the *determinist* manner, which is Origen's accusation. Although ultimately unclear, I think a more conservative approach is warranted, and thus without textual confusion we should not attribute this ambiguous section to Origen's pen (*pace* Ansgar Wucherpfennig, *Heracleon Philologus*, 347 – 49).

[40] *CJ* 20.20.168; 20: ὑμεῖς ἐκ τοῦ πατρὸς τοῦ διαβόλου ἐστέ' ἀντὶ τοῦ 'ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας τοῦ διαβόλου; cf. *CJ* 20.23.198: "you are from the substance of the devil" (ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας τοῦ διαβόλου ἦσαν).

[41] In contrast, see the *Tripartite Tractate* 118 ff.; cf. Alexander Kocar, "'Humanity Came to Be According to Three Essential Types': Ethical Responsibility and Practice in the Valentinian Anthropogony of the Tripartite Tractate (NHC I, 5)." in *Jewish and Christian Cosmogony in Late Antiquity* (ed. Lance Jenott and Sarit Kattan Gribetz; Tübingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 2013), 193 – 221.

those who do wicked acts *participate in* and become the same *substance* as the Devil.[42] Consequently, although many scholars – following Origen's polemic remarks – have argued that Heracleon used *ousia* to indicate a *causal* relationship,[43] what we find is the exact inverse of this. Sharing in the substance of the Devil is the consequence of wicked conduct, not the cause of it.[44]

As we shall see in the following section, the interpretations of *physis* and *ousia* I have advocated have implications for how we will answer the question of whether psychics could transform and *become* pneumatics. Unlike the *Excerpts of Theodotus* or the *Tripartite Tractate*, Heracleon does not deploy *physis* or *ousia* as part of sweeping cosmological narratives where natures or substances are represented as causally responsible for material and moral difference. Instead, Heracleon's exegetical project is best understood as part of his activities as an early Christian teacher who encouraged his students to emulate the proselytizing activities of the earliest followers of Jesus.

**"The Death of the Soul": Ethics not Soteriology**

Finally, we return to the question: do saved psychics become pneumatics? It does not appear so. If a person remains "converted" but never becomes a missionary, that person is a *good* psychic; if a person is converted and goes to become a missionary, that person is a pneumatic. A passage that has been raised as complicating this socially determined classification scheme is fragment 40 which describes the death of the soul of the son of the petty king:

> His son in Capernaum is described as being in lower part of the middle area beside the sea, that is, in the part joined together with matter. He says the man belonging to [the petty king] was sick, that is, not by nature but in ignorance and

[42] On the mechanics of Pauline participation, especially the materiality of the *pnuema*, see further **Chapter 3**.
[43] See, for example, Trumbower, Jeffrey. *Born from Above: The Anthropology of the Gospel of John* (Tübingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 1992).
[44] An illuminating parallel is Romans 1: 18 – 32; in this passage, Paul claims that sexual immorality was the *penalty* for the disobedience of the Nations not the cause of their disobedience.

> sins...from the statement "he is about to die" he thinks the teachings (τὰ δόγματα) of those who suppose the soul to be immortal are overturned…He says that the soul is the corruptible clothed in incorruption and mortality [clothed] in immortality when "its death is swallowed up in victory" (1 Cor. 15:53 - 54). (frag. 40; *CJ* 13. 60. 416 – 18)

Einar Thomassen has interpreted this passage soteriologically as indicating that psychics *qua* psychics are not saved but instead are transformed, likely into spirit:

> This view seems logically to preclude any notion that the psychic will attain an enduring salvation *qua* psychics. Instead, therefore, he quotes Paul, who speaks about how the perishable will put on imperishability and the moral will put on immortality, death being swallowed up in victory (1 Cor. 15:53 – 54). Heracleon thus envisages a total transformation of the psychics into a new state of being. Once again, he does not explicitly state that they will become spiritual, though the context of 1 Cor. 15:44 – 49 makes that a natural assumption.[45]

So the argument goes: because souls are said to be perishable and not immortal, they must be transformed when saved.[46]

On the basis of close parallels with Philo of Alexandria, it is more likely that Heracleon deploys this evocative image of the death of the soul to illustrate the stakes of the psychological conflict raging within psychics. Consequently, Heracleon's warning about the death of the soul is not exclusively (or even primarily) a soteriological claim, but rather a warning against the risks of moral depravity. Philo of Alexandria uses exactly this same exact imagery to describe the double-death that God warns Adam and Eve about eating from the tree of life:

> That death is of two kinds, one that of the man in general, the other that of the soul in particular. The death of the man is the separation of the soul from the body, but the *death of the soul is the decay of virtue and the bringing in of wickedness*…the one is the separation of combatants that have been pitted against one another, i.e., body and soul. The [death of the soul], on the other hand, is a meeting of the two in conflict. And in this conflict the worse, the body, overcomes the better, the soul. (*Leg.* 1.105 – 107)

[45] Einar Thomassen, "Saved" 145; cf. idem, "Heracleon," 190.
[46] See also Ismo Dunderberg, *Beyond Gnosticism*, 144.

In her *Death of the Soul in Romans* 7, Emma Wasserman helpfully situates Philo's description of the death of the soul against its Platonic background.[47] To this end, Wasserman catalogues the various metaphors Philo deploys to describe this "moral-psychological drama, the basic model is consistent in depicting an ongoing struggle between the good mind and the evil passions."[48] Drawing upon Platonic language, Philo depicts extreme moral depravity as the death of the soul in which it dies "to the life of virtue and is alive only to the life of wickedness" (*Leg.* 1.107).

This link between a "death of the soul" and moral depravity, I suggest, may illuminate the portrayal of the son of the petty king who was sick due to his ignorance and sins. Consequently, although it obviously has soteriological implications, the main force of Heracleon's rhetorical appeal to the death of the soul is to encourages the psychic to resist a life of sin and be saved through belief in the Savior:

> [When the Savior says] to them the following: "unless you see signs and wonders, you will not believe," it was said to such a person having a nature (φύσιν) to be persuaded through works and perception, and who does not believe only [because of] a word. He believes the phrase "descend before my child dies" was said because death is the goal/end (τέλος) of the law that destroys through sins. Therefore, he says, the Father needs the only Savior to help [the petty king's] son, that is, to one belonging to such a nature (τουτέστιν τῇ τοιᾷδε φύσει), before he is finally put to death, on account of his sins. He has interpreted [When the Savior says] to them the following: "your son lives" (John 4:40), to have been said by the Savior with modesty, since he did not say, "let him live," nor did he show that he himself provided the life. But [Heracleon] says that after [the Savior] descended to the sick son and healed him from his illness, that is, from his sins, and have given him life through forgiveness, he said "Your son lives." (frag. 40; *CJ* 13.60.419 – 21)

The psychic, by nature, is internally divided, drawn to both redemption and perdition (frag. 40 and 46). This internal division, when unchecked, could lead to moral depravity and sin,

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[47] Emma Wasserman, *The Death of the Soul in Romans 7*: *Sin, Death, and the Law in Light of Hellenistic Moral Psychology* (Tübingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 2008, 60 – 76.
[48] Emma Wasserman, *Death of the Soul*, 62.

epitomized by the illness of the petty king's son; but when the Savior heals the petty king's son, he redeems him from the death of his soul by cleansing him from ignorance and sin.[49]

Similarly drawing upon Matthew 10:28, *Excerpts of Theodotus* 51 – 3 also describes the internal battle raging within a psychic:

> Concerning these two [the material and divine souls], the Savior says: "one must fear the one able to destroy that soul and that psychic body in Hell." (Mt. 10:28) For the Savior calls the flesh an "adversary" (Mt. 5:25), and Paul calls it a "law warring against the law of my mind," and the Savior urges us "to bind" and "to plunder the property as of a rich man," (Mt. 12:29) who was warring against the heavenly soul… (*Exc.* 51. 2 – 52.1)

The *Excerpts of Theodotus* encourages psychics to subdue these lower and warring passions and "put them to death" so that the heavenly soul might defeat the material soul (*Exc*. 52.1). Consequently, fragment 40 and its appeal to the death of the soul does not entail that psychics, when saved, are transformed into pneumatics; instead, it demonstrates that psychics, due to their divided selves, are at great risk of turning away from the Savior and falling into soul-destroying moral depravity.

## Conclusion

In many ways, comparing Heracleon with the *Excerpts of Theodotus* and the *Tripartite Tractate* is like comparing apples and oranges. Having examined the threefold division of humanity found in these three Valentinian texts, however, we conclude that while each text deploys this tripartite division differently, in every instance it reflects Pauline exegetical tradition and an ethical ideal of bringing others to salvation. This anthropological speculation

[49] Cf. fragment 13 (*CJ* 10.33.213) discussed above, which depicts the saving actions of the Savior as the cleansing of the temple, in which the whip symbolizes the "power and energy of the Holy Spirit" that removes the wicked.

arose among a group of second-century Christians who, similar to Paul, viewed themselves as having received a special calling and revelatory knowledge:

> In the same fashion as the Paraclete, Paul became the apostle of the resurrection. He was also sent to preach immediately after the Lord's passion. Therefore, he preached the Savior in these two ways: as begotten and passible for the sake of those on the left, because being able to recognize him in this position they have become afraid of him, and in the spiritual/pneumatic manner stemming from the Holy Spirit and a virgin, as the angels on the right know him. For each one knows the Lord after his own fashion, and not all in the same way. (*Exc.* 23.2-4.)

We have seen that Paul's language of different types of persons supplied the terminology used to describe and justify why some people might immediately accept the gospel message, delay before being persuaded, or categorically and resolutely reject what these spiritually elected individuals were offering.

In arguing that this threefold division and – in the case of the *Excerpts of Theodotus* and the *Tripartite Tractate* – higher and lower levels of salvation does not preclude ethics, this chapter has sought to bridge a divide in current Valentinian studies. As mentioned in **Chapter 8**, this divide is between two viewpoints: the Valentinians either 1. envisioned three natures, higher and lower levels of salvation, and thus did not consider ethics to be the cause of salvation; or 2. envisioned only temporary categories through which one advances, equal salvation, and an ethical system that resembled their peers. Each side of this dichotomy homogenizes the diverse views of the ancient authors and texts, and thus each interpretive camp sacrifices an important facet of the soteriology and ethics of this missionizing movement.

As I have shown throughout **PART III**, I find the first account to be inadequate because it undervalues the centrality of ethics in this missionizing movement. Without this foundation, why would someone adhere to a Valentinian view of the world and how would these

beliefs have motivational force and impact the lives of adherents? I suggest that we should not treat ethical practices as peripheral consequences of theoretical speculation, but instead consider them as part of an ongoing and dialectical relationship through which cosmological and eschatological beliefs were embodied and mutually reinforced. Thus, we conclude that ethical values and practices, far from being secondary to theoretical speculation, are, in fact, an inseparable part of the structured and structuring ideological commitments and practices, to paraphrase Catherine Bell, of these authors and their putative communities.[50]

Scholars from the latter camp – while arguing *for* the centrality of ethics – have done so by transforming the soteriologies and anthropologies of Heracleon, the *Excerpts of Theodotus*, and the *Tripartite Tractate* in order to bring them more closely in line with other early Christian thinkers, e.g., Irenaeus, Clement, or Origen. In minimizing the theoretical distance between, e.g., the *Excerpts of Theodotus* and Origen, these scholars have implicitly re-inscribed the traditional divide between orthodoxy and heterodoxy. In order for a heretical group to be ethical, they must resemble more orthodox thinkers, who are *really* ethical.[51]

Throughout **PART III**, I have sought to demonstrate that the *Excerpts of Theodotus,* the *Tripartite Tractate*, and to a lesser degree Heracleon's *Commentary on John* each employ a sophisticated model of ethical responsibility that differs from the models of ethical responsibility employed by their early Christian rivals, e.g., Clement and Origen. Thus, we should not construct and judge "Valentinian" ethics in light of *our* inherited notions like a free will, but instead attempt to understand the *Excerpts of Theodotus*, the *Tripartite Tractate*, and Heracleon on their own terms and in their own historical context.

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[50] Catherine Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice* (Oxford University Press, New York, NY, 1992), 98**.**
[51] King, Karen. *What is Gnosticism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003). cf. **Chapters 4** and **6.**

By removing a false binary of either free choice or determinism, we can recognize that ancient authors could, for a variety of reasons, privilege different, even sometimes incompatible, models for moral responsibility. Thus, the *Excerpts of Theodotus* and the *Tripartite Tractate* both deploy a tripartite division of humanity and a soteriology with higher and lower levels of salvation in order to motivate and reinforce expectations that a pneumatic ought to be engaged in proselytizing and other practices meant to save others. Similarly, Heracleon's *Commentary on John* deploys its threefold division of humanity to justify and encourage his readers towards missionizing psychics. Although these missionaries (pneumatics) ultimately disappeared into the fog of time, their tripartite division of humanity is a lasting artifact of an important and highly influential movement– if heresiological accounts are any indication – that spanned areas across the Mediterranean, from France to Rome and from North Africa to Egypt.

# Conclusion: The Origins of Christian Moralities

Over two years and nearly three hundred pages ago, this dissertation began with a basic question: what is the relationship between soteriology and ethics? I have pursued this question through a survey of texts and author that displayed what I have called higher and lower levels of salvation. The themes, authors, and texts covered in this dissertation may seem at times to be cacophonous in their diversity. This was by design.

I have not, nor was it ever my intention to trace a single idea – higher and lower levels of salvation – from its prehistory through its various permutations or forms. There is no such *thing* as higher and lower levels of salvation that could be traced thusly. Instead, I have used the broad typological grouping around which this dissertation is organized to offer my own answers to several different questions that continue to be debated by scholars (e.g., what was Paul's view of Jewish and Gentile salvation? Were the 'Gnostics' ethical determinists?).

Rather than rehearsing past debates and/or championing an established position, my use of this understudied organizing principle has enabled me to navigate as best I could away from well-trod paths, and to create odd or uncommon conversation partners (e.g., Paul and John or *Hermas* and the *ApocJn*)[1] as well as to break up texts and authors traditionally interpreted as saying the same things (e.g., the *TriTrac/ Exc.* and Heracleon). This is not to say that this is a wholly original dissertation, or that I have not at every step benefited from excellent scholarly conversation partners; rather, I am attempting to explain why the reader might unconsciously have heard John Cleese's voice announcing at the start of every new section: And now for something completely different.

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[1] I believe I have shown, however, that there are sound historical rationales for grouping these authors and texts together, even if such groupings are rather rare (John and Paul) or to the best of knowledge unprecedented (*Hermas* and the *ApocJn*).

Part of the appeal of higher and lower levels of salvation is that it is not just one thing or perhaps not ever *only* one thing. When I selected this topic, I was drawn to the messiness of the texts and authors studied herein. In every instance, it appeared to me, these texts and authors had overcommitted themselves to contradicting ideas and beliefs and thus had to resort to higher and lower levels of salvation as something analogous to a release valve in order to reduce some of the dissonant pressure. When I considered the commitments and contexts behind each creation of higher and lower levels of salvation, I found that they differed greatly. *This* is what so intrigued me about the topic of higher and lower levels of salvation. It not only provided a means to examine some of the most interesting texts from antiquity and interact with some of the most important modern debates, but it also oriented me towards the conceptual and practical triage underway in a variety of contexts, an important point that is too often smoothed over (e.g., Paul) or overlooked (e.g., *Hermas*/*ApocJn*).

In this approach, I have attempted to apply the maxim that "incongruity gives rise to thought."[2] If higher and lower levels of salvation is a solution to a theoretical and/or practical difficulty or inconsistency, then by using it as my organizational principle I could investigate the social situations and conceptual commitments that prompted its invention. Moreover, by manufacturing my own incongruity through odd conversation partners or by estranging traditional partners, I hoped to provide some new answers to old questions.

What I have found is that ancient morality and soteriology cannot be explained by appealing to a one-size-fits-all model. Modifying the title of a well-known and still highly valuable introduction to ancient Christian morality, it is better to speak of the *Origins of*

[2] I am especially indebted to Jonathan Z. Smith's reworking and application of Paul Ricoeur's famous phrase; see, for example, Smith's "A Pearl of Great Price and a Cargo of Yams: A Study in Situational Incongruity," in *Imagining Religion: From Babylon to Jamestown* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 90 – 101 and idem, *To Take Place: Toward a Theory in Ritual* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987).

*Christian Moralities* than a singular morality.[3] Whether deliberately or not, investigations into ancient ethics often assume a right/wrong or normative/aberrant binary. This helps explain some of the most enduring dichotomies we find in the study of the New Testament and early Christianity, e.g., spiritual v. ritual and universal v. particular (**PART I**), orthodox v. heresy (**PART II**), or voluntary v. determinist (**PART III**). In every case, the first term of each pairing connotes authors or texts committed to ethical concerns while its opposing term is shorthand for a *lack* of concern over ethics, typically held by an outside (i.e., not *authentically* Christian) group. Thus, there is a dominant tend that reduces texts and authors to single model of morality by explaining them in terms meant to fit within a column comprised of the front half of each pairing and their near synonyms. This trend further articulates this essentializing conception of morality by showing what it is not and could not be by appealing to a collection of the opposing terms and their cognates.[4]

A truism for many academics is that things are always more complicated than we had previously assumed, i.e., there are missing and additional factors that when brought to light help us make better sense of what has or will transpire. While true in most instances, including all those examined in this dissertation, this may not always be the case. As such, I do not want my argument to be mistaken for categorical opposition to binaries. What I dislike about the binaries listed above is they have become uncritical explanations for their own existence and thus are constantly reinforced through their own feedback loop. In other words, what is taken to be an explanation justifying the binary and what it entails is little more than a restating of the dichotomy itself.

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[3] Wayne Meeks, *The Origins of Christian Morality: The First Two Centuries* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993).

[4] See chapters 2, 6, and 8 for bibliography for each instance.

This results in the following examples of problematic reasoning: Why do John of Patmos' references to Torah practices not *really* refer to ritual practices? Because as a Christian (see: morally superior) he has spiritualized that legalist tradition. Why does Paul preach a universalist gospel of salvation? Because he has converted away from and thus transcended the limited and outdated particularism of his forebears. Why is the *ApocJn* not interested in the formation and stability of its community? Because, as a heretical text, the *ApocJn* appealed only to social deviants. Why is the *Tripartite Tractate* uninterested in ethics? Because it lacks a certain form of voluntary choice that is necessary for moral responsibility. In this way, what is given as a justification to support the contention is presumed to be an undisputed fact.

Hopefully I have demonstrated throughout this dissertation exactly why each of the above answers or "facts" ought to be strongly disputed. In so doing, I hope also that I have shown why many anachronistic categories (e.g., "Jewish Christian") and conceptions (a "free will") often do more to impede and obfuscate historical analysis than they do to clarify it. Finally, I hope that I have offered not just criticisms of past scholarly paradigms but new and plausible interpretations of ancient texts and authors, not just on global issues but on specific points as well.

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