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THE SECRET BOOKS OF THE EGYPTIAN Gnostics¹

HANS JONAS*

THE discovery, about 1945, at Nag Hamadi in Egypt (the ancient Chenoboskion), of what was probably the complete sacred library of a Gnostic sect is one of those sensational events in the history of religious-historical scholarship that archeology and accident have so lavishly provided since the beginning of this century. It was preceded (speaking of written relics only) by the enormous find, early in the century, of Manichaean writings at Turfan in Chinese Turkistan and by the further unearthing, about 1930 in the Egyptian Fayum, of parts of a Manichaean library in Coptic. It was closely followed by the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls in Palestine. If we add to these new sources the Mandaean writings—whose progressive coming to light since the latter part of the last century is owed not to the digging of archeologists or the scavenging of shep-

herds and peasants but to contacts with the still-living, long-forgotten sect itself—we find ourselves now in possession of a massive literature of "lost causes" from those crucial five or so centuries, from the first century B.C. onward, in which the religious destiny of the Western world took shape: the voice of creeds and flights of thought which, part of that creative process, were to become obliterated in the consolidation of official creeds that followed upon the turmoil of novelty and boundless vision.

Unlike the Dead Sea finds of the same years, the Gnostic find from Nag Hamadi has been beset from the beginning and to this day by a persistent curse of political roadblocks, litigation, and, worst of all, scholarly jealousies and "firstmanship" (the last factor has grown by now into a veritable *chronique scandaleuse* of contemporary academia), the combined upshot of which is that fifteen years after the first recognition of the nature of the documents only two of the forty-six (forty-nine)² writings have been properly edited,³ three additional ones have been translated in full,⁴ and two (four) more⁵ are available from a different papyrus that also contains them and has recently been published (in its Gnostic parts) after having been in the Berlin Museum for sixty years.⁶ For all the rest, about which fragmentary information has been seeping out over the years, we have now, and probably for quite some time, to be content with the provisional

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descriptions, excerpts, and summaries offered in the book under review. Its author happened, as a young Egyptologist from Paris, to be on the spot when, in 1947, the first of the thirteen papyrus codices comprising the find was acquired by the Coptic Museum in Cairo. He recognized its significance and was from then on intimately connected with the unfolding story of further acquisition, inventorying, communication to the scientific community—and the aforementioned intramural feuds.⁷ By his own account, Jean Doresse is, as of now, the only scholar who has had direct access to the complete Cairo treasure, has at least leafed through all of its twelve codices,⁸ catalogued the writings composing them, and taken notes (of varying copiousness and not always at leisure) of their contents. Whatever the ultimate merits in the scramble, the practical fact for the general student is that by embodying those first-hand notes the present book is in mere terms of information indeed unique and plainly indispensable.

The monopolistic situation, unhealthy in itself, could have fallen into less worthy hands. Doresse shows himself a competent scholar who joins enthusiasm for the subject with extensive command of the field of Gnostic and related studies and with a lively sense for relevance and interconnection. With this general praise I pass over the valuable general account of gnosticism and its hitherto extant documents (chap. i, ii), as well as the narration of the discovery, to the crucial chapter v, "Forty-four Secret [and hitherto unknown] Books." This is the real *raison d'être* of the book and at the same time the reason by which it is legitimately meant for supersession;⁹ the one hundred pages of this

chapter contain, one by one, the résumés or at least listings of all the writings of which we hope for more complete and more direct knowledge in the not-too-distant future. It is provisional information by its very nature, for the serious student exciting and tantalizing to the highest degree. The résumés range from the fairly detailed to the very bare: some are enriched by direct quotations, some enlarged into interpretations and comparisons with older material; sometimes far-reaching conjectures are ventured; sometimes a writing rates no more than a catalogue title. "My examination . . . was . . . unequal and incomplete," says Doresse (p. 249), calling his notes "rather hurried." The reader, grateful though sometimes vexed, has to take what is offered. On the whole, he feels ably informed wherever the information is substantial.

With the obvious reservations dictated by the state of affairs, some critical and supplementary comments may be voiced at this stage. Doresse finds (p. 150) the teaching of the *Paraphrase of Shem*, the longest of the revelations in the whole library (No. 27 by his counting, which is adopted here for all references), "identical or nearly so" with what Hippolytus reports of a "Paraphrase of Seth" (*Refut.* v. 19–22). To elaborate the qualification, the first speaks in the Manichaean manner of a rising-up of the primordial Darkness to the Light, while the latter speaks of the Light's being attracted downward to the Darkness, a cardinal difference. Seeing that nonetheless the two works seem to be close relatives indeed, this is a good example of how much wavering—or shall we say permissive play of variation?—there was on such basic points of doctrine within the same sect, and with no apparent quarrel. If, by contrast, we just think of the bitter trinitarian battles in contemporary ecclesiastic Christendom, we realize what the presence or absence of "church" meant in such matters. Doresse's identification of No. 14, *Discourse of Truth*

by Zostrian . . . (and) Zoroaster, with the "revelations" (*ἀποκαλύψεις*) reported by Porphyry as going under these two names (p. 156; cf. p. 157, n. 19), seems to me quite untenable; by no artifice can Porphyry's text be amended to refer to one work only, as he is very explicit about two different works' being refuted by two different scholars (one being himself).

In No. 40 ("Origin") the demiurge Ialdabaoth, when rebuked by Sophia for his boasting, is addressed with the alternative name "Samael," which is said to mean "the blind god" (p. 166).¹⁰ The plausible etymology (*סמאל*) explains the appellation "the blind one" for the demiurge found in Hippolytus' account of the Peratae, where it is merely based on an allegory of the Esau story (*Refut.* v. 16. 10); we now learn that the predicate was more than an exegetical improvisation.¹¹ Another interesting Hebrew etymology found in the same treatise is Israel, "the man who sees God" (*אִישׁ רִאָה אֵל*). This is very well known from Philo,¹² where it assumes great doctrinal significance.¹³ A concordance pairing the educated Hellenist with the obscure sectarian testifies to a common background of well-established Jewish exegesis. Incidentally, the treatise (or an annotator) twice makes reference to a "preceding Book of Norea," which Doresse believes is found in the writing actually preceding in the codex (No. 39), *Hypostasis of the Archons*, but his own account of the latter's content hardly agrees with what those references state "thou wilt find" there (p. 166). The comparison of the full texts, now possible through Schenke's translations, rules the conjecture definitely out. Also Puech's identification of the *Hypostasis* with the book *Noria* summarized by Epiphanius (*Panar.* 26. 1. 3-9) does not seem to pass closer examination (cf. Schenke, *op. cit.*, 83, col. 663). The simple fact of the matter is that both consecutive writings in the Nag Hamadi codex belong to the Barbelognosis in which the figure of Norea enjoys special attention. (But its Gnostic domain is much wider and includes the Mandaeans.)

The alternative title of Nos. 2 = 7, *Gospel of the Egyptians*, given at the end of a work of this character, shows the extreme latitude with which the title "gospel" was used and should once for all set at rest the doubts raised on that score with regard to the famous writing

of the Jung Codex, i.e., whether or not it can be the *Gospel of Truth* that Irenaeus ascribes to the Valentinians. This text speaks of the "living water" in a manner reminiscent of the Mandaeans and afterward has a passage which to Doresse recalls a baptismal liturgy: "I have known thee; I mingled myself with him who changes not (etc.);" (pp. 179-80). To me it rather recalls in style and content some of the pass formulas for the ascending soul (the two interpretations are not incompatible).

No. 12, *Revelation of Adam to His Son Seth*, presents the (originally Iranian?) doctrine of a succession (thirteen, or more?) of Enlighteners coming down into the world in the course of its history, through the miraculous births of prophets. Variations of this theme occur in the Pseudo-Clementines, Mani, and elsewhere in gnosticism—the first conception of one "world history" as a divinely helped progress of gnosis. The author of our treatise is unaware of a clash between this idea of intermittent revelation and that of a continuous secret transmission of the "secrets of Adam" through Seth and his descendants, which he professes in the same breath (p. 183). To the latter doctrine Doresse quotes (p. 185) a parallel from a later Syriac *Chronicle*¹⁴ but misses in the analogy the salient point of difference. In the Christian rendering of the *Chronicle*, Adam, when imparting revelations to his son Seth, shows him his original greatness before his transgression and his expulsion from Paradise and admonishes him never to fail in justice as he, Adam, had done; in the Gnostic rendering, Adam is not the sinner but the victim of archontic persecution, ultimately of the primordial Fall to which the world's existence and his own are due. Here is one simple criterion for what is "Christian" (orthodox) or "Gnostic" (heretical): whether the *guilt* is Adam's or the archon's, whether human or divine, whether arising in or before creation. The difference goes to the heart of the Gnostic problem.

In Nos. 3 = 8, *Epistle of Eugnostos the Blessed*, Doresse in the flush of discovery claims for this eponymical Eugnostos, also called Gogessos, that "he is, up to the present, the only Gnostic doctor who was certainly a historical reality and is also directly known to us through his writings" (p. 197). This is fantastic and herewith referred to the author for second thoughts. But as regards the question

of "direct knowledge" in general, it prompts the almost trivial reminder that nothing in the new sources, being translations one and all, equals in directness of testimony the direct quotations in the Greek fathers (such as, e.g., Ptolemy's *Letter to Flora*), which render the Greek originals themselves—even if a longer line of copyists then intervenes between them and our oldest manuscript. This aspect is easily forgotten in the elation over the mere physical age of the writing which happens to come into our hands.

No. 19 (title missing), interesting as a polemic of Marcion's vehemence against the Law, also launches a startling attack upon the baptism of John: "The river Jordan . . . is the strength of the body, that is, the essence of pleasures, and the water of Jordan is the desire for carnal cohabitation"; John himself is "the archon of the multitude" (pp. 219–20)! This is entirely unique. Could it be a retort to the Mandaeans—the other side of the bitter quarrel of which we have the Mandaean side in their writings? The account is too sketchy to permit more than the suggestion of this tempting possibility.

Doresse's comparison of the "long" versions of the *Apocryphon of John* (Nos. 6, 36) with the "short" (No. 1 and Cod. Berol.) suffers from inconsistency as to whether the excess ending of the former is an addition or its absence in the latter a mutilation (as on the whole he seems to think [pp. 209, 211, 217]). The answer cannot be in doubt: this self-account by a saving deity of her descent into the depth of Darkness to awaken Adam is an interpolation from a different variety of Gnostic thought easily identified by such passages as, "I penetrated to the midst of the prison . . . and I said, 'Let him who hears wake up from heavy slumber!' Then Adam wept and shed heavy tears . . . : 'Who called my name? And from whence comes this hope, while I am in the chains of the prison?' . . . 'Stand up, and remember that it is thyself thou hast heard, and return to thy root. . . . Take refuge from . . . the demons of Chaos . . . and rouse thyself out of the heavy sleep of the infernal dwelling.'" The close parallels in Manichaean (also Mandaean) writings tell that we have here an intrusion of "Iranian" gnosis into an otherwise "Syrian" context.

For the rest I forego comment on the writings now available in full, namely, the *Apocryphon of John*, *Sophia of Jesus*, *Gospel of*

Philip, *Gospel of Thomas*, and *Gospel of Truth*. Their study is independent of Doresse's mediation and indeed far advanced beyond the stage represented generally by his book. In the case of the Thomas gospel the advanced stage appears in the book itself; Appendix II gives the complete text in English with introduction and notes. This is now part of a growing specialist literature, and a discussion has no place in this review. But how awkward it is to be at the mercy of one man's mind, however competent, can be seen from Doresse's judgment on the published *Gospel of Truth*, on which fortunately everyone can form his own opinion: ". . . full of bad rhetoric while otherwise particularly empty. . . . If this work was really representative of [Valentinus] we should have to admit that he was a pretty poor writer!" (pp. 239–40). But then, the Jung Codex is not one of "his" codices.

What do the new finds¹⁵ add to our knowledge and understanding of Christian gnosticism? At present, the answer must be given on the basis of the very preliminary state of the public record. It is, of course, simply not the case that our evidence hitherto was scanty. The patristic testimony is rich and stands vindicated with every test by newly recovered originals (i.e., texts preserved on their own and not through doxography). But of these there were few hitherto, and none from the classical period of Gnostic production, namely, the second and third centuries. Of these we now possess a whole library. A priori, and quite apart from questions of doctrine, it is obvious that so large an accretion of original writings will afford us a much more full-blooded, full-bodied experience of the authentic flavor of Gnostic literary utterance, a more intimate view of the working and manner of self-communication of the Gnostic mind, than any doxographic excerpts or renderings of doctrinal substance can convey. As has happened before, in the case of the Manichaean

documents, the form and tone of statement in all its profusion now add their undimmed evidence to the object "content," the "themes," as it were, which the heresiologists could for purposes of debate detach from the din of their polyphonous treatment; and the latter is of the substance, even if it should not show it to advantage. If the picture becomes more blurred instead of more clear, this would be part of the truth of the matter.

We learn, further, what was the reading matter of a Gnostic community¹⁶ of the fourth century, probably typical for the Coptic area and possibly well beyond it. From the relative weight of Sethian documents in the total we may conclude that the community was Sethian. But the presence of many writings of quite different affiliations¹⁷ shows the openmindedness, or mutual interpenetration, which must have been the rule among the Gnostics at large. Really surprising in this respect is the inclusion of five Hermetic treatises in an otherwise "Christian"-Gnostic collection; the mere fact proves a greater proximity, or at any rate feeling of proximity, at this time between the two streams of speculation than is usually conceded. On the other hand, as Dorresse points out (p. 250), none of "the great heretical teachers" of patristic literature "makes any explicit appearance in the writings from Chenoboskion."¹⁸ The fact has some significance, but it bears not, as Dorresse seems to think, upon the value of patristic testimony but upon such questions as the intellectual level of the Chenoboskion group and its likes in the fourth century, the survival of conscious doctrinal differentiation and of the individual names representing it from the second century, the preference for pseudepigrapha-

phy, anonymity, and superhuman authorship over humanly identifiable speculation, and the like.

To the Sethians, no historical teacher is attributed by the heresiologists anyway. Their teaching itself is now richly documented. The (Iranian) doctrine of "three roots"—that they shared with the Peratae, Justin, and others—stands forth clearly and in full accord with Hippolytus' account. Its relative prominence in the present collection (which, as noted, had its Sethian emphasis) seduces the discoverer into declaring this, quite specific, feature to be among "the essential fundamentals without which the Gnostic doctrine could not have existed" (p. 265). He then must wonder "But how this doctrine of the three primordial roots could have been harmonized with . . . the formation of the higher world by successive pairs of emanations . . . is still not clearly apparent" (p. 260). The answer is, of course, that the two doctrines were indeed not harmonized and did not ask for harmonization: they belong to two different strains of Gnostic thought, each complete in itself (which I have distinguished nearly thirty years ago as "Iranian" and "Syrian-Egyptian," respectively). While the whole aeon- and Sophia-speculation of the emanationist, Syrian-Egyptian gnosis has plainly no room for it, the three-root doctrine is not even vital for the "Iranian" gnosis to which it belongs: neither Mani nor, long before him, the teachers cited by Basilides (*Acta Archelai* 67. 5) make use of it but make their systems work on the rigorous two-root hypothesis. And in the Sethian case itself, the speculative role of the intermediate principle is in fact slight; the real meaning, here too, is dualistic; and in general the third prin-

ciple either affords—as “Space”—the mere topological meeting ground for the opposites or in its substantial description—as “Spirit”—is an attenuated form (notwithstanding the assurance of co-primacy) of the higher principle, susceptible of intermingling. This susceptibility is called for in Gnostic speculation; the various alternatives show that its provision does not really require a separate, aboriginal principle.

Bypassing what to the New Testament scholar must be the most exciting aspect of the whole find—the “Logia” collection in the *Gospel of Thomas*—I turn in conclusion to some doctrinal features that can be provisionally gleaned from the new material and relate them to the older evidence. One thing this reader is impressed with is the persistent recurrence of certain motifs which, well documented as they were before, now receive added accreditation as basic articles of faith from the sheer weight of numerical and even verbal constancy.

1. Prominent among them is the theme that, for short, I will call *the pride of the demiurge*, that is, the story of his ignorance, perversity, and conceit. The ubiquity of this theme, with an almost stereotyped repetition of its formulas throughout the cosmogonic writings of our collection, is a striking though not surprising fact of the new evidence. It agrees with the patristic testimony down to the literal phrasing of (a) the demiurge’s thinking that he alone exists and there is nothing above him; (b) his boasting about his creation, issuing in the cry, “I am God and there is no other God than I”; (c) his humbling by the retort from on high, “Thou art mistaken (or “don’t lie”) . . . ! There is above thee. . . .” This nearly invariant cluster of features—

already familiar from Irenaeus (*Adv. haer.*; e.g., i. 30. 6), Hippolytus (*Refut.*; e.g., vii. 25. 3), Epiphanius (*Panar.*; e.g., 26. 2), and attributed by them to a variety of sects—is found in no less than the following writings of the Chenoboskion library: No. 27, *Paraphrase of Shem* (p. 149); No. 39, *Hypostasis of the Archons* (134:27–135:4; 142:21–26; 143:4–7); No. 40, *Origin of the World* (148:29–33; 151:3–28; 155:17–34); Nos. 2 = 7, *Sacred Book of the Invisible Great Spirit or Gospel of the Egyptians* (p. 178); No. 4, *Sophia of Jesus*¹⁹ (BG 125:10–126:5); Nos. 1, 6, 36, *Apocryphon of John*¹⁹ (BG 44:9–16; cf. 45:11 f.; 45:20–46:9). These, if I am not mistaken, are all the cosmogonic tractates of the collection which Dorese has summarized.

Some particulars are worth mentioning. Concerning (b), the assertion by the demiurge of his arrogant claim always takes the form of an “exclamation” in the unmistakably Old Testament style of divine self-predication (recalling, e.g., Isa. 45:5, 46:9), sometimes adding to the profession of uniqueness that of jealousy.²⁰ Except for the special psychological twist in *Apocryphon of John*, the trait is familiar from patristic reports and is now shown to be one of the true “invariants” of that whole type of Gnostic cosmogony in which the “lower” represents a defection from the “higher.”²¹ The anti-Jewish animus of these transparent identifications of Ialdabaoth (etc.) with the Judaic god is one of the elements one has to consider in forming any hypothesis on the origins of gnosticism.

Concerning (c), the rebuke from on high, mostly by his mother Sophia, reveals to the demiurge, and to the lower powers at large, the existence of the higher God “who is above the universe”

(BG 126:1-5), thus undeceiving him and humbling his pride; but its most telling form is "*Man* exists [above thee = before thee] and so does the Son of Man."²² This formula, too, which shows "*Man*" elevated to a supracosmic deity, is known from patristic testimony (e.g., Iren. i. 30. 6), and there some of the systems listed even go so far as to equate him outright with the first and supreme God himself.²³ Now this elevation—whether going that far or not—of "*Man*" to a transmundane deity, prior and superior to the creator of the universe, or the assigning of that name to such a deity, is one of the most significant traits of Gnostic theology in the general history of religion, uniting such widely divergent speculations as those of the Poimandres and of Mani. It signifies a new metaphysical status of man in the order of things, and by being advised of it is the creator of the world put in his place. Join to the theological concept the fact that the very name insures—namely, that terrestrial man can identify his innermost being ("spirit," "light," etc.) with this supracosmic power, can therefore despise his cosmic oppressors and count on his ultimate triumph over them—and it becomes visible that the doctrine of the god Man (in the creation story specifically: the humiliation of the demiurge in his name) marks the distinctly *revolutionary* aspect of gnosticism on the cosmic plane, which on the moral plane shows itself in the defiance of antinomianism and on the sacramental plane in the confidence of defeating fate and outwitting the archons. The element of revolt, with its affective tone, is recognized only when taken together with the element of oppression and the consequent idea of liberation, that is, of reclaiming a freedom lost.

We must remember that the role of the demiurge is not exhausted in his feat of creation, but that, through his "*Law*" as well as through cosmic Fate, he exercises a despotic world rule aimed mainly at enslaving man. In the *Revelation of Adam to His Son Seth* (No. 12, p. 182), Adam tells how, after he had learned (from Eve?) about "the eternal angels" (aeons), who

were higher than the god who had created us, . . . the Archon, in anger, cut us off from the aeons of the powers . . . the glory that was in us deserted us . . . the primordial knowledge that had breathed in us abandoned us. . . . It was then that we knew the gods who had created us . . . and we were *serving him in fear and humility*.²⁴

What relish, then, to learn that, even before, the archon himself had been humiliated by the disclosure that above him is "*Man*"!

2. Practically coextensive in occurrence with the "pride of the demiurge" is the theme I shall briefly call *the folly of Sophia*, that is, the story of her aberration and fall from the higher divine order, of which she is and continues to be a member even during her exile of guilt. In the sequence of the myth this topic precedes the pride of the demiurge—in fact, Sophia's fall is the generative cause of the demiurge's existence and of his *ab initio* inferior nature. But historically the figure is of different provenance. The Jewish reference and thus the anti-Judaic sting are absent;²⁵ and in spite of the genealogical connection and even culpable responsibility, the affective tone of the symbol is different: she evokes tragic "fear and compassion," not revolt and contempt. The presence of this theme²⁶ is an infallible sign that we deal with the "Syrian-Egyptian" type of Gnostic speculation, in which the cosmogonic process engulfing parts of divinity is

originated by a self-caused *descensus* from the heights, and not, as in the "Iranian" type, by the encroachment of a primordial darkness from without. The *Origin of the World* (40) provides by its polemical opening telling proof that the proponents of the Sophia myth were well aware of this doctrinal point: "Since they all, the gods of the world and men, say 'Nothing existed before the Chaos' I shall prove that they all are mistaken, for they never knew the origin of Chaos, nor its root." The Chaos (so the treatise goes on), far from being aboriginal, emerged out of a "Shadow" which itself resulted from a "primordial work," undertaken by Pistis-Sophia outside the realm of the "Immortals" (who at first existed alone) whence she strayed (p. 165).²⁷ Thus the very existence of darkness is here the consequence of a divine failing. Sophia, "Wisdom," is the agent and vehicle of this failing (not the least of the paradoxes in which gnosticism delighted); her soul-drama before time prefigures the predicament of man within creation (though it has pre-empted "guilt" for the precosmic phase alone); and the various possibilities of motivation open to choice make for considerable freedom in the actual psychological evolution of the transcendental adventure tale. Of this freedom, the number of variations found in the literature bears witness; even for the one Valentinian school, two alternative conceptions of the first cause and nature of Sophia's fault are recorded. Thus we have here, with all sameness of the basic idea, not the same rule of stereotype as in the "demiurge" theme. We list a few instances from the new sources and relate them to their counterparts in the old.

The *Hypostasis of the Archons* and

the *Origin of the World* both tell us that (a) Pistis Sophia desired to produce alone, *without her consort*, a work that would be like unto the first-existing Light: it came forth as a celestial image which (b) constituted a *curtain* between the higher realms of light and the later-born, inferior aeons; and a *shadow* extends beneath the curtain, that is, on its outer side which faces away from the light. The shadow, which was called "Darkness," becomes *matter*; and out of this matter comes forth, as an abortion, the lion-shaped Ialdabaoth.

1. *Nature of the fault*.—"Without consort": the same motif occurs in *Apocryphon of John*²⁸ and in No. 4, *Sophia of Jesus*,²⁹ and is fully explained in Hippolytus' version of the Valentinian myth, namely, as impossible imitation of the Father's creativity.³⁰ Thus Sophia's fault is here presumption, *hybris*, leading directly to failure but indirectly in the further chain of consequences (via the demiurge, in whom the *hybris* reappears compounded by ignorance and *amor dominandi*) to the becoming of the material world. This, therefore, and with it our condition, is the final fruit of the abortive attempt of an erring sub-deity to be creative on her own. The student of Valentinianism knows from Irenaeus (Ptolemy: Italian school) and the *Excerpta ex Theodoto* (Anatolian school) of a different and more sophisticated motivation of Sophia's error: excessive desire for complete knowledge of the Absolute (the result, of course, is the same). To this variant there seems to be no parallel in the new documents, any more than there was in the older ones. And in the light of the Coptic testimony it is now safe to assume what internal evidence, by the criterion of subtlety and crudity, always suggested:

Hippolytus' version, which agrees so well with the now attested Gnostic Vulgate, represents within Valentinian literature an archaism, preserving currency from the established Gnostic Sophia mythology, whereas the version prevalent in the school itself represents a uniquely Valentinian refinement.

2. *Consequence of the fault.*—The "curtain," in the above examples obviously a direct effect of Sophia's work as such, is in the *Sophia of Jesus* a creation of the Father in response to this "work": he spreads a separating screen "between the Immortals and those that came forth after them," so that the "fault of the woman" may live and she may join battle with Error (*BG* 118:1-17).³¹ This recalls the "Limit" (*ἄρος*) of the Valentinians, in the second of his roles.³² In this version, then, the "curtain" or "limit" was ordained with the intent of separation and protection: while in the other version, where it arises with Sophia's work itself, it becomes the unintended cause of the "darkness" beneath itself, which becomes "matter" in which Sophia then carries on her "work" (No. 39); in this unintended aspect it rather recalls the "fog" of the *Gospel of Truth*,³³ which in its turn recalls the Valentinian doctrine that Sophia, falling into ignorance and formlessness, "brought into being the Void-of-Knowledge, which is the Shadow [i.e., the cone of darkness produced by her blocking the light] of the Name" (*Exc. Theod.* 31. 3-4). Thus, where the "curtain" is not spread by the Father but directly results from Sophia's error, it forms a link in the genealogical deduction of darkness from that primordial error, if by a somewhat extraneous kind of causality. We have here the incipient or cruder form of that derivation of mat-

ter from the primal fault whose perfected form we meet in the Valentinian doctrine of the origin of psychic and hylic substance *out of*—not merely *because of*—the mental affections of Sophia herself. In the *Gospel of Truth*, this subtle doctrine seems presupposed.³⁴ Again the new texts permit us to measure the step which Valentinianism took beyond the more primitive level of its general group.

3. *The passion of Sophia.*—This step is also apparent in the meaning given the *suffering* of Sophia, that is, in whether it is incidental (however movingly told) or, as a second phase, crucial to the cosmogonic process. As that process was initiated by the "error" which somehow gave rise, in the first phase, to a darkness and chaos that were not before (thus providing the monistic turn in the theory of dualism), there was ample cause, without further purpose, for distress, remorse, and other emotions on the part of the guilty Sophia. It is obvious that these formed part of the story before their speculative use was seized upon. What do the Coptic sources tell us in this respect? In *Apocryphon of John*, Sophia's distress arises over the creative doings of the demiurge, her son³⁵—a comment on, not an originative factor in, the cosmogonic process, by now well under way (though a factor in her own conversion and provisional redemption). In the *Pistis Sophia*, let us remember, the long-drawn-out, dramatic epic of this suffering is wholly for its own emotional sake. But in No. 40, noted before for its awareness of the theoretical implications of the Sophia theme, a substantive and originative role is assigned to her very distress, which accordingly here precedes the demiurgical stage: Sophia, beholding the "dark-

ness" and the "waters devoid of spirit" (i.e., Chaos), is dismayed at these products of her initial fault; and her consternation turns into the apparition (upon the waters?)³⁶ of a "work of fright," which flees away from her into Chaos (147:23-34): whether this is the male-female Archon, later mentioned himself or his first adumbration, the future creator of the world is either mediately or directly a projection of the despair of "Wisdom"! This comes closest to the hypostasizing role which the "affects" of Sophia assume in Valentinian speculation; also the two-step development (first Chaos, then demiurge) adumbrates the differentiation into a higher and lower Sophia.³⁷ Yet it is still a marked step hence to the definite derivation of the several psychic and hylic elements of the universe from those passions; and nothing so far in the new texts suggests the existence of something as subtle outside the Valentinian circle. The latter's originality stands forth again and again.

To return once more from intra-Gnostic doctrinal matters to the subject of "foreign relations," of which we had an instance in the inclusion of Hermetic writings in the Nag Hamadi collection, it is almost irresistible to ask the question whether there is any link between the Nag Hamadi codices and the Dead Sea Scrolls, between "Chenoboskion" and "Qumrân"—the two groups whose relics, by one of the greatest coincidences imaginable, have come to light at almost the same time. Indeed there may have been, according to a fascinating section in Doresse's book (pp. 295 ff.), whose main finding, in all brevity, is this: *Qumrân* could be *Gomorrhah*, a hypothesis first suggested by F. de Saulcy on linguistic and topographical grounds. Gomorrhah and Sod-

om are named by ancient writers as places of Essenian settlements, and in this connection the Biblical connotations of the two names do not seem to matter. No. 2 of the Nag Hamadi texts, the *Sacred Book of the Invisible Great Spirit*, or *Gospel of the Egyptians*, has the following passage: "The great Seth came and brought his seed, and sowed it in the aeons that have been engendered and of which the number is the number of Sodom. Some say: 'Sodom is the dwelling place of the great Seth, which [or, who?] is Gomorrhah.' And others say: 'The great Seth took the seed of Gomorrhah, and he has transplanted it to the second place which has been called Sodom'" (p. 298). Doresse suggests that, late as the text is relative to the date of the cessation of the Qumrân community, it may refer to it (or else to some neighboring group) as "the seed of the great Seth" and even allude to its reconstitution further south, at Sodom, after the catastrophe that overtook Qumrân. There would then be some kind of continuity between the disappearing Essenian movement and an emerging Sethian gnosis. Pending more data, it is impossible to assess the merits of this bold conjecture. Certainly, the implications of such a linkage between Essenes and Gnostics, as here intimated by a mythologized "historical" memory, would be vast and intriguing.

Finally, a remark in connection with P. Mairet's translation (which is good on the whole): it should be made mandatory for translators of scholarly material to have (a) bibliographical references and (b) quotations already in the original translated from a third language checked for adequacy in the new medium. Else the English reader is treated to such French provincialisms as (p. 9, n. 34, and *passim*), "Plotinus, *Ennéades*, text revised in French translation by E. Bréhier, Paris, 1924,

seq.," where for translations the reference should now be to MacKenna's English one (and for title, to the *Enneads*); or (p. 5, n. 23), "*Extraits de Théodote*, edn. F. Sagnard, 1948," instead of "*The Excerpta ex Theodoto*, ed. and trans. R. P. Casey, 1934"; or (p. 10, n. 36, and *passim*) H. Leisegang, "*La Gnose* (trans. J. Gouillard), Paris, 1951," instead of "*Die Gnosis* (Leipzig, 1924), 4th ed., 1955"; and—the worst example—(p. 285 and *passim*), G. G. Scholem, "*Les Grands courants de la mystique juive* (trans. by M. M. Davy), 1950": the book, written in English, appeared in this country in 1941 under the title *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* and has had several editions since.

As for retranslation of translated texts, the request that the original be consulted cannot, of course, in the present case apply to Doresse's translations from "his" Coptic texts; but with easily accessible material in the better-known languages the hazards of translation at a second remove should be avoided by checking with, for example, the Greek original. Thus (p. ix), "I will denounce the appearances of the gods" would have been recognized as "I shall reveal the forms of the gods"; and quotations from Scholem's classic (see above) would not be offered us (pp. 177, 290) in approximate retranlations from their French translation but in their original English.

NOTES

1. Jean Doresse, *The Secret Books of the Egyptian Gnostics: An Introduction to the Gnostic Coptic Manuscripts Discovered at Chenoboskion* (New York: Viking Press, 1960).

2. One writing occurs twice and one three times in the collection.

3. *Evangelium Veritatis*, ed. M. Malinine, H.-Ch. Puech, and G. Quispel (Zurich, 1956); *Supplementum*, ed. M. Malinine, H.-Ch. Puech, G. Quispel, and W. Till (Zurich, 1961). *The Gospel According to Thomas*, ed. A. Guillaumont, H.-Ch. Puech, G. Quispel, W. Till, and Y. 'Abd al-Masih (Leiden, 1959).

4. *The Hypostasis of the Archons, the Gospel According to Philip*, and an untitled cosmogony (No. 40 of the collection by Doresse's counting, No. 14 by Puech's)—all three translated into German by H.-M. Schenke in *Theologische Literaturzeitung*, LXXXIII (1958), 10, cols. 661-70; LXXXIV (1959), 1, cols. 1-26; *ibid.*, No. 4, cols. 243-56. These translations were made from a photographic reproduction of the texts in Pahor Labib, *Coptic Gnostic Papyri in the Coptic Museum at Old Cairo*, Vol. I (Cairo, 1956) (the beginning of a planned, provisional publication of all the manuscripts). For the missing title of the cosmogony (No. 40), Schenke proposes "Discourse on the Origin of the World," which we shall here adopt—for short: *Origin of the World*.

5. *The Sophia of Jesus* (No. 4) and *The Secret Book of John* (Nos. 1, 6, and 36, the last two being longer versions).

6. W. Till, *Die gnostischen Schriften des koptischen Papyrus Berolinensis 8502* (Berlin, 1955). The codex will be quoted as BG.

7. These sometimes show in the book with asperity, as on pp. xiv-xv, 122, 125, 127 (n. 17), and 263 (n. 19). One hears that matters have since gone from bad to worse and in a direction which not even the studious homage paid to Puech in this volume was able to prevent. In fairness to the sorely embattled scholar, the out-

sider may observe that publication eleven years after the first discovery does not betray indecent haste (the French original of this book came out in 1958).

8. One codex found its way illegally to Europe and was acquired by the Jung Institute in Zurich.

9. With respect to the three writings translated by H.-M. Schenke (see above, n. 4), obsolescence has already overtaken the book in the two years that elapsed between the publications of the French original and the English version. It is a pity that the author has taken no account of the changed situation in the preparation of the present volume.

10. We now know from Schenke's translations that the address occurs not only in this work, viz., the *Origin of the World* (151:17 f.), but repeatedly also in its close relative, the preceding No. 39, *Hypostasis of the Archons* (134:27-135:4; 142:25 f.).

11. Indeed, the very description of the archons in the *Hypostasis* begins thus: "Their lord is blind. Because of his power, ignorance, and conceit, he says in the midst of his creation 'I am God . . .'" (134:27-31; cf. also *Sophia of Jesus*, BG 126:1-3).

12. E.g., *Praem. et poen.* 44, *de Abr.* 57, *fug. et invent.* 208, *de ebr.* 82, *de somn.* i. 129.

13. Cf. H. Jonas, *Gnosis und spätantiker Geist*, II, Part I, 94 ff.

14. From the Zuqnin monastery near Amida, finished about A.D. 774; quoted in U. Monneret de Villard, *Le leggende orientali sui Magi evangelici*, pp. 27-28.

15. I include in these the writings of the Berlin Papyrus, the publication of which at long last, in 1955, was indeed prompted by the Nag Hamadi discovery.

16. It is, of course, perfectly possible that the collection was that of a wealthy individual, but he too must have belonged to some kind of group, whatever its form of coherence.

17. E.g., the *Apocr. John* is Barbelognostic; the *Gospel of Truth*, *Discourse to Reginos*, and *Gospel of Philip* are Valentinian, etc.

18. How with this observation we are to reconcile the curious statement (p. 252) "that we have [in this collection] nearly all the literature that the ancient enemies of the Gnostics had heard of" I cannot guess. As for the "great teachers," they are, though indeed not named, perhaps not wholly absent: for the *Gospel of Truth*, perhaps also the *Discourse to Reginos*, a case can be made that they are by Valentinus; the untitled fourth writing of the Jung Codex (No. 48) may be traceable to Heracleon; and Doresse himself tries (in Appendix I) to identify Simon Magus in Nos. 22 and 34 (not convincing to me). Incidentally, could it be that the otherwise unknown PHOSILAMPES quoted in the untitled work of the Bruce Codex (Doresse, p. 83) hides BASILEIDES? The content of the quotation is compatible with the guess.

19. Also in Berlin Coptic Papyrus No. 8502.

20. E.g., in Nos. 2 and 7, "I am a jealous God and there is no other beside me"; identical in Nos. 1, 6, 36 (*Apocr. John*), where the exclamation is neatly turned into proof of his awareness "that there is another God: for if there were none, of whom should he be jealous?" (BG 44:14-18).

21. It is not, however, confined to that type; in the *Paraphrase of Shem* (No. 27) the trait appears in a context which the doctrine of "three roots" puts squarely within the Iranian type. Doresse's summary does not show how in this case the demiurge (as also Sophia) originated. But from some other instances it appears that Ialdabaoth could also be conceived as a wholly evil power rather than the son of the fallen Sophia. Mythographically, the figure is indeed independent of the latter and became secondarily combined with her.

22. Nos. 2 = 7 (p. 178); *Origin of the World*, 151:19 f.: "an immortal Man of Light"; *Apocr. John*, in all versions; there apparently as a voice coming to Sophia herself from above but also heard by Ialdabaoth.

23. Cf., e.g., *Iren.* i. 12. 4 for one branch of the Valentinians; they say that "Man" is the name of the Forebeginning, the Pre- and Unthinkable; and this is the great and hidden mystery that the name of the power that is above all things, the forebeginning of everything, is 'Man'; cf. *ibid.* 30. 1 for the Ophites: the primal light in the Abyss, blessed, eternal, and infinite, is "the Father of all, and his name is First Man"; cf. also the Naassenes and the Arab Monoimus in Hippolytus' report, *Refut.* v. 7; viii. 12. Of the new sources, the *Apocr. John* and the *Origin of the World*, both Barbelognostic, seem to accord to "Man" the same supreme position.

24. Cf. also No. 26, *Gospel of Philip* 102:29-30:

"They [the Archons] wanted to take the free one and make him their slave in eternity."

25. The first in spite of the name Achamoth (Hebrew *chokma*): a pagan female deity, as Bousset has shown, provided the mythological substratum for the figure.

26. In the Chenoboskion collection so far visible in the following writings: *Hypostasis of the Archons*; *Origin of the World*; *Sophia of Jesus*; *Apocr. John*.

27. *Origin of the World* 145:24-146:7.

28. "Our sister Sophia . . . conceived a thought from herself . . . she willed to let a copy appear out of herself . . . her work came forth, imperfect and ugly (Ialdabaoth), because she had made it without her consort" (R. M. Grant, *Gnosticism, a Sourcebook* [New York, 1961], pp. 74-75; BG 36:16-37:16).

29. "Without a male partner" (Doresse, p. 200: cf. Till, p. 277, note to BG 118:3-7).

30. Perceiving that the Father alone generates out of himself, whereas all the begotten aeons generate by pairing, Sophia wants to emulate him and also to generate out of herself without consort, so that she might not fall short of the Father's achievement. She failed to perceive that this is the power solely of the Unbegotten One, and so she managed only to bring forth a formless entity (*Refut.* vi. 30. 6).

31. Cf. also the eschatological speculation on the "renting of the curtain" in No. 26, *Gospel of Philip* 132:22 ff. (cf. 117:35 ff.).

32. E.g., Hippol. vi. 31. 6, "that nothing of the deficiency might come near the Aeons within the Pleroma."

33. "The Anguish condensed like a fog, so that no one could see. Because of this, Error gained strength and set to work upon her own matter in the void" (17:11-16).

34. See above and 24:22 ff. The world is the "shape" (*schema*) of the "deficiency" [thus "deficiency" its matter], and "deficiency" arose because of the primordial Ignorance of the Father.

35. "She saw the wickedness and the apostasy which clung to her son. She repented, and while she went to and fro in the darkness of her ignorance, she began to be ashamed . . . and grieved exceedingly" (Grant, *op. cit.*, p. 77: BG 45:11-46:15).

36. The begetting of the demiurge through a reflection upon the waters of the Abyss is a well-established Mandaean topic (see Jonas, *The Gnostic Religion* [Boston, 1958], p. 164, n. 16); cf. the general remarks on the motif of the mirror image, *ibid.*, pp. 62 ff.

37. In our collection fully present in No. 38, *Gospel of Philip* 108:10-15: "Another is Ekhamoth, and another is Ekhamoth. Ekhamoth is the Sophia simply (*απλῶς*), but Ekhamoth is the Sophia of Death . . . who is called 'the little Sophia.'" The *Gospel of Philip* is by all accounts a Valentinian composition.