

The Gnostic *Coptic Apocalypse of Paul*: A Powerful Gnostic Witness

Steven A. Armstrong, MA, MAHum, MDiv, FRC

[Go directly to the text of the paper](#)

Abstract

The Gnostic *Coptic Apocalypse of Paul* is a relatively brief work from the Nag Hammadi Library whose text, especially at its opening, is quite corrupt. Although foundational work on the text was done in the late twentieth century in the years since its publication in 1963, the *Coptic Apocalypse of Paul* has only begun to attract increased scholarly attention in the early twenty-first century. This paper deals with the major issues concerning the text, its state, content, and background, and introduces readers to this Gnostic text of the mid-to-late second century. Its “Gnostic” lineage is arguably Valentinian and Marcosian. The major thrust of the work is to exalt Paul and his mission above the preaching and authority of the other Apostles, even so far as to make Paul a type of the Perfect Aeon, as Christ himself was. Its interpretation of the key Scripture passages uses a “Gnostic” allegorical hermeneutic. The author has used and reworked several motifs to fit them to the purpose of the work: a heavenly journey of the soul, judgment, and interrogation of the soul. It is clear, concise, and powerful. The author has pared down the mythological elements to the minimum and used canonical quotations and allusions subtly but effectively. In many ways, this work is arguably one of the most unified of the Nag Hammadi Library, and the most lucid.

L’Apocalypse Gnostique Copte de Paul : un Témoignage Gnostique Puissant

Steven A. Armstrong, MA, MAHum, MDiv, FRC

Résumé

L’Apocalypse gnostique copte de Paul est un ouvrage relativement bref, conservé à la bibliothèque de Nag Hammadi, dont le texte, notamment dans ses premières pages, est très abimé. Bien qu’un travail fondamental sur ce texte ait été effectué à la fin du XXe siècle, dans les années successives à sa publication en 1963, l’Apocalypse de Paul s’est vu porter une attention scientifique accrue seulement au début du XXIe siècle. Cet article traite les grandes questions concernant ce texte, son état, son contenu et son contexte historique ; il présente aux lecteurs un texte gnostique daté du milieu - fin du deuxième siècle. Sa lignée « Gnostique » est probablement Valentinienne et Marcosienne. L’axe majeur de l’ouvrage est d’exalter Paul et sa mission, le situant au-dessus de la prédication et de l’autorité des autres Apôtres, allant même jusqu’à déclarer Paul un Éon Parfait comme le Christ lui-même. Son interprétation de passages-clés des Écritures Saintes utilise un gnosticisme allégorique herméneutique. L’auteur a utilisé et façonné plusieurs motifs afin de les adapter à l’objectif de l’ouvrage : un voyage céleste de l’âme, son jugement et son questionnement. Le tout est clair, concis et puissant. L’auteur a réduit les éléments mythologiques au strict minimum, et a fait usage de citations et allusions canoniques subtilement, mais efficacement. À bien des égards, ce travail est sans doute l’un des plus unifiés de la bibliothèque de Nag Hammadi, et sans doute le plus lucide.

La Gnosis del Apocalipsis Copto de Pedro: Un Poderoso Testigo Gnóstico **Steven A. Armstrong, MA, MAHum, MDiv, FRC**

Resumen

La Gnosis del Apocalipsis Copto de Pedro es un trabajo relativamente breve de la biblioteca Nag Hammadi cuyo texto, especialmente en su comienzo es bastante corrupto. A pesar de que se trabajó en las bases del texto en los últimos años del siglo veinte desde su publicación en 1963, El Apocalipsis de Pedro comenzó a aumentar la atracción de académicos a principio del siglo veintiuno. Este artículo trata los grandes problemas concernientes al texto, su estado, contenido y antecedentes, e introduce a los lectores a este texto Gnóstico de mediados a final del siglo dos. Su linaje Gnóstico es posiblemente Valentiniano y Marcosiano. El mayor impulso del trabajo es resaltar a Pedro y su misión por encima de predicar y autoridad de los otros Apóstoles, hasta el punto de hacer a Pedro una clase del Perfecto Eón como lo fue el mismo Cristo. Su interpretación de pasajes claves de las Escrituras usan un hermenéutico alegórico “Gnóstico”. El autor ha usado y recreado varios motivos aptos para el propósito de la obra: un viaje celestial del alma, un juicio e interrogación del alma. Es claro, conciso y poderoso. El autor ha reducido los elementos mitológicos al mínimo, y uso citas canónicas y alusiones sublimes pero efectivas. En muchas formas, este trabajo es probablemente uno de los mas unificados de la biblioteca Nag Hammadi y el más claro.

O Apocalipse Copta Gnóstico de Paulo: Uma Poderosa Testemunha Gnóstica

Steven A. Armstrong, MA, MAHum, MDiv, FRC

Sumário

O Apocalipse Copta Gnóstico de Paulo é um trabalho relativamente breve da Biblioteca de Nag Hammadi, cujo texto, especialmente na sua abertura, está bastante corrupto. Embora o trabalho fundamental no texto tenha sido feito no final do século XX, nos anos que se seguiram à sua publicação em 1963, O Apocalipse de Paulo apenas começou a atrair mais atenção acadêmica no início do século XXI. Este artigo trata das questões principais relativas ao texto, seu estado, conteúdo e antecedentes, e introduz os leitores a este texto gnóstico do meio do século II. Sua linhagem "gnóstica" é indiscutivelmente Valentiniana e Marcosiana. O principal objetivo da obra é exaltar Paulo e sua missão acima da pregação e autoridade dos outros Apóstolos, até mesmo para tornar Paulo um tipo de Aeon Perfeito, como o próprio Cristo era. Sua interpretação das principais passagens das Escrituras usa uma hermenêutica alegórica “gnóstica”. O autor usou e reformulou vários motivos para ajustá-los ao propósito do trabalho: uma jornada celestial da alma, julgamento e interrogação da alma. É claro, conciso e poderoso. O autor reduziu ao mínimo os elementos mitológicos e usou citações e alusões canônicas de maneira sutil, mas efetiva. De muitas maneiras, este trabalho é sem dúvida um dos mais unificados da Biblioteca de Nag Hammadi e o mais lúcido.

Die Gnostische Koptische Apokalypse von Paulus: ein Kraftvolles Gnostisches Zeugnis

Steven A. Armstrong, FRC, M.A., M.A. Hum., M.Div.

Zusammenfassung

Die gnostische koptische Apokalypse von Paulus ist ein relative kurzer Text aus der Nag Hammadi Bibliothek. Das Manuskript ist insbesondere am Anfang durchaus beschädigt und wurde erst in 1963 veröffentlicht. Im späteren 20. Jh. wurde ihr Text zwar grundlegend bearbeitet, dennoch hat die Apokalypse von Paulus frühestens Beginn des 21. Jh die Aufmerksamkeit der Wissenschaft erregt. Diese Abhandlung beschäftigt sich mit wichtigen Fragen bezüglich der Texte, des Zustands, des Inhalts und der Hintergründe; darüber hinaus führt sie den Leser in diesen gnostischen Text von Mitte bis Ende des zweiten Jahrhunderts. Sein „gnostischer“ Ursprung kann wohl Valentinianisch und Markionisch sein. Das Hauptanliegen des Schriftstücks besteht darin, Paulus zu verherrlichen und seine Mission über die Predigte und über die Autorität der anderen Apostel zu stellen, sogar darüber hinaus Paulus als eine Art vollkommener Aeon, wie Christus es selbst war, darzustellen. Die Interpretation der Schlüsselpassagen bedient sich der gnostischen allegorischen Hermeneutik. Der Verfasser setzte verschiedene Themen ein und überarbeitete sie zweckmäßig: der Besuch der Seele im Paradies, das Urteil, und die Befragung der Seele. Es ist klar, prägnant und kraftvoll. Der Verfasser hat die mythologischen Elemente minimal eingesetzt, er benutzt geschickt aber gekonnt kanonische Zitate und Hinweise. Diese Arbeit vereinigt wohl in vielerlei Hinsicht die Nag Hammadi Schriften und ist äußerst einleuchtend.

The Gnostic *Coptic Apocalypse of Paul*: A Powerful Gnostic Witness

Introduction

The Gnostic *Coptic Apocalypse of Paul* (CG V,2; 17:19-24:9) is a relatively brief work whose text, especially at its opening, is quite corrupt.¹

In the years of the twentieth century since its publication in 1963², the *Coptic Apocalypse of Paul* attracted little scholarly attention, generating only one dissertation and fewer than a dozen articles.³ Interest has grown considerably in the early decades of the current century, and there is now a flowering of scholarship on the work.⁴

A Note on the Use of the Term “Gnostic”

Modern scholarship has challenged the use of the term Gnostic.⁵ In broad terms, those who use the term Gnostic for the Valentinian, Sethian, and other such Christian schools, usually point to the primal importance of inner knowledge in these movements which allows the individual to bypass the evil or befuddled Demiurge who created this world (sometimes identified with the Divinity of the Hebrew Scriptures) to return to the true Divinity (identified with the Divinity revealed in the New Testament).

These “Gnostics” do not seem to have used this term for themselves, as if they were a united religious movement – which they were not. Both Michael Allen Williams’s *Rethinking Gnosticism* and Karen L. King’s *What is Gnosticism?* provide a healthy critique of the use of the term.⁶ Nevertheless, in a brief study such as the present work, it provides a helpful shortcut, and the term has not been abandoned by scholarship at large.

It also allows for the connection with the post-Antiquity descendants of the “Gnostics,” such as the Paulicians in Armenia and the Eastern themes of the Roman Empire (650-872); the Bogomils, beginning in Bulgaria in the tenth century; and the Cathars in Northern Italy and in the Languedoc in the South of France between the twelfth and fourteenth centuries.⁷

From internal evidence, it would appear that the Gnostic *Coptic Apocalypse of Paul* within Gnostic circles has Valentinian tendencies,⁸ as well as those from its variation, Marcosianism. Marcos adapted Valentinianism and added to it Pythagorean number theory—Isopsephy, related to Gematria.⁹

The Context of the Terms “Orthodox” and “Catholic”

In the present work, the terms Orthodox and Catholic are used to designate the “Institutionalizing vector” of some parts of the early Christian Community, not so much their descendants who use these terms today.

Christianity in its origins was extremely diverse and in many ways has remained so. The full history of this is for another time and place.

For the purposes of this work, this paper uses the terms “Catholic,” from the Greek καθολικός (*Katholikós*), meaning “complete, having everything [sc. necessary for Salvation],” and “Orthodox,” from the Greek ὀρθόδοξος (*orthodoxos*), meaning “Correct belief/worship” for the groups of Christians that we would think of as “mainstream,” from the vantage point of the twenty-first century. In their ancient context, however, it was not clear at all which versions of the Christian message would dominate in the end.

As these groups represented a large segment of the early Christian population, it was important for other groups, such as the Valentinian Gnostics, to create literature which would appeal to Catholic and Orthodox Christians. The Gnostic *Coptic Apocalypse of Paul* is one of the most well-crafted examples of this literature.

Sadly, subsequent history proves that the “Gnostics” badly needed such protective coloration. Freedom of religion did not exist in the Christian Roman Empire, and non-conforming groups often felt the wrath of the State Church after the fourth century.¹⁰ The persecution of the Gnostics pursued them across continents and centuries, culminating in the thirteenth century Albigensian Crusade against the French Cathars by the forces of the French King and the Roman Pope. Although the Cathars lived in the Languedoc of Southern France where toleration was practiced, outside forces destroyed this state of affairs.¹¹

Date and Structure

Although the date of the *Coptic Apocalypse of Paul* cannot be fixed with certainty, four data point to an early composition.¹²

- First, St. Irenaeus knew of a Valentinian tradition which interpreted II Cor 12:2-4 as a Gnostic *extasis*.¹³
- Second, the Valentinian tendency to exalt Paul over the other apostles (Paulinism), especially over Peter, comes from the second century.¹⁴
- Third, its non-mythological content may be for purposes of proselytizing, or at least making Valentinian gnosis acceptable to Orthodox and Catholic Christians, contemporary with *The Letter of Ptolemy to Flora*.
- Fourth, the seeming anti-Jewish bias of “The Seventh Heaven” episode, while not specifying a time, is consistent with an early date.

All this seems to point to an approximate date of 150-170, in the mid to late second century or perhaps third century.

Even with the corruption in the first pages, the overall structure of the *Coptic Apocalypse of Paul* is clear and straightforward:¹⁵

I. 18:3-19:18 AN EPIPHANY

A. 18:3-13a Paul encounters the little child

B. 18:13b-19:7 First Revelatory Discourse

1. 18:13b-23a Material about Paul

2. 18:23b-19:7 A Cosmogonic /Anthropogonic myth

C. 19:8-18 Second Revelatory Discourse

1. 19:10-14 Imperative (exhortation)

2. 19:15-18a Indicative description

II. 19:18b-21:22a A SCENE OF JUDGEMENT AND PUNISHMENT

A. 19:18b-20:5a First greeting & rise to Fourth Heaven

B. 20:5b-21:22a The Fourth Heaven

1. 20:5b-25 A Soul is brought to Judgment

2. 20:25-21:14 The three witnesses/tempters

3. 21:14-22a The soul's punishment: Reincarnation

III. 21:22b-24:8 A HEAVENLY JOURNEY

A. 21:22b-22:12 The Fifth Heaven (judgment)

B. 22:13-23a The Sixth Heaven

C. 22:23b-23:28 The Seventh Heaven (the Old Man)

1. 22:23b-30 The Old Man described

2. 23:1-28 Question dialogue

D. 23:29-24:8 The Ogdoad, Ninth and Tenth Heavens

The structure itself is interesting in a number of ways. This is not an “Ascension” in the common meaning of the term.¹⁶ It is a revelatory and mystical experience, with three major goals.

First, it exalts Paul and argues for his very high place in the cosmic order.¹⁷ Second, the Judgment Scenes (III.A is a transitional judgment scene) explore the problem caused by the cosmo-anthropogenesis theory of I.B.2.¹⁸ Finally, it seeks to make Valentinian Gnosticism acceptable to the Orthodox and Catholic Christian communities, with its comparative lack of mythic descriptions.

How this seeming interruption in the upward journey functions will be the subject of its own investigation below.

There are other extra-canonical works about Paul known in antiquity, notably a Greek *Apocalypse of Paul* which is not connected to our Apocalypse. Epiphanius mentions an Ascension of Paul¹⁹ which deals with Paul's vision, but apparently he only went to the third heaven, while our present text begins in the fourth.²⁰

Canonical Referents

The most obvious Canonical material behind The *Coptic Apocalypse of Paul* is II Cor 12:1-4:

12 Καυχᾶσθαι δεῖ· οὐ συμφέρον μὲν, ἐλεύσομαι δὲ εἰς ὄπτασίας καὶ ἀποκαλύψεις κυρίου.² οἶδα ἄνθρωπον ἐν Χριστῷ πρὸ ἐτῶν δεκατεσσάρων— εἴτε ἐν σώματι οὐκ οἶδα, εἴτε ἐκτὸς τοῦ σώματος οὐκ οἶδα, ὁ θεὸς οἶδεν— ἀρπαγέντα τὸν τοιοῦτον ἕως τρίτου οὐρανοῦ.³ καὶ οἶδα τὸν τοιοῦτον ἄνθρωπον— εἴτε ἐν σώματι εἴτε χωρὶς τοῦ σώματος οὐκ οἶδα, ὁ θεὸς οἶδεν—⁴ ὅτι ἤρπάγη εἰς τὸν παράδεισον καὶ ἤκουσεν ἄρρητα ῥήματα ἃ οὐκ ἐξὸν ἀνθρώπῳ λαλῆσαι.

12 I must boast; there is nothing to be gained by it, but I will go on to visions and revelations of the Lord.² I know a person in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows.³ And I know that this person was caught up into Paradise—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows—⁴ and he heard things that cannot be told, which man may not utter.

However, further Pauline texts provide a richer context, and have parallels (||) in our *Coptic Apocalypse of Paul*. The key passages (besides II Cor 12:1-4, which provides the context for the entire Apocalypse) seem to be Gal 1:15-16 (|| 18:16-17 & 23:3-4); 2:1-2 (|| 18:5);

¹⁵ ὅτε δὲ εὐδόκησεν ὁ ἀφορίσας με ἐκ κοιλίας μητρός μου καὶ καλέσας διὰ τῆς χάριτος αὐτοῦ ¹⁶ ἀποκαλύψαι τὸν υἱὸν αὐτοῦ ἐν ἐμοὶ ἵνα εὐαγγελίζωμαι αὐτὸν ἐν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν, εὐθέως οὐ προσανεθέμην σαρκὶ καὶ αἵματι,

2 Ἐπειτα διὰ δεκατεσσάρων ἐτῶν πάλιν ἀνέβην εἰς Ἱεροσόλυμα μετὰ Βαρναβᾶ συμπαραλαβὼν καὶ Τίτον· ² ἀνέβην δὲ κατὰ ἀποκάλυψιν· καὶ ἀνεθέμην αὐτοῖς τὸ

εὐαγγέλιον ὃ κηρύσσω ἐν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν, κατ' ἰδίαν δὲ τοῖς δοκοῦσιν, μή πως εἰς κενὸν τρέχω ἢ ἔδραμον.

¹⁵ But when he who had set me apart before I was born, and had called me through his grace, ¹⁶ was pleased to reveal his Son to me, in order that I might preach him among the Gentiles, I did not confer with flesh and blood,

2 Then after fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus along with me. ² I went up by revelation; and I laid before them (but privately before those who were of repute) the gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, lest somehow I should be running or had run in vain.

II Cor 3:17 (|| 19:21)

¹⁷ ὁ δὲ κύριος τὸ πνεῦμά ἐστιν· οὗ δὲ τὸ πνεῦμα κυρίου, ἐλευθερία.

¹⁷ Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.

Eph 4:8-9 (|| 23:13-17).²¹

⁸ διὸ λέγει· Ἀναβὰς εἰς ὕψος ἠχμαλώτευσεν αἰχμαλωσίαν, ἔδωκεν δόματα τοῖς ἀνθρώποις. ⁹ τὸ δὲ Ἀνέβη τί ἐστιν εἰ μὴ ὅτι καὶ κατέβη εἰς τὰ κατώτερα μέρη τῆς γῆς;

⁸ Therefore it is said, “When he ascended on high he made captivity itself a captive; he gave gifts to his people.” ⁹ When it says, “He ascended,” what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower parts of the earth?

The picture that is drawn from these canonical passages is of Paul the seer, the one who has had an ecstatic experience, and returns with this gnosis. The correspondence between the "fourteen years" of II Cor 12:2 and Gal 2:1 cannot have escaped the Gnostic author's notice.

Further, the journey to Jerusalem is assigned “by revelation” (Gal 2:2). The Galatians passage continues (2:11-14 ff) as Paul confronts Peter over the latter's confused policy about the gentiles, and thus asserts his superiority (in the eyes of a Gnostic, already influenced by Valentinian leanings).

With II Cor 12:1-4 and Gal 2:1-2, 11-14 as a base, it is fairly easy to place the other references into context. Since Paul was granted this gnosis, he must be one of the *pneumatikoi* (spiritual people) to be able to receive it (Gal 1:15-16). His stature is raised much higher by the parallel to Eph 4:8-9. Paul is clearly speaking of Christ in his Epistle according to Orthodox exegesis, while the Gnostic author attributes these same salvific actions to Paul.

Finally, the Lord who speaks to the *pneumatikos* (Spiritual Person) must be the *Pneuma* (Spirit) itself, and so the Gnostic author is most happy to find Paul in seeming agreement in II Cor 3:17.

Therefore, the author of the *Coptic Apocalypse of Paul* has taken several Pauline statements out of the ordinarily assumed Orthodox context of the broader corpus of Paul's letters, and purports to reveal what happened during the *extasis*. This sort of scriptural "expansion" is not uncommon in Gnostic (especially apocalyptic) literature, and the Gnostic *Coptic Apocalypse of Paul* is a particularly succinct and clear example of the genre. It remains to examine the text itself for its doctrine and worldview.

Exegesis

In this section, we will consider the major points of exegesis; a line-by-line exegesis would be far too long for the present endeavor. The particular issues of greatest interest will be a) specifically Gnostic doctrines, and b) points of contact with canonical scripture and other contemporary writings and doctrines.

I.A. Paul encounters the little child (18:3-13a).

And he spoke to him, saying, "By which road shall I go up to Jerusalem?" The little child replied, saying, "Say your name, so that I may show you the road". The little child knew who Paul was. He wished to make conversation with him through his words in order that he might find an excuse for speaking with him.²²

The first lines of this section (17:20-18:2 [up to five lines]) are missing, and the remaining text has required quite a bit of emendation.

The city in 18:5 may be Je[rusalem] or Je[richo].²³ If it is Jerusalem, Paul may be seeking the earthly city, as in Gal 2:1. This would fit with 19:10, where the revealer points out that Paul is in Jericho at the moment. On the spiritual level, Jericho often represents this world, and Jerusalem the heavenly realm.²⁴

If the text has Jericho, Paul may be travelling from the "mountain" itself into the city, or may be in need of redirection by his interlocutor. He would be "heading toward earthly things" instead of heavenly.

I.B.1 Material about Paul (18:13b-23a).

The little child spoke, saying, "I know who you are, Paul. You are he who was blessed from his mother's womb. For I have come to you that you may go up to Jerusalem to your fellow apostles. And for this reason you were called. And I am the Spirit who accompanies you."²⁵

The identity of the little child who speaks with Paul is not entirely clear. Although he asks Paul's name, it is clear that this is a ruse: "he wished to make conversation..." (18:10-11). He identifies himself as "the Spirit who accompanies you" (18:21-22). This is an accurate description of what he does throughout the rest of the *Coptic Apocalypse of Paul*, if this is the same Spirit (19:21, 26; 20:4; 21:24; 22:1, 11, 22; 23:5, 23).

Three possibilities arise:

- 1) He is Paul's own perfect self;
- 2) He is a guiding/guardian spirit;
- 3) He is the risen Christ.

We can probably eliminate the direct reference to the Holy Spirit of the Trinity, since a clear understanding of Trinitarian theology was still very much in evolution in the second century CE. However, given a Gnostic diffusion of divinity among so many entities, he could well be thought of as “divine.”

1) Children were sometimes seen as images of the perfect Gnostic.²⁶ They were not yet sexually differentiated, and acted without shame.²⁷ Together with the Gospel scene (Mt 18:3-4), these instances elevate the status of children. Could this child be Paul’s own gnostically perfected self?²⁸

However attractive this thesis might be, the evidence of the rest of the *Coptic Apocalypse of Paul* argues against it. Paul and the guiding spirit are clearly distinct in their actions, and it would be very difficult to identify the two of them.²⁹ Thus the first possibility must be eliminated.

2) If the child is an “escorting spirit,” the general tradition would support this compromise position. Most, if not all, apocalyptic literature guides the seer by means of a revealing angel of some sort. If all else fails, this possibility stands *prima facie*.³⁰

3) Instances of the Risen Christ as a little child are comparatively rare. Hippolytus reports an identification of a newborn child with the Logos,³¹ while the *Apocryphon of John* gives us three ages of the Logos.³² However, Murdock holds out for such an identification, arguing from the child's knowledge of Paul's name and “calling” of Paul, parallel to the election of the Apostle in Gal 1:11-17.³³ If this is correct, it heightens the drama of the escape scene in 23:23-28 (the Seventh Heaven), in which the guiding Spirit shows Paul how to escape the Old Man (identified with the God of the Old Testament/Hebrew Scriptures), and confirms the opposition between the Testaments held by the Gnostics.

Although both 2) and 3) are possibilities, the compromise choice (2) seems safer, until more conclusive evidence comes to light.

It is interesting to remark, in concluding this section, that the “reason” Paul “was called” (18:20) was so that he might go to Jerusalem to meet his fellow Apostles. This is not the same answer he gives in 23:13-17, where he has a much more exalted mission, as we will see below. The author will allegorize the earthly mission in order to conform it to his design.

I.B.2. A Cosmo-Anthropogonic myth (18:23b-19:7).

Let your mind awaken, Paul, with [...]. For [...] whole which [...] among the principalities and these authorities and archangels and powers and the whole race of demons, [...] the one that reveals bodies to a soul-seed."³⁴

With at least six lines missing from this section, we have to rely on the key extant words (19:2-5): authorities (*exousia*), archangels, powers, race of demons (*genos daimon*) and perhaps *arche*. These terms certainly recall the extensive mythological materials of other Nag Hammadi texts. In a work otherwise lacking a great deal of cosmogony, it would not be unusual to find some reference to the Gnostic worldview, couched in terms that Orthodox and Catholic Christians would find acceptable. Murdock, et. al. seem justified in their conjecture.³⁵

The further addition of what seems to be an anthropogenesis myth follows naturally. The divine spark in human beings was lured into flesh by the "one that reveals bodies to a soul-seed" (19:6-7), according to Murdock's translation. Kasser ("celui qui devoile des corps, pour une graine d'ame") and Etcheverria ("la que descubre cuerpos en que sembrar almas") are in substantial agreement with this reading.

What is remarkable in both instances is not the presence of such mythological material, but its relative absence and restraint. Even the names Sophia (Wisdom) and the Pleroma (the Fullness) are missing from the entire text (unless they have been lost in the missing lines). The argument is thus strengthened that this is a document designed to make "Gnosticism" acceptable to the emerging Orthodox and Catholic populations of Christians, along the lines of *The Letter of Ptolemy to Flora*.³⁶

Etcheverria, using the common Gnostic triad of *hylikoi*, *psychikoi*, and *pneumatikoi* (fleshly people, those on the level of the soul, and the spiritual persons), suggests that it is the middle group, the *psychikoi*, who are those mentioned in 19:7. They are the battleground. Paul (a *pneumatikos*), witnesses the trial of a *psychikos* in section II. The *psychikoi* are the ones primarily subject to judgment, while the other two are destined for the Pleroma (*pneumatikoi*) or annihilation (*hylikoi*).³⁷ The *psychikoi* are poised in the balance, and are subject to the temptations of the "whole race of demons" (19:5).

I.C. Second Revelatory Discourse (19:8-18).

And after he brought that speech to an end, he spoke, saying to me, "Let your mind awaken, Paul, and see that this mountain upon which you are standing is the mountain of Jericho, so that you may know the hidden things in those that are visible. Now it is to the twelve apostles that you shall go, for they are elect spirits, and they will greet you." He raised his eyes and saw them greeting him.³⁸

As the second discourse begins, the child again exhorts Paul (as he did in 18:22) with the characteristic Gnostic exclamation: "Let your *nous* awaken" (19:10). *νοῦς* or *νόος*—*nous* or *noos* in Ancient Greek has many meanings which would have carried over to Coptic:

- mind
 - perception, sense
 - mind as used in feeling, the heart, soul
 - the mind as used in resolving and purposing, will

- an act of mind
- thought
- purpose, design
- the sense or meaning of a word
- (in Attic philosophy) intelligenece, intellect, reason
- (as name by Anaxagoras) the principle which acts on elementary particules of matter ³⁹

This time, however, the text is intact, and we see a particularly clear call to “know the hidden things in those that are visible” (19:13-14), something that is without a doubt a typical Gnostic goal. The first object of this knowledge is the location of the vision itself: the mountain of Jericho. As we have seen before, Jericho may stand for earthly things, but the fact of a mountaintop as locus for a Revelation or Teaching is almost universal, and could be so here.³⁹ Physically, of course, the height of a mountain affords a much clearer view, and one that allows the seer to observe patterns that he would have missed if he had remained enmeshed in the activity of the world below. The analogy is easily transferred to spiritual realms.

Paul is called to understand his experiences according to the gnosis he will receive.⁴⁰ The "mountain of Jericho" unites two motifs:

1. Epiphany on a mountaintop.

2. A Journey (spatio-temporal and spiritual), which is necessary to join the Apostles in Jerusalem. This journey is “Revelation” itself (Gal 2:1-2). Michael Kaler suggests that the association of Jericho with blindness (Jesus’s healing of the blind in Jericho in Mk 10:46-52, Lk 18:35-43) is a reference to Paul’s spiritual blindness from which he is to emerge.⁴¹

In 2015, Dr. Matthew Twigg at Oxford has suggested another very interesting possibility that would turn this exegesis on its head (a very Gnostic thing to do).⁴²

Noting that there is no Mount of Jericho in reality (Jericho is the lowest city in the world at 846 ft [258 metres] below sea level in the Wadi Qelt in the Jordan Valley⁴³), he suggests that this is an elaborate metaphor created by the Gnostic author.

We know that Valentinian authors used the image of Jericho from the Parable of the Good Samaritan, as in the Gospel of Philip 78:7-9,⁴⁴ and so its association in the Valentinian Gnostic *Coptic Apocalypse of Paul* is not surprising.

Twigg reads a more powerful translation of the verb used, which has ordinarily been translated as “standing.” He translates it, with good justification, as “trampling,” as it is often used in Christian literature, both canonical and Manichaean, to indicate defeating the wicked.⁴⁵

With this, he suggests that:

1. The “Mountain of Jericho” references the parable of the Good Samaritan, going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, which for Valentinian Gnostics indicated involution from the spiritual to the material.
2. “Mountain” recalls Jn 4:20-24 when Jesus and the Samaritan Woman at the Well are discussing the old (carnal) worship on the mountain versus the spiritual worship in Jerusalem.
3. “Trampling” alludes to Lk 10:19 where the Disciples are able to defeat (trample) the devil using the Divine Name. This passage was used by Valentinians in their Baptismal Ritual.⁴⁷

Whichever of these fascinating exegeses is correct, we can affirm that the author unites Gal 1:15-16 (mystical election) and 2:1ff (revealed journey).⁴⁸

The child tells Paul that he will go to the Twelve Apostles and elect spirits who will greet him (19:15-18). They fulfill this role immediately (19:20) and travel with him throughout the *Coptic Apocalypse of Paul* (21:27; 22:14; 24:2). In the last of these (24:2), they again greet Paul in the Ogdoad, the very important eighth sphere of ancient cosmology, the sphere of the fixed stars, which was particularly assimilated into the Valentinian Gnosis.⁴⁹

Irenaeus reports Gnostic speculation that the Twelve Apostles were the Twelve Aeons:

“If again they maintain that the twelve apostles were a type only of that group of twelve Aeons which Anthropos in conjunction with Ecclesia produced...”⁵⁰

Perhaps the author blends their role as Aeons with Ophite teaching on escorting spirits.⁵¹

If the *Coptic Apocalypse of Paul* is an allegorical interpretation of Gal 2:1f, then the Apostles' greeting Paul again in the Ogdoad (24:2), i.e., the Heavenly Jerusalem,⁵² where he has gone up to meet them makes great sense. Paul then proceeds to transcend them by his greater gnosis and goes up to the ninth and tenth heavens, where he greets his real equals, the divine beings of the Pleroma,⁵³ the realm of Divine Fullness, where the first emanations of being are,⁵⁴ just as he “transcends” the teaching of the other Apostles in Gal 2:11f.

II.A. First greeting and rise to fourth heaven. (19:18b-20:5a)

Then the Holy Spirit who was speaking with him caught him up on high to the third heaven, and he passed beyond to the fourth heaven. The Holy Spirit spoke to him, saying, “Look and see your likeness upon the earth.” And he looked down and saw those who were upon the earth. He stared and saw those who were upon the [...]. Then he gazed down and saw the twelve apostles at his right and at his left in the creation; and the Spirit was going before them.

And the three witnesses came. The first spoke, saying, “Was I not in the body the second hour [...]? I rose up against you until you fell into anger and rage and envy.” And the second spoke, saying, “Was I not in the world? And I entered at the fifth hour, and I saw you and desired you. And behold, then, now I charge you with the murders you committed.” The third spoke, saying, “Did I not come to you at the twelfth hour of the day when the sun was about to set? I gave you darkness until you should accomplish your sins.” When the soul heard these things, it gazed downward in sorrow. And then it gazed upward. It was cast down. The soul that had been cast down went to a body which had been prepared for it. And behold, its witnesses were finished.⁵⁵

As Paul hears the greeting of the Twelve, he rises “out of himself” and looks back, under the direction of the Spirit, at himself, with the twelve “at his right and at his left in the creation” (20:3-4). The scene is unmistakably Christological (cf. Mt 16:27, 19:28, 25:31 etc.). It would seem that Paul is being portrayed as a type of the “perfect aeon” as was Jesus.⁵⁶

When this vision is coupled with Paul's superiority to the Apostles, and his remarkable response in the Seventh Heaven: “I am going down to the world of the dead in order to lead captive the captivity that was led captive in the captivity of Babylon” (23:13-17) [cf. Eph 4:8], it becomes clear that Paul is another type of Christ in the eyes of this Gnostic school. Such speculation may seem extreme today, but the exaltation of Paul was not at all unknown in antiquity,⁵⁷ based on II Cor 12:1-4 and I Cor 2:7, as well as the first two chapters of Galatians. Tertullian reports such teachings,⁵⁸ as does St. Irenaeus.⁵⁹

The revelation of Paul's exalted role in Gnostic salvation is one of the most important goals of the *Coptic Apocalypse of Paul*. This object is very cleverly managed, however, in that the author never directly downgrades Christ, nor means to: Paul is another manifestation of the perfect Aeon, not a rival. It is the teaching of the Apostles that the Gnostics are opposing. By extremely skillful and subtle paraphrases of canonical scriptures, the Valentinian author hopes to appeal to both Orthodox and Catholic Christians.

It should be noted as well that the narration switches abruptly from third person to first in 20:5. Whether this is an intentional shift or evidence of the composition of our text from separate sources, is a source of debate. Older commentaries (e.g. R. Kasser) considered this to be evidence of the composite nature of the text; however, more recent scholarship has largely disputed this.⁶⁰

II.B. The Fourth Heaven (20:5b-21:22a).

But I saw in the fourth heaven according to class - I saw the angels resembling gods, the angels bringing a soul out of the land of the dead. They placed it at the gate of the fourth heaven. And the angels were whipping it. The soul spoke, saying, "What sin was it that I committed in the world?" The toll-collector who dwells in the fourth heaven replied, saying, "It was not right to commit all those lawless deeds that are in the world of the dead". The soul replied, saying, "Bring witnesses! Let them show you in what body I committed lawless deeds. Do you wish to bring a book to read from?"⁶¹

This section is extraordinarily rich in detail and importance for historians of religion and exegetes, and for that very reason, we will be able to touch on only one or two points here: a full-fledged study of this section needs to be undertaken along the lines begun by W.R. Murdock, and G. MacRae,⁶² and now amplified by M. Keller and others.⁶³

1) As we have seen, Etcheverria considers the soul in judgment one of the *psychikoi*, capable of a partial salvation, but also quite susceptible to the lures of the demons.⁶⁴ This view is compatible with the text of II.B, since in this view of the cosmos, the psyche is, during the judgment, free of the body, but is reincarnated as a punishment. It seems to be a "spark of divinity" enmeshed in flesh, not a totally earthly creature (*hylikos*).

2) There are abundant parallels with judgment scenes in other ancient and extra-canonical sources. Among them are:

a) In the *Testament of Abraham* (10) and the *Visio Sancti Pauli* (17-18), at least five parallels are found in the Presentation of the Soul, the Indictment, the Book brought forward, Witnesses, and the Sentencing.⁶⁵

b) The change of place of judgment and punishment from beneath to above the earth can be traced through Egyptian, Iranian, Greek, and Jewish thought.⁶⁶

c) The punishing angels may have ties to the *Erinyes* of Greek myth. They use flails (*mastix*) [22:8], the common instruments of the Erinyes, to whip (*mastigoun*) [20:12] the soul. Further, in the following section, they rival (*erizein*) each other in whipping the souls.⁶⁷

Similar images may be found in *Pistis Sophia* (111), where *Erinaioi paralemptores* might be translated as "Erinyes receivers."⁶⁸

d) Most translate 20:24-25 as "[Do you wish] to bring a book [to read from?]" However, Kasser has "[il] vou[lait] produire un livre [qu'on avait mis sur] lui <comme vetement>"⁶⁹ (He wanted to produce a book which one could wear as a garment).

He argues that this is a reference to the "passport papyrus" in the Egyptian *Book of the Dead* which was laid on the chest of the departed as a protection. Valentinian Gnostics, along with Jews and Orthodox Christians, would abhor such a simplistic and materialistic means of salvation, and thus the *Coptic Apocalypse of Paul* shows it to be of no use. This argument is interesting, but a bit tortured, and it requires more than a conjectural reading for substantiation.⁷⁰

3) The three witnesses of II.B are not just witnesses, but tempters as well. Speaking to the accused soul, the first recalls that he "rose up against you until you fell into anger and rage and envy" (20:30-21:2); the second that he "saw you and desired you" (21:6-7); the third that he "gave you darkness until you should accomplish your sins" (21:13-14). These are not impartial witnesses.

Fallen angels were certainly known in Jewish apocalyptic literature,⁷¹ but they did not testify against souls:

"Indeed, the very fact that the spiritual beings who led the soul astray were allowed to appear at the judgment as witnesses against it signified that the judgment was now in the hands of the evil powers."⁷²

In this view, the whole process of tempting and judgment is fixed, and the cosmos is malign. The *psychikoi* who might have a chance are denied real justice. Murdock argues convincingly that the elements of dualism in Jewish apocalyptic and Greek thought are not continued here, but rather that the *Coptic Apocalypse of Paul* finds "a Gnostic solution of that dualism by collapsing it into a cosmic monism of evil."⁷³

As morbid as this picture seems,⁷⁴ it is an accurate rendition of the tone of the Apocalypse and of Valentinian thought. A Gnostic answer to this problem is found in the third section.

III. A Heavenly Journey (21:22b-24:8).

Then I gazed upward and saw the Spirit saying to me, "Paul, come! Proceed toward me!" Then as I went, the gate opened, and I went up to the fifth heaven. And I saw my fellow apostles going with me while the Spirit accompanied us. And I saw a great angel in the fifth heaven holding an iron rod in his hand. There were three other angels with him, and I stared into their faces. But they were rivalling each other, with whips in their hands, goading the souls on to the judgment. But I went with the Spirit and the gate opened for me.

Then we went up to the sixth heaven. And I saw my fellow apostles going with me, and the Holy Spirit was leading me before them. And I gazed up on high and saw a great light shining down on the sixth heaven. I spoke, saying to the toll-collector who was in the sixth heaven, "Open to me and the Holy Spirit who is before me." He opened to me.

Then we went up to the seventh heaven, and I saw an old man [...] light and whose garment was white. His throne, which is in the seventh heaven, was brighter than the sun by seven times. The old man spoke, saying to me, "Where are you going, Paul? O blessed one and the one who was set apart from his mother's womb." But I looked at the Spirit, and he was nodding his head, saying to me, "Speak with him!" And I replied, saying to the old man, "I am going to the place from which I came." And the old man responded to me, "Where are you from?" But I replied, saying, "I am going down to the world of the dead in order to lead captive the captivity that was led captive in the captivity of Babylon." The old man replied to me saying, "How will you be able to get away from me? Look and see the principalities and authorities." The Spirit spoke, saying, "Give him the sign that you have, and he will open for you." And then I gave him the sign. He turned his face downwards to his creation and to those who are his own authorities.

And then the [seventh] heaven opened and we went up to the Ogdoad. And I saw the twelve apostles. They greeted me, and we went up to the ninth heaven. I greeted all those

who were in the ninth heaven, and we went up to the tenth heaven. And I greeted my fellow spirits.⁷⁵

The fifth heaven provides a transition from the judgment/punishment scene of the fourth heaven. An angel with an iron rod (cf. Rev 19:15) joins three Erinyes/angels. We have no relief from the malignant universe here. It is not until we enter the seventh (which presumably is the source of the light “shining down on the sixth heaven” [22:18-19]), that there is some change.

Here again, the *Coptic Apocalypse of Paul* presents a passage rich with possibilities, only some of which can be glimpsed here:

1. The Toll Collectors are a possible parallel with the Marcosian Gnostic rites for the dead as described by Irenaeus.⁷⁶
2. The description of the Old Man surely recalls The Ancient of Days (cf. Dan 7:13, I Enoch 46-47).⁷⁷

This figure has been commonly taken, therefore, to represent the Deity of the Hebrew Scriptures, known to Christians as the “Old Testament,” a negative figure for the Valentinian Gnostics, and the evil (or befuddled) Demiurge⁷⁸ who is responsible for the creation of the material world.⁷⁹

He is probably equivalent to Ialdabaoth in the *Hypostasis of the Archons* (CG II,4) and elsewhere. In any case, he is the ruler of the seventh heaven and all those below him, and the author of the malign injustice of the fourth heaven.

3. The questioning of the soul by cosmic powers has numerous precedents. St. Irenaeus reports such a question and answer session,⁸⁰ and it appears in the *Gospel of Thomas* (50), the *First Apocalypse of James* (33:11-28, 34:15-20) and the *Gospel of Mary* (15:1-17:7). All of these formulae, while diverse, have certain elements in common: “They had to do with who the soul was, whence it came, and whither it was going.”⁸¹

These questions may also reflect a Marcosian Gnostic influence, as St. Irenaeus mentions them as using these;⁸² however, they may also be simply a reflection of a very widespread tradition of mystical/spiritual questions.⁸³

The Gnostic soul is usually seen in terms of its divine parentage, coming from the (true) Father and destined to return there. This is the definition of gnosis itself:

“But it is not only the washing [Baptism] that is liberating, but the knowledge of who we were, and what we have become, where we were or where we were placed, whither we hasten, from what we are redeemed, what birth is and what rebirth.”⁸⁴

The first item in each pair represents the perfect realm, while the second indicates the Gnostic's earthly exile.⁸⁵ While the questions and answers are slightly different in the *Coptic Apocalypse of Paul*, the author is certainly familiar with the models.⁸⁶ He conflates the “from where” and “to

where” questions into the first answer. The second answer shows a radical departure from the traditional meanings, however.

Murdock argues that the addition of the verb in 23:4, which is usually translated “set apart,” should be read “separated.” Thus the predestination formula becomes a birth formula: Paul was separated from his “mother,” the earth, by his *extasis*, and reclaimed by the Pleroma. This scene, like the Epiphany scene, interprets Gal 1:11-17 and confirms the *Coptic Apocalypse of Paul* as “an ascension vision of calling.”⁸⁷

The interrogation scene then becomes a revelation of Paul's mission as another type of the perfect Aeon. He has come from and will return to his mission of salvation on the earth. He defeats the Old Man by means of a mystic sign, which causes the Demiurge to return his attention below, i.e. to his own proper realm.

The identity of this Mystic Sign has been the subject of some speculation. M. Kaler recalls the speculation of Morard (1995) and Etcheverria (2002) that it is the Sign that Christian Baptism confers on the recipient.⁸⁸

Kaler than expands this idea to include the anointing⁸⁹ that takes place in the Mystery of Holy Illumination, Baptism, Chrismation, and Eucharist, which today are still conferred by Eastern Christians as one act, while some Western Christian Churches have separated them into three acts, Baptism, Confirmation, and First Communion. This immersion and anointing mark the recipient as the property of The Christ, and thus the property of the (true) Father.⁹⁰ This identification points to the Baptismal initiatic structure of the *Coptic Apocalypse of Paul*.⁹¹

A recent 2017 study has actually identified the *Coptic Apocalypse of Paul* as a Baptismal “Song of Ascents,” and a great deal of attention should be given to this suggestion.⁹²

The *Coptic Apocalypse of Paul* comes rapidly to an end after this revelation, which probably confirms the climactic nature of the announcement of Paul's calling and authority. He greets his “fellow spirits” in the tenth heaven. These are probably not the Apostles, but the highest holy powers of the Pleroma under the Father.

Paul, when he returns to earth, comes, not from the Ogdoad (the heavenly Jerusalem), but from the origin itself. It is doubtful if he could have arrived there if he was not from the Pleroma to begin with.

Conclusions and Judgments

More work remains to be done on the *Coptic Apocalypse of Paul*, and it is heartening to see that this is taking place with the increasing interest in this text during the first two decades of the twenty-first century. An excellent up-to-date summary of the sources has been compiled by Dr. Michael Kaler of the University of Toronto-Mississauga.⁹³

However, the major elements of the work can be seen. It is Valentinian, with possible Marcosian associations, with the question formula in III. It is thus an excellent example of the Paulinism Valentinian gnosis emphasized.

The lack of typical Valentinian mythological material indicates that these elements were purposely omitted in order to appeal to both Orthodox and Catholic Christians.

The major thrust of the work is to exalt Paul and his mission above the preaching and authority of the other Apostles, even so far as to make Paul a kind of Perfect Aeon, as Christ himself was. Whether it seeks to downgrade the other Apostles is not clear.⁹⁴

Its interpretation of the key Canonical Scripture passages removes their context and conflates them, using a Gnostic allegorical hermeneutic. The author has used and reworked several motifs to fit them to his or her purpose: the heavenly journey of the soul, judgment, and interrogation of the soul.

The *Coptic Apocalypse of Paul* is an amazing work. It is clear, concise, and powerful. The author has pared down the Gnostic mythological elements to the minimum, and uses canonical scripture quotations and allusions subtly but effectively.

In many ways, this work is arguably one of the most unified of the Nag Hammadi Library, and the most lucid. If it was indeed a piece of Valentinian Gnostic literature designed to appeal to Orthodox and Catholic believers, as seems quite likely, it was very well made to carry forward the Gnostic message.

Bibliography

– All citations from the Canonical Judeo-Christian Scriptures are from the New Revised Standard Version CE.

– This Bibliography is greatly indebted to the bibliographic work of the primary *Coptic Apocalypse of Paul* scholar of our day, Dr. Michael Kaler at the University of Toronto—Mississauga: www.nasscal.com/e-clavis-christian-apocrypha/apocalypse-of-paul-coptic/.

“The Apocalypse of Paul.” Introduced and translated by George W. MacRae and William R. Murdock. Douglas M. Parrott, ed., in *The Nag Hammadi Library in English*. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1977, 239-241.

Boehlig, A. & P. Labib, (eds). *Koptisch-gnostische Apokalypsen aus Codex V von Nag Hammadi im Koptischen Museum zu Alt-Kairo*. Sonderband: Wissenschaftliche Zeitschrift der Martin-Luther-Universität. Halle-Wittenberg, 1963, 15-26.

Clement of Alexandria. *Excerpta ex Theodoto* (ed & trans by R.P. Casey). London: Christophers 1934. In Lake, K. and S. Lake. *Studies and Documents*. London: Christophers 1934, 1.

- Epiphanius of Salamis. *Panarion*. Frank Williams, trans. 2nd Ed. Rev. Leiden: Brill, 2009.
- Erbetta, Mario. "L'apocalisse gnostica di Paolo (II sec.), Lettere e apocalissi" in *Gli Apocrifi del Nuovo Testamento: Versione e commentario*, vol III. Torino: Marietti, 1969, 348-351.
- Etcheverría, Ramon Trevijano. "El Apocalipsis de Pablo (NHC V2: 17.19–24.9): Traducción y comentario." In *Quaere Paulum: Miscelánea homenaje a Monseñor Doctor Lorenzo Turrado*. Edited by R. Blasquez. Salamanca: Universidad Pontificia, 1981, 217–236.
- Fallon, Francis T. "Gnostic Apocalypses." *Semeia* 14 (1979): 123–58.
- Funk, Wolf-Peter. "The Coptic Gnostic Apocalypse of Paul." In *New Testament Apocrypha*, Vol. 2, *Writings Relating to the Apostles, Apocalypses and Related Subjects*. Edited by Edgar Hennecke and Wilhelm Schneemelcher. Translated by R. McL. Wilson. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1992, 695-700.
- Hippolytus. *The Refutation of all Heresies* (Ante-Nicene Fathers edition). Accessed October 5, 2018. www.newadvent.org/fathers/0501.htm.
- Hypostasis of the Archons*. Nag Hammadi Library CG II. Accessed October 5, 2018. www.gnosis.org/naghamm/Hypostas-Barnstone.html.
- Irenaeus of Lyons. *Against Heresies* (Ante-Nicene Fathers edition). Accessed October 5, 2018. www.newadvent.org/fathers/0103.htm.
- Janssens, Yvonne. "Apocalypses de Nag Hammadi." In *L'Apocalypse johannique et l'Apocalyptique dans le Nouveau Testament*. Edited by J. Lambrecht. Bibliotheca Ephemeridum theologicarum Lovaniensium 53. Louvain: Leuven University Press, 1980, 69-75.
- Kaler, Michael. *An Investigation of the Coptic, Gnostic Apocalypse of Paul and its Context*. Dissertation at Laval University, Québec. 2006.
- Kaler, Michael, Louis Painchaud, and Marie-Pierre Bussières. "The Coptic *Apocalypse of Paul*, Irenaeus' *Adversus Haereses* 2.30.7, and the Second-Century Battle for Paul's Legacy." *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 12.2 (2004): 173–93.
- Kaler, Michael. "Apocalypse of Paul (Coptic)." *e-Clavis: Christian Apocrypha*. Accessed May 28, 2018. www.nasscal.com/e-clavis-christian-apocrypha/apocalypse-of-paul-coptic/.
- Kaler, Michael. "Commentaire." In Jean-Marc Rosenstiehl and Michael Kaler, *L'Apocalypse de Paul (NH V, 2)*. Bibliothèque copte de Nag Hammadi: Section "Textes" 31. Québec: Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 2005, 115-280.

- Kaler, Michael. *Flora Tells a Story: The Apocalypse of Paul and Its Contexts*. Études sur le christianisme et le judaïsme 19. Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2008.
- Kasser, R. "L'Apocalypse de Paul," in *Revue de Theologie et Philosophie* 19 (1969) 259-63.
- Kasser, R. "Nouvelles remarques a propos des Apocalypses de Paul, Jacques et Adam" in *Le Museon* 78 (1965) 299-301.
- Kasser, R. "Remarques a propos des editions recentes du Livre Secret de Jean et des Apocalypses de Paul, Jacques et Adam" in *Le Museon* 78 (1965) 71-98.
- MacRae, G. & Murdock, W.R. "Apocalypse of Paul" in *Nag Hammadi Codices V,2-5 and VI*. Leiden: Brill, 1979, 47-63.
- Murdock, William R. "The Apocalypse of Paul from Nag Hammadi." Th.D. dissertation, School of Theology at Claremont, 1968. Harvard Divinity School Library microfilm 1579p.
- Myszor, W. "Apokalipsa Pawla," in *Studia Theologica Vars.* 10 (1, 1972) 163-170.
- Pesthy, Monika. "Earthly Tribunal in the Fourth Heaven (NH V 2 20,5–21,22)," in *The Visio Pauli and the Gnostic Apocalypse of Paul*. Edited by Jan N. Bremmer and István Czachesz. *Studies on Early Christian Apocrypha* 9. Leuven: Peeters, 2007, 198-210.
- Pistis Sophia*. In the Askew Codex. Accessed October 5, 2018.
<http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/pistis.html>.
- Robinson, James M. (ed). *The Nag Hammadi Library*. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1978.
- Rosenstiehl, Jean-Marc, and Michael Kaler. *L'Apocalypse de Paul (NH V, 2)*. Bibliothèque copte de Nag Hammadi: Section "Textes" 31. Québec: Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 2005.
- Rosenstiehl, Jean-Marc. "Crime et châtement au quatrième ciel: NH V, 2 20,5-21,21: Contribution à l'étude de l'Apocalypse copte de Paul." *Colloque international "L'Évangile selon Thomas et les textes de Nag Hammadi,"* Québec, 29–31 mai 2003. Edited by Louis Painchaud and Paul-Hubert Poirier. Bibliothèque copte de Nag Hammadi: Section "Études" 8. Québec: Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 2007, 559-584.
- Rosenstiehl, Jean-Marc. "Djôlep: 'révérer'—Djôlep: 'modeler' (NH V,2 : 19,6b-7): Contribution à l'étude de l'Apocalypse copte de Paul." Pages 311–18 in *Études coptes IX: Onzième journée d'études* (Strasbourg, 12–14 juin 2003). Edited by Anne Boud'hors, Jean Gascou, and Denyse Vaillancourt. Cahiers de la Bibliothèque copte 14. Paris: De Boccard, 2006, 311-318.

- Rosenstiehl, Jean-Marc. "Introduction." In Jean-Marc Rosenstiehl and Michael Kaler, *L'Apocalypse de Paul (NH V, 2)*. Bibliothèque copte de Nag Hammadi: Section "Textes" 31. Québec: Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 2005.
- Rosenstiehl, Jean-Marc. "Le Montagne de Jéricho (NH V,2,19,11-13): Contribution à l'étude de L'Apocalypse copte de Paul," in *Coptica–Gnostica–Manichaica: Mélanges offerts à Wolf-Peter Funk*. Edited by Louis Painchaud and Paul-Hubert Poirier. Bibliothèque copte de Nag Hammadi: Section "Études" 7. Québec: Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 2006, 885-892.
- Scopello, Madeleine, and Marvin Meyer. "The Revelation of Paul: NHC V,2," in *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures*. Edited by Marvin Meyer. New York: HarperOne, 2007, 313-319.
- Scopello, Madeleine. "Contes apocalyptiques et apocalypses philosophiques dans le bibliothèque de Nag Hammadi," in *Apocalypses et voyages dans l'au-delà*. Edited by C. Kappler. Paris: Cerf, 1987, 321-350.
- Scopello, Madeleine. "Practicing 'Repentance' on the Path to Gnosis in Exegesis on the Soul," in *Practicing Gnosis: Ritual, Magic, Theurgy, and Liturgy in Nag Hammadi, Manichaean and Other Ancient Literature: Essays in Honor of Birger A. Pearson*. Edited by April DeConick, Gregory Shaw, and John D. Turner. Nag Hammadi and Manichaean Studies 85. Leiden: Brill, 2013, 199-213.
- Stevenson, Jane. "Ascent Through the Heavens from Egypt to Ireland." *Cambridge Celtic Medieval Studies* 5 (1983): 21–35.
- Tertullian. *De Praescriptione Haereticorum* (Ante-Nicene Christian Library). Accessed October 5, 2018. www.newadvent.org/fathers/0311.htm.
- Testament of Abraham*. Ethiopic Jewish Pseudipigrapha. Accessed October 5, 2018. www.earlyjewishwritings.com/testabraham.html.
- Twigg, Matthew. "Becoming Paul, Becoming Christ: The Nag Hammadi *Apocalypse of Paul* (NHC V,2) in Its Valentinian Context." Ph.D. diss., Regent's Park College, 2015.
- Twigg, Matthew. "The Mountain of Jericho in the Nag Hammadi *Apocalypse of Paul*: A Suggestion." *VC* 69.4 (2015): 422–42.
- Visio Sancti Pauli*. Third Century New Testament Apocrypha. See Rempt, Menna. *Visio Sancti Pauli: A Bilingual Edition of Redaction IV*. BA Thesis. Utrecht: Utrecht University, 2015. Accessed October 5, 2018.
- Wilson, R. McL. "The Apocalypse of Paul" in *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1975, Volume IV, 623-4.

Endnotes

- ¹ The full text may be found at <http://www.gnosis.org/naghamm/ascp.html>.
- ² Boehlig and Labib 15-26.
- ³ See the bibliography.
- ⁴ Michael Kaler, "Apocalypse of Paul (Coptic)," *North American Society for the Study of Christian Apocryphal Literature*, Accessed October 5, 2018. <https://www.nasscal.com/e-clavis-christian-apocrypha/apocalypse-of-paul-coptic/>.
- ⁵ Michael Allen Williams, *Rethinking Gnosticism: an Argument for Dismantling a Dubious Category*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001); and Karen L. King, *What is Gnosticism?* (Cambridge, Mass: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2005).
- ⁶ For a discussion of the major issues of the argument, please see Steven A. Armstrong, "Review of *Rethinking Gnosticism*." *Rose+Croix Journal* 1 (2004), 85-88.
- ⁷ See the Bibliography on this history at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Albigensian_Crusade - Bibliography, and also see <https://www.rosicrucian.org/rosicrucian-digest-gnosticism>.
- ⁸ Michael S. Domeracki, "The Apocalypse of Paul (NHC V,2) as a Valentinian Baptismal Liturgy of Ascents," *Gnosis: Journal of Gnostic Studies* 2, No. 2, (2017), 212 – 234. <https://doi.org/10.1163/2451859X-12340037>.
- ⁹ J. Lougovaya, "The Art of Isopsephism in the Greco-Roman World" in *Ägyptische Magie und ihre Umwelt*, ed. A. Jördens, (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2015), 82–98; Dimitris K. Psychoyos, "Masonry and the Cabala – Gematria as a Key to the Secrets of Freemasonry and Masonic Codes," Accessed October 5, 2018. <http://www.masoncode.com/masonry-and-cabala/>. "The forgotten art of isopsephy and the magic number KZ," *Semiotica*, 154 (1–4): 157–224.
- ¹⁰ See Bart D. Ehrman, *Lost Christianities: the battles for scripture and the faiths we never knew*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).
- ¹¹ *Rosicrucian Digest: Gnosticism*, Accessed January 9, 2019. <https://www.rosicrucian.org/rosicrucian-digest-gnosticism>.
- ¹² G. MacRae and W. R. Murdock, "Apocalypse of Paul," *Nag Hammadi Codices V,2-5 and VI*, (Leiden: Brill, 1979), 49; Etcheverría, Ramon Trevijano. "El Apocalipsis de Pablo (NHC V2: 17.19–24.9): Traducción y comentario," *Quaere Paulum: Miscelánea homenaje a Monseñor Doctor Lorenzo Turrado*, ed. R. Blasquez, (Salamanca: Universidad Pontificia, 1981), 236.
- ¹³ Irenaeus of Lyons, *Against Heresies* II.30.7.
- ¹⁴ Michael Kaler, *An Investigation of the Coptic, Gnostic Apocalypse of Paul and its Context*. Dissertation at Laval University, Québec. 2006, 61-77.
- ¹⁵ Structural analysis of section I from William R. Murdock, "The Apocalypse of Paul from Nag Hammadi," Ph.D. dissertation, School of Theology at Claremont, 1968. Harvard Divinity School Library microfilm 139-164; sections II and III suggested by MacRae and Murdock, 48.
- ¹⁶ Etcheverria 231.
- ¹⁷ Murdock 240.
- ¹⁸ This reading depends on Murdock's reconstruction of 18:23b-19:7 as a Cosmo-anthropogenesis myth (Murdock 140 ff).
- ¹⁹ Epiphanius, *Panarion* 38.2.5 (cited in MacRae and Murdock 47).

-
- ²⁰ MacRae and Murdock 47.
- ²¹ Murdock considers *The Apocalypse of Paul* to be constructed from Gal 1:11-17, 2:1f and II Cor 12:2-4 (167). Etcheverria calls the whole Apocalypse "a gnostic paraphrase" of these plus II Cor 3:17, Eph 4:8, which combines "the Damascus epiphany, the exstasis, the going up to Jerusalem and the mission in which the Apostle takes the turn of Christ." (231).
- ²² "The Apocalypse of Paul." Introduced and translated by George W. MacRae and William R. Murdock. Douglas M. Parrott, ed., in *The Nag Hammadi Library in English*, (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1977), 239.
- ²³ Thus Kasser.
- ²⁴ Etcheverria 226.
- ²⁵ The Apocalypse of Paul 240.
- ²⁶ Etcheverria 229.
- ²⁷ Cf. *Gospel of Thomas* logia 22, 37, 46. [Cited in Etcheverria 229].
- ²⁸ See the full discussion on this point in Etchevarria 229-230.
- ²⁹ Ibid 230.
- ³⁰ Hayes, Christine. "Introduction to the Old Testament (Hebrew Bible) — Lecture 23 — Visions of the End: Daniel and Apocalyptic Literature." Open Yale Courses. Yale University, 2006, Accessed October 5, 2018. <https://oyc.yale.edu/religious-studies/rfst-145>.
- ³¹ Hippolytus. *The Refutation of all Heresies* VI,42:2.
- ³² *Apocryphon of John* 2:1-9, in the Nag Hammadi Library (CG II,1:1-32:9).
- ³³ Murdock 144-146.
- ³⁴ "The Apocalypse of Paul" 240.
- ³⁵ MacRae and Murdock 53; Etcheverria 219; Kasser 260.
- ³⁶ Etcheverria 236.
- ³⁷ Etcheverria 232.
- ³⁸ "The Apocalypse of Paul" 249.
- ³⁹ [https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/ νόος #Ancient_Greek](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/νόος#Ancient_Greek)
- ⁴⁰ Kaler, "Commentaire," 199-201.
- ⁴¹ Murdock 164.
- ⁴² Kaler, Commentaire, 198-199.
- ⁴³ Twigg, Matthew. "The Mountain of Jericho in the Nag Hammadi *Apocalypse of Paul*: A Suggestion." *Vigiliae Christianae* 69.4 (2015): 422–42.
- ⁴⁴ Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, *The Holy Land: An Oxford Archaeological Guide from Earliest Times to 1700*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 288; and *International Dictionary of Historic Places*, eds. Trudy Ring, Paul Schellinger, and Noelle Watson, (Chicago : Fitzroy Dearborn Publishers, 1994), 367-370.
- ⁴⁵ Twigg, 431.
- ⁴⁶ Twigg, 237 ff.
- ⁴⁷ Twigg, 442.
- ⁴⁸ Murdock 159.
- ⁴⁹ George Salmon, "Ogdoad," *A Dictionary of Christian Biography, Literature, Sects and Doctrines*, Volume IV, (London: John Murray, 1887), 71–72.
- ⁵⁰ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* II.21.1 (Cited in Murdock, 220).
- ⁵¹ Origen, *Contra Celsum* VI:27 (cited in Murdock 221).

-
- ⁵² For a discussion of the identity of the Ogdoad with the heavenly Jerusalem, which is the salvation of the psychikoi, see Etcheverria 227-8.
- ⁵³ Murdock 222-224.
- ⁵⁴ Lock, W. (1902). "Pleroma". In Hastings, James. *A Dictionary of the Bible IV* Honolulu: University Press of the Pacific, 1898, reprinted 2004, 1-2.
- ⁵⁵ "The Apocalypse of Paul," 240-241.
- ⁵⁶ Clement of Alexandria. *Excerpta Ex Theodoto* 23.1-2 (cited in Murdock 226).
- ⁵⁷ Kaler, diss. 61-77.
- ⁵⁸ Tertullian, *De Praescriptione Haereticorum* 23.1-3,5,8; 24:5-6 (cited in Murdock 230).
- ⁵⁹ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* I.2.6, II.21.2, III.13.1 (cited in Murdock 225-6, 231).
- ⁶⁰ Kaler, diss 8.
- ⁶¹ "The Apocalypse of Paul," 241.
- ⁶² Murdock 75-115, etc.
- ⁶³ Kaler diss.
- ⁶⁴ Etcheverria 232.
- ⁶⁵ Murdock 101.
- ⁶⁶ Murdock 21-71.
- ⁶⁷ Murdock 75-79.
- ⁶⁸ Murdock 80-81.
- ⁶⁹ R. Kasser, "Remarques a propos des editions recentes du Livre Secret de Jean et des Apocalypses de Paul, Jacques et Adam" in *Le Museon* 78 (1965), 77.
- ⁷⁰ Murdock 96-100.
- ⁷¹ Murdock 107-113.
- ⁷² Murdock 113.
- ⁷³ Murdock 124.
- ⁷⁴ Modern readers can find this theme of an evil cosmos well illustrated in the horror fiction of the American author, H.P. Lovecraft (1890-1937), the inventor of the popular "Cthulhu Mythos."
- ⁷⁵ Kaler diss, 241.
- ⁷⁶ Kaler diss 40.
- ⁷⁷ MacRae and Murdock 48.
- ⁷⁸ Kaler, diss 185-187.
- ⁷⁹ Etcheverria 233-234; Murdock 178-181.
- ⁸⁰ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* I.21.5.
- ⁸¹ Murdock 197.
- ⁸² Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* I, 21.
- ⁸³ Kaler, diss 200. Modern fans and scholars of Science Fiction will recognize these self-identification questions posed by several of the ancient races to the younger races in Michael Straczynski's *Babylon 5* and *Crusade: Who Are You? What Do You Want? Why Are You Here? Where Are You Going? Do You Have Anything Worth Living For? Whom Do You Serve? Whom Do You Trust?* See <http://toscapetheserpentstongue.blogspot.com/2012/07/five-fundamental-questions-from-babylon.html>.
- ⁸⁴ Clemeny of Alexandria. *Excerpta ex Theodoto* 78:2.
- ⁸⁵ Murdock 207.
- ⁸⁶ Murdock 201-203.
- ⁸⁷ Murdock 204-213.

⁸⁸ Kaler, diss 189.

⁸⁹ Kaler, diss 189-199.

⁹⁰ Kaler diss 194-196.

⁹¹ Kaler, diss 210.

⁹² Michael S. Domeracki, “The Apocalypse of Paul (NHC V,2) as a Valentinian Baptismal Liturgy of Ascents.” *Gnosis: Journal of Gnostic Studies*, Volume 2, Issue 2 (2017): 212 – 234.

⁹³ Michael Kaler, “Apocalypse of Paul (Coptic),” *e-Clavis: Christian Apocrypha*, Accessed May 22, 2018. <http://www.nasscal.com/e-clavis-christian-apocrypha/apocalypse-of-paul-coptic/>. The Bibliography of this paper is greatly indebted to Dr. Kaler’s work.

⁹⁴ Murdock 234-5.

This paper is dedicated to the late Fr. George MacRae, S.J. (1928-1985), Biblical Scholar and Acting Dean of Harvard Divinity Faculty, whom I had the great honor of having as a Professor at Harvard Divinity. For Fr. George: Eternal Memory!