

## John and ‘the Gnostics’

As we have seen, for a long time the consensus of scholarship has held that gnostic and other heretical groups held a virtual monopoly on the Fourth Gospel throughout much of the second century. Here again are Melvyn Hillmer’s conclusions reached in 1966,

At a time in history when the Apologists were using John very sparingly, with only incidental citations, these gnostic writers were writing commentaries on the text. This seems to be clear indication that John was first fully accepted and used as authoritative in gnostic circles; not until Irenaeus does it have the same kind of position in other than gnostic writers.<sup>1</sup>

The Commentaries of Ptolemaeus and Heracleon from the second generation of Valentinianism, give the earliest clear indication of the acceptance of the Gospel of John as canonical and worthy of verse by verse comment. The interpretation in these commentaries is in terms of Valentinian gnosticism but nevertheless demonstrates a final stage in the recognition of the gospel as a writing which has scriptural authority. It is significant that this position is first accorded to John in the work of Valentinian teachers, who were able with relative ease to interpret the Fourth Gospel in terms of their own theological system.<sup>2</sup>

The more recent formulation of J.-D. Kaestli states,

1) On one side, we have underscored the lack of clear attestation of a use of the fourth gospel in the texts and with the authors who have been considered afterwards as the representatives of ‘orthodox’ Christianity. One must await the last quarter of the second century, with Irenaeus and Theophilus of Antioch, to find the first sure witnesses attesting to the full acceptance of John in the ‘canon’ of the Great Church.

2) On the other side, contrasting with this absence of attestation, we have recovered the place of choice which the gospel of John held with the gnostics of the Valentinian school, with Heracleon in particular.<sup>3</sup>

In this section I shall not attempt to present an exhaustive, systematic examination of the borrowings from the Fourth Gospel in gnostic or gnostic-related literature from the second century. The task has to be more focused. First of all, just how much did the Valentinians and gnostics of the

<sup>1</sup> M. R. Hillmer, ‘The Gospel of John in the Second Century’ (Th. D. dissertation, Harvard Univ. Apr. 1966), 169.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* 172.

<sup>3</sup> J.-D. Kaestli, ‘Remarques sur le rapport du quatrième évangile avec la gnose et sa réception au IIe siècle’, in Kaestli *et al.* (eds.), *La Communauté johannique et son histoire* (Paris, 1990), 352–3.

period use the Fourth Gospel? Is their use of it seen ‘on every side’? Also, how did the Valentinian and gnostic writers use the Johannine Gospel? For example, did they tend to use all of it or did they have favourite parts? Did they use it as scripture? What interested them about this Gospel? Why did they feel a ‘peculiar kinship’ with it? Was it John’s soaring Christology, its pneumatology, or its general, ‘proto-gnostic’ ambience? But most of all I shall be interested here in the question of whether and to what extent gnostic use of the Fourth Gospel is likely to have contributed to a sense of Johannophobia, a reluctance to use John or an antipathy towards it, on the part of their orthodox contemporaries. This is at the heart of the paradigm that has dominated scholarship for decades, and an examination of the question has the potential of clearing up the mystery of why the gnostics (allegedly) favoured the Fourth Gospel, and why the orthodox (allegedly) did not.

Before the relevant evidence is examined, brief mention should be made of two tendencies often seen in the literature on this subject. First is the tendency to assume that the use of a book by Christian heretics necessarily must have advertised against that book in the eyes of the orthodox.<sup>4</sup> It is certainly possible that it did, but there might well be other possibilities. It is antecedently just as possible that sectarian use of a book should have very little effect upon the orthodox, for such use conceivably could reflect and depend upon an already high regard for the book within the orthodox mainstream. What the OJP has done is to set up the boundaries in such a way that few scholars entertain this possibility because it is considered an established fact that the orthodox were simply not using the Fourth Gospel at this time, or were using it ‘tentatively’, or furtively, as if using someone else’s prized property. But, freed of preconceptions on this matter, one could envision a situation in which a book had to be used by proponents of a competing view if they wanted to make any headway in reaching or converting or even refuting people from the Great Church. These two may not be the only possibilities, and they may not be mutually exclusive, but we should at least be aware that the preferred explanation is often simply assumed without consideration of any alternative.

The other tendency worth mentioning here is the tendency to assume that any use of a book (at least, any gnostic use of the Fourth Gospel) always denotes an unqualified, positive evaluation and reception of that book. We shall come to see, I believe, that other possibilities exist in this case as well and cannot be ignored.

<sup>4</sup> To demonstrate the invalidity of the assumption one might ask whether the reverse was true as well. If heretical use of a book advertised against it for the orthodox, did heretical rejection of a book commend it? Did Marcion’s positive rejection of the Johannine books (this is specifically attested by Tertullian, *Marc.* 4. 5) have the effect of commending these books to the orthodox? Which then should we presume was a more powerful force upon the minds of the orthodox, Valentinian acceptance or Marcionite rejection?

## Second-Century 'Gnostic' Movements

### INDIVIDUAL GNOSTIC TEACHERS

#### *Heracleon*

It is obvious from the many representations of the OJP cited at the beginning of this book that a major plank in the paradigm comes directly from the commentary on the Fourth Gospel by Heracleon the Valentinian. Other Valentinians and 'gnostics' certainly played their parts, but the one name most frequently associated with orthodox suspicion, avoidance, or rejection of John is that of Heracleon, who is supposed to have 'tainted' the work by his commentary on it.<sup>5</sup>

And yet, despite the prevalence of the assumption, there are immediate problems with asserting such an influence flowing from Heracleon's work. The first is that we cannot document anything of the sort. Irenaeus quite obviously did not experience any poisonous effects of Johannophobia from Heracleon's work. His reaction to the Valentinian use of John is one of indignation at their misusing a book which is part of the catholic scripture and which is illegitimately used to support Valentinianism:

striving, as they do, to adapt the good words of revelation to their own wicked inventions. And it is not only from the writings of the evangelists and apostles that they endeavour to derive proofs for their opinions by means of perverse interpretations and deceitful expositions: they deal in the same way with the law and the prophets... and others of them, with great craftiness, adapted such parts of Scripture to their own figments, lead away captive from the truth those who do not retain a steadfast faith in one God, the Father Almighty, and in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God. (*AH* 1. 4. 5)

The danger here mentioned by Irenaeus is not that theologians or Church leaders might come to question the authenticity of John, but that those with an unsteady faith in one God and one Lord might be led astray by the Valentinians' crafty adaptations of scriptures *already accepted* by the faithful. It might be objected, however, that Irenaeus may not have read the commentary of Heracleon on the Fourth Gospel. This in fact, I believe, was indeed the case. Irenaeus mentions Heracleon but once (*AH* 2. 4. 1), as a follower of Valentinus, but never alludes to any of his comments on John, while on the other hand he deals extensively with those of another Valentinian writer, identified in the Latin text as Ptolemy (1. 8. 5). If Heracleon's commentary on John was written in Rome or in Italy by this time,<sup>6</sup> it is unlikely that Irenaeus

<sup>5</sup> Hillmer, 'Second Century', 79–80; T. E. Pollard, *Johannine Christology and the Early Church* (Cambridge, 1970), 39; E. Haenchen, *John 1* (Philadelphia, 1984), 18–19; D. M. Smith, 'The Problem of John and the Synoptics', in A. Denaux (ed.), *John and the Synoptics* (Leuven, 1992), 157; J. H. Charlesworth, *The Beloved Disciple* (Valley Forge, Pa., 1995), 407.

<sup>6</sup> G. Salmon, 'Heracleon', *DCB*, ii. 897–901 at 900, thinks Heracleon, who Hippolytus says was a member of the Italian school of Valentinians, must have taught in south Italy, as he is not

would not have known it. That he did not know it would also seem to be supported by the fact that when Irenaeus mentions, in his famous remark, that the Valentinians used John because they found support in his Prologue for their syzygies (3. 11. 9), he thus mentions a factor that characterizes ‘Ptolemy’s’ exegesis of John’s Prologue but not Heracleon’s.<sup>7</sup> Heracleon’s work on John was evidently later than Ptolemy’s, and probably was unknown to Irenaeus because it was not written till perhaps the late 170s, or the 180s, or even later.<sup>8</sup> Even Clement, writing in the 190s, who knows Heracleon as a Valentinian teacher, shows no signs of having read the now-famous commentary. But the OJP asks us to believe that many orthodox Christians had read or heard about Heracleon’s commentary on the Gospel according to John, and that most of them as a result came to view that Gospel as not ‘reliable and authentic’,<sup>9</sup> if they did not already view it as such.

This brings us to a second problem, a basic and confounding flaw in this thesis that nevertheless routinely goes untreated. The invocation of Heracleon’s commentary by proponents of the OJP ignores the fact that the time of the publication of Heracleon’s commentary is the very time from which—even by their own admission—the Fourth Gospel is in the ascendancy among the orthodox. Without yet exploring the signs of earlier use in their works, we have already seen that from some time in the 170s until the end of the second century such representatives of the ‘Great Church’ as Theophilus in Antioch, Athenagoras in Athens, Hegesippus, probably the author of the *Muratorian Fragment*, and the officials in charge of the Christian cemeteries in Rome, the author of the *Epistle of Vienne and Lyons* and Irenaeus in Gaul, Melito in Sardis, Polycrates and Apollonius in Ephesus, Clement and the laity in Alexandria, and Tertullian and the martyrs in Carthage, were assuming essentially a scriptural status for the Fourth Gospel in the Church at large. By the end of the century, as even Haenchen and most others will say, the apostolic authority of this Gospel is generally acknowledged among the orthodox.<sup>10</sup> This brings up a related point. At least since Hillmer, scholars have cited the mere writing of a commentary on John by Heracleon as proof that Heracleon regarded John

mentioned by any Roman authority. C. Bammel, ‘Herakleon’, *Theologische Realenzyklopädie*, xv (Berlin, 1986), 54–7 at 54, says that any activity of Heracleon in Alexandria is doubtful.

<sup>7</sup> Salmon, ‘Heracleon’, 900; Elaine Pagels, *The Johannine Gospel in Gnostic Exegesis* (Nashville, Tenn., 1973), 46–7.

<sup>8</sup> Tertullian lists Heracleon after Ptolemy but before Secundus and Marcus (*Val.* 4); Ps. Tertullian, *Adv. omn. haer.* 4 lists Heracelon after Ptolemy and Secundus. R. A. Culpepper, *John, The Son of Zebedee* (Columbia, SC, 1994), 116, places Heracleon’s commentary at c.170, but he assumes that it was known to Irenaeus. Heracleon was evidently not a personal disciple of Valentinus (Markschies, ‘Valentinian Gnosticism’, in J. D. Turner and A. McGuire, *The Nag Hammadi Library after Fifty Years* (Leiden, 1997), 430, 433–5, though Markschies too speculates, 430, that Heracleon’s commentary on John was written ‘perhaps around 170 CE’).

<sup>9</sup> Charlesworth, *Beloved Disciple*, 407.

<sup>10</sup> Haenchen, *John 1*, 14; G. M. Hahneman, *The Muratorian Fragment and the Development of the Canon* (Oxford, 1992), 102.

as scriptural, in supposed contrast to the orthodox.<sup>11</sup> Certainly, Heracleon seems to have assumed that the very words of the Gospel are significant and even sacred. But the likely date for Heracleon's commentary is after Irenaeus' *Against Heresies*. Shall we argue that Heracleon had a greater respect for the scriptural character of John than did Irenaeus? It is, in my opinion, most probable that Heracleon's commentary was written partly in reaction to Irenaeus' refutation of 'Ptolemy'. But in any case the two writings must be closely contemporary. And even if Heracleon wrote closer to 170, it will make little difference. In 1880 Salmon, who believed the centre of Heracleon's activity should be fixed in the decade 170–80, wrote about its relevance for determining the relative status of the Gospel among the Valentinians and the orthodox,

Considerable interest attaches to the determination of the date of Heracleon on account of his use of St John's Gospel, which clearly had attained so high an authority when he wrote that it must then have been a work of considerable standing. It seems to us, however, that the mere fact that the book was held in equal honour by the Valentinians and the orthodox proves that it must have attained its position before the separation of the Valentinians from the church; and, therefore, that as far as the controversy concerning the fourth Gospel is concerned, it is of less importance to determine the exact date of Heacleon.<sup>12</sup>

The consensus view about Johannophobia then appears to be mistaken, at least as it regards the influence of Heracleon, and, really, any other gnostic teacher or school which flourished after about 170 or so. Heracleon's commentary may of course have been despised by the orthodox. It may have been scorned, feared, perhaps it was burnt (or cast into rubbish heaps). But we shall be hard pressed to show that it contributed to any significant Johannophobia among the orthodox in the first decades after it was published.

And what about thereafter? Surely one should see in Origen's somewhat copious use and refutation of Heracleon's commentary in the 230s an admission that it was regarded by the orthodox as a threat. It might be argued that the very fact that he and others mention Heracleon and contend against him presumes that some in the Great Church were being seduced by Heracleon, otherwise there would be no need to refute him.<sup>13</sup> This is certainly possible, but at least three observations should also be made.

First, it does not necessarily follow that whatever threat was posed by Heracleon's commentary was a particularly serious one.<sup>14</sup> Sometimes fairly

<sup>11</sup> Hillmer, 'Second Century', 169, who assumes that Heracleon wrote his commentary long before Irenaeus began to write; Culpepper, *John*, 118.

<sup>12</sup> Salmon, 'Heracleon', 900.

<sup>13</sup> J.-M. Poffet, 'Indices de réception de l'Évangile de Jean', in J.-D. Kaestli *et al.* (eds.), *La Communauté johannique et son histoire* (Paris, 1990), 316, indicates that Origen wrote 'précisément pour réfuter cette lecture jugée par lui ruineuse pour la foi chrétienne'.

<sup>14</sup> Pace Poffet, 'Indices', 316, who says that Origen's entire 32+ volume commentary on John was devoted to the refutation of Heracleon.

inconsequential people or heresies are refuted for the sake of completeness (as in Epiphanius, often), for the furnishing of historical backgrounds to present problems (as in Irenaeus on the Barbeloites), or to answer the criticism of pagan writers (as in Origen on the Ophites in answer to Celsus). Before Origen specifically cites passages from Heracleon's 'not very detailed'<sup>15</sup> commentary in the 230s, several authors, including Irenaeus, Clement, Tertullian, Hippolytus, and probably Ps. Tertullian, had mentioned Heracleon's teaching without ever mentioning or quoting from a work on John. Clement, in fact, only seems to know Heracleon's exegesis of passages in Luke (*Strom.* 4. 9. 73–5; *Ecl. Proph.* 25), which has caused some to think that Heracleon also wrote a commentary on Luke. If Origen had never written his own commentary on John, or if it had perished, we would not in fact know Heracleon had written one.<sup>16</sup> One of Origen's comments even makes it uncertain whether Origen himself was able to obtain a full copy of Heracleon's commentary,<sup>17</sup> which itself would call into question the accessibility of the work to great numbers of Christians. This nearly complete silence of orthodox authors about Heracleon's commentary at least shows us that wide estimates of its influence are highly conjectural, at best, and are flimsy support for the supposed phenomenon of orthodox Johannophobia in the second century.

Second, and more to the point for present purposes, it does not follow that Heracleon's 'threat', however serious it was, was a threat to orthodox use of John. In the case of Origen himself, presumably no one will claim that his exposure to Heracleon's commentary on John engendered in him any Johannophobic sentiments. And as I have already observed, by the time Heracleon published his commentary the place of the Fourth Gospel in the Great Church was quickly becoming or had already become immovable. And apart from the dubious case of Gaius of Rome there is no indication that this changed after AD 200. Whatever seductive power Heracleon's teaching might have exerted among members of these churches, its attractions would be more likely to have drawn one towards Heracleon's distinctive views, or to the Valentinian church (or school), rather than away from an appreciation of John's Gospel, which was by now prized by both friends and foes of Valentinianism.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>15</sup> C. Bammel, 'Herakleon', *Theologische Realencyclopädie*, x (Berlin, 1986), 55. It is, as Bammel says (p. 54), not at all certain whether Heracleon commented on the whole of the Fourth Gospel. Origen's excerpts do not go beyond John 8.

<sup>16</sup> Photius cites a comment of Heracleon's on John 1: 17, but Salmon, 'Heracleon', 898, is probably correct that this was taken from one of the lost books of Origen's John commentary.

<sup>17</sup> ἐν οἷς καταλέλοιπεν ὑπομνήμασιν. See Salmon, 'Heracleon', 898.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid. 899, 'Instances of this kind where the interpreter is forced to reject the most obvious meaning of the text are sufficiently numerous to shew that the gospel was not written in the interests of Valentinianism; but it is a book which Heracleon evidently recognized as of such authority that he must perforce have it on his side.'

Finally, another factor about Heracleon's commentary needs to be emphasized. Sweeping assertions about the dramatic effects of Heracleon's comments on John usually bypass any discussion of the character of those comments. It is known, however, that Heracleon's exegesis was much 'toned down', its strictly Valentinian and 'pleromatic' character to a great extent obscured, at least as compared with Ptolemy's (or what has been considered Ptolemy's).<sup>19</sup> His penchant for 'spiritual' exegesis is not so much at odds with Origen's own,<sup>20</sup> and Origen even at times acknowledges the worth of his adversary's comments. This makes it quite possible to maintain that Heracleon had himself been influenced to a considerable extent by orthodox writers such as Irenaeus to abandon the openly 'pleromic' exegesis advocated by his Valentinian predecessor cited by Irenaeus in *AH* 1. 8. 5.<sup>21</sup> If so, this would only have been in order to make his work more appealing to orthodoxy. This too works against any thesis which would seek to credit Heracleon's commentary with a great defection from the Fourth Gospel among the Great Church. Instead, Salmon's conclusion that Heracleon saw in John's Gospel 'a book which Heracleon evidently recognized as of such authority that he must perforce have it on his side',<sup>22</sup> though hopelessly out-of-step with the prevailing paradigm of today, still has to be regarded as eminently more agreeable with the data.

### *Theodotus*

It should be apparent that, if the notion of orthodox Johannophobia caused by gnostic use of or association with John is to be saved at all, it will have to be done by essentially restricting it to a time before the last thirty years or so of the second century. This realization impinges as well upon the work of another Valentinian teacher whom we have encountered already in a work of Clement's, Theodotus, a representative of the so-called eastern school of Valentinianism who evidently taught in Alexandria. He is not mentioned by Irenaeus and, like Heracleon, probably wrote some years

<sup>19</sup> J.-D. Kaestli, 'L'Exégèse valentinienne', in Kaestli *et al.* (eds.), *La Communauté johannique*, 323–50.

<sup>20</sup> Salmon, 'Heracleon', 899, 'Heracleon's doctrine is not orthodox, but his principles of interpretation cannot be said to differ essentially from those of Origen himself. Many orthodox parallels, for instance, could be adduced to Heracleon's exposition'; cf. Bammel, 'Herakleon', 55.

<sup>21</sup> Several have in fact maintained this, among them, E. De Faye, A. E. Brooke, and W. von Loewenich, *Das Johannes-Verständnis*, according to Pagels, *Gnostic Exegesis*, 25 (see Pagels's own view on p. 26). Similarly, Kaestli, 'L'Exégèse valentinienne', 350, has recently said that Heracleon did not ignore or eliminate the myth of the aeons and Wisdom, 'mais qu'il l'a délibérément laissé de côté parce que son commentaire s'adressait à un public pas encore initié à toutes les dimensions du mythe'. Sanders, *Fourth Gospel*, 65, acknowledged the differences but preferred to say simply that Heracleon's 'Valentinianism was profoundly modified by his understanding of the Fourth Gospel'. Whatever the true cause, it remains apparent that the non-pleromic interpretations seem to be later than the pleromic ones, and that, whether intentionally or not, they avoid the interpretations which Irenaeus criticized in the 'commentary' usually attributed to Ptolemy in *AH* 1. 8. 5.

<sup>22</sup> Salmon, 'Heracleon', 899

after Ptolemy.<sup>23</sup> By the time he wrote, then, the Fourth Gospel was already well established in orthodox theology and piety. As evidence for a high Valentinian regard for the Fourth Gospel, Poffet points out that Theodotus cited from it *ad litteram*.<sup>24</sup> But the citations in *Theod.*<sup>25</sup> certainly show no higher regard for the Fourth Gospel than is exhibited by Clement, who also cited it *ad litteram* at times—not to admit, however, that literal citation necessarily denotes a higher regard than adapted citation or embedded allusion. And it is worth observing again that the combined labours of Theodotus, Heracleon, Ptolemy, and all other Valentinians known to Clement failed to poison his mind against the Fourth Gospel or to deter him from using it as an authoritative, scriptural book. To maintain that Theodotus' work did have such an effect on other orthodox scholars or on ordinary church members is speculation, and not particularly well-conceived speculation. I have noted above that Clement knew of orthodox church members, evidently in Alexandria, who, on the authority of Jesus' words in John 10, objected to the use of pagan philosophers—'thieves and robbers' who came only to kill and to destroy—in Christian theology. In fact, it appears that all the evidence of the period, both from Christian leaders and from the laity, is against such speculation.

### *Ptolemy*

In the section on Irenaeus I dealt briefly with the exegesis of the Prologue of John's Gospel contained in a Valentinian work known to Irenaeus and traditionally assigned to Ptolemy the Valentinian. I mentioned in passing a controversy over whether this should rightfully be assigned to Ptolemy or not. There has long existed a question of how to relate this piece to the other work which has come down to us under Ptolemy's name, his *Letter to Flora*, which we have thanks to Epiphanius (*Panarion* 33. 3. 1–33. 7. 10). But now Christoph Marksches has argued that only the latter is genuinely Ptolemaean.<sup>26</sup> I shall return to this matter after a look at the *Letter* itself.

<sup>23</sup> F. Sagnard, *Clément d'Alexandrie, Extraits de Théodote: Texte grec, introduction, traduction et notes* SC (Paris, 1948), 7, suggests that he was contemporary with Ptolemy and taught between 160–70 (accepted by Culpepper, *John*, 117). This is hard to establish, however, as no one mentions him before Clement of Alexandria writing in the 190s or after the turn of the 3rd century. Even if Theodotus wrote as early as the 160s, however, it makes little difference. Negative effects on the use of John among the mainstream churches, if in fact there were any, could not have been great.

<sup>24</sup> Poffet, 'Indices', 315. The rest may have come from Ptolemy or some other Valentinian source or sources.

<sup>25</sup> Remember that, in the judgement of R. P. Casey, *The Excerpta ex Theodoto of Clement of Alexandria* (London, 1934), 5, as to Theodotus' use of the Fourth Gospel, only the references to the Paraclete in *Theod.* 23. 1–2 and to John 1: 9 in *Theod.* 41. 3 come from material which can be attributed to Theodotus himself. Material in *Theod.* 6–7 has probably come from Ptolemy (or the same source used by Irenaeus). The rest apparently comes either from this latter source or from some other product of the Ptolemaic school.

<sup>26</sup> '[T]he only reliable source for a reconstruction of the teachings of the Roman theologian Ptolemy is the Epistle to Flora. The system developed in Irenaeus' so-called "grand notice" cannot

The *Letter to Flora* is a letter-treatise<sup>27</sup> which sets out to develop an interpretative approach to the Law of Moses. This letter, like the Valentinian cited by Irenaeus in *AH* 1. 8. 5, also uses the Prologue to John's Gospel, though not in any programmatic way and without giving any openly pleromatic exegesis. His one clear allusion to it is as follows: 'And further, the apostle states that the craftsmanship of the world is his, and that "all things were made through him, and without him was not anything made" (Jn. 1. 3), thus anticipating these liars' flimsy wisdom' (*Panar.* 33. 3. 6).<sup>28</sup> Ptolemy's purpose in this citation is to confound those who would attribute the creation of the physical world and the giving of the law of Moses to 'the adversary, the pernicious devil' (probably a caricature of a Marcionite<sup>29</sup> or a 'gnostic' position). Ptolemy opposes just as sharply the view of those who attribute creation and the OT law to the highest Father. To him the Creator and Lawgiver, being an intermediate being (33. 7. 4), was just, but neither good nor evil (33. 7. 5). However one seeks to integrate Ptolemy's use of John 1:3 here with the more openly pleromatic exegesis of the Johannine Prologue in the treatise cited by Irenaeus, this certainly shows that he used at least parts of the Fourth Gospel as apostolic and as positive supports for his views. But just as certainly one cannot speak of any special reliance upon John, with regard to this letter. Ptolemy's lone citation of John, for example, is far outweighed by his ten citations of or allusions to Synoptic material, probably exclusively from Matthew.<sup>30</sup> He treats the words of Jesus recorded in Matthew's Gospel as authentic words of 'the Saviour' which he takes to support his position on the law. Moreover, he cites 'the apostle Paul',<sup>31</sup> by name, just as authoritatively (33. 5. 15; 33. 6. 6) for his own teaching (references to Rom., 1 Cor., and Eph.). As Marksches points out, Ptolemy's treatment 'takes it for granted that the readers of the Epistle knew the Bible and Jewish-Christian customs very well'.<sup>32</sup> Known to both Ptolemy and his readers in common is surely the Fourth Gospel, but also the First Gospel, the Letters of Paul, and no doubt more. This much, at least, conforms well to our observations about the Christian sources used in the work traditionally ascribed to Ptolemy in *Against Heresies* 1.8.

be called "Ptolemaic" without further thought and, accordingly, the Epistle cannot be interpreted in the light of this system' (C. Marksches, 'New Research on Ptolemaeus Gnosticus', *ZAC* 4 (2000), 252).

<sup>27</sup> On its form and genre, see Winrich A. Löhr, 'Ptolemäus, *Gnostiker*', in *TRE* ii. 27 (Berlin, 1997), 699–702 at 699; Marksches, 'New Research', 228–33, who says it fits the description of a *διαρηπτικά εισαγωγή*.

<sup>28</sup> B. Layton's translation in *The Gnostic Scriptures* (New York, 1987).

<sup>29</sup> So Löhr, 'Ptolemäus', 699; Marksches, 'New Research', 234, 237.

<sup>30</sup> Matt. 12: 25 in 33. 3. 5; Matt. 11: 27 in 33. 3. 7; Matt. 19: 8 and 19: 6 in 33. 4. 4; Matt. 19: 7 in 33. 4. 5; Matt. 15: 4 in 33. 4. 11 and again in 33. 5. 7; Matt. 15: 5 in 33. 4. 12; Matt. 15: 8 in 33. 4. 13; Matt. 5: 38 in 33. 5. 4.

<sup>31</sup> Layton, *The Gnostic Scriptures*, 313 n. g. says, 'Valentinians considered Paul to be the ultimate source of their esoteric tradition'.

<sup>32</sup> Marksches, 'New Research', at 238.

This brings us back to the question of authenticity. Any definitive determination about the authenticity of the work cited by Irenaeus is beyond the scope of the present study. Before endorsing either position, the relevance of each for this study may be explored briefly. Markschie's writes that an implication of his research is that the records at our disposal now

allow the hypothesis that Ptolemy was closer to the consent of the theology of the city of Rome than his followers—similar to the namegiving Valentinus, who was closer to the consent of Alexandrine Theology than his followers. From this hypothesis two conclusions follow: first, Valentinus and Ptolemy are likely to be closer connected than I claimed in my book seven years ago. And second, the real originators of the 'classical' Valentinian myth are neither Valentinus nor Ptolemy, but gifted and imaginative thinkers among their followers of whom we do not know the names.<sup>33</sup>

He writes further that the mentality of Ptolemy's Epistle is that of 'the group of Christian theologians in the second century to which the Apologists and mainly Justin belonged. Ptolemy's insisting on the "teachings of the saviour" and the "apostolic tradition"... (7, 9)—goes with this'.<sup>34</sup> Thus the *Letter to Flora* and its 'less Valentinian' teaching would leave us with a use of the Fourth Gospel that was, if Markschie's is right, possibly non-controversial among the orthodox in Rome. And it would mean that the treatise known to Irenaeus, which explicitly links John 1: 1–18 to the names and the generations of the pantheon of Valentinian aeons, is from a later Valentinian who had developed the thought of Valentinus and Ptolemy along lines not taken by them. This would most likely place the writing of this unknown Valentinian even closer in time to Irenaeus himself than previously thought. This in turn would provide even less room for Johannophobia to take hold in orthodox circles which responded negatively to the development.

I have to admit to being somewhat sceptical about aspects of Markschie's proposal. This goes for the assumption that the words *et Ptolomaeus quidem ita* in the Latin version at the end of *AH* 1. 8. 5 are necessarily spurious<sup>35</sup> and

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.* 252.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.* 253.

<sup>35</sup> Rousseau (SC 263, 218, n. 2) says Epiphanius probably omitted these words because he placed this material in his section on Valentinus, not on Ptolemy. Markschie's, 'New Research', 249–50, has contested this, arguing that Epiphanius did not have the words in his Greek exemplar, for Epiphanius ends his citation of this section of Irenaeus with the words *πεπλήρωται τὰ Ειρηναίου κατὰ τῶν Οὐαλεντίνων* (GCS Epiphanius i. 435, 9 Holl) and in a later section on Ptolemy (*Panarion* 33. 1. 2–2. 5) reproduces not *AH* 1. 8. 5 but 1. 12. 1, where Irenaeus attributes the teaching to 'the followers of Ptolemy'. He proposes that the words are an explanatory gloss supplied by the 4th-cent. Latin translator. But another explanation is possible. We notice from Rousseau's SC edn. that at *Panar.* 33. 1, where Epiphanius purports to give teaching from Ptolemy, his text differs from that of Hippolytus and the Latin version of Irenaeus 12. 1. The text in Hippolytus, agreeing with the Latin, attributes the material only to 'the more experienced followers of Ptolemy' (*Οἱ δὲ περὶ τὸν Πτολεμαῖον ἐμπειρότεροι... λέγουσιν*), while Epiphanius

mistaken.<sup>36</sup> One should also want to question the alleged compatibility between the thought of Ptolemy in the letter and that of Justin and his associates,<sup>37</sup> and the supposedly unproblematic nature of his use of John 1: 3 there. Can the theology of the letter be closer to Justin than to the Valentinian excerpts in *AH* 1. 8? I do not think so. But in any case, even if we should reject Markscheis's proposal, the import of the Ptolemaean heritage does not give more than a marginal foothold for the OJP. Ptolemy's use of John in the *Letter to Flora* would not have drawn as much attention as would his ten references to Matthew, and so it provides no incentive for a theory of orthodox Johannophobia which does not also advance a theory of orthodox Mattheophobia. And even if we were able to be confident about a date for one or both of these 'Ptolemaean' works as early as the early 160s,<sup>38</sup> we would still have to conclude that neither the *Letter to Flora* nor any other works he might have authored, including the exposition of the Johannine Prologue known to Irenaeus, can have had a great effect in orthodox circles—unless the effect was to stimulate Johannophilia instead of Johannophobia. For we are still very close to the time from which, by all accounts, and particularly as the demonstration above makes plain, orthodox use of this Gospel begins to show itself strong. After reviewing the evidence of Melito of Sardis, Claudius Appolinarius of Hierapolis, Tatian, and others, I shall be able to speak more definitely about the decade of the 160s itself. For now I only reiterate my former observation that the use of John's Prologue in the Valentinian work explicitly treated by Irenaeus had no deleterious effect on Irenaeus' appreciation for the Fourth Gospel. It appears that this 'Ptolemaean' exegesis was also known to Clement,

attributes it to Ptolemy and his followers (οὕτως τοῖνυν ὁ Πτολεμαῖος καὶ οἱ σὺν αὐτῷ) and changes the plural verbs to singulars. That Hippolytus and the Latin are correct against Epiphanius is proved also by Tertullian, who in *Val.* 33, says, *hunc malui in locum distulisse aliter atque aliter commendata ab emendationibus Ptolemaei. Exstiterunt enim de schola ipsius discipuli super magistrum...* Why then did Epiphanius change Irenaeus' report and attribute this material to Ptolemy himself? It may be that, having realized that he had already reproduced the Ptolemaean material from 1. 8 in a section on Valentinus (perhaps he only realized it when he got to the end of 1. 8. 5), Epiphanius presented the views Irenaeus attributed to followers of Ptolemy as those of Ptolemy himself.

<sup>36</sup> Markschie's view requires not only that the words are interpolated but that they are also incorrect. But it is worth stating that, even if the attribution to Ptolemy at the end of 1. 8. 5 is not original, this does not necessarily mean it was mistaken. It could be that the translator had located the true source of the citation and included it for the benefit of the reader.

<sup>37</sup> Although the defection of Justin's student Tatian to something resembling Valentinianism might form a bridge. Markschie's, 'Valentinian Gnosticism', 425, 427; 'New Research', 244–9, takes seriously Harnack's contention that this Valentinian Ptolemy is the same man mentioned by Justin in *2Apol.* 2 as a teacher in Rome (recently revived by G. Lüdemann, 'Zur Geschichte', *ZNW* 70 (1979), 100–2), though he is, I believe, rightly sceptical. As he observes, 'Valentinian Gnosticism', 425 n. 100, 'it would be strange if Justin branded the "Valentinians" as heretics [in *Dial.* 35. 6] ... and at the same time wrote, without any commentary, in support of the Valentinian Ptolemy'.

<sup>38</sup> Trying to date Ptolemy's works cannot produce exact results, but it must be remembered that 'Nowhere do we find the claim that Ptolemy was personally a disciple of Valentinus' (Markschie's, 'Valentinian Gnosticism', 426). Markschie's (*ibid.* 428), also observes that Irenaeus 'discusses, in sequence, Valentinus (11. 1), Secundus (11. 2), the other anonymous teacher (11. 3) and finally those of Ptolemy's school (12. 1)'. Ptolemy's *Letter to Flora* presupposes the existence of Marcionite teaching.

and it certainly had no such effect on him, nor upon Hippolytus, Tertullian, or Origen, the only fairly contemporary authors who we know may have had access to it.<sup>39</sup> If someone wants to insist, in spite of this, that it must have tended to turn many other Christians away from the Gospel according to John (and, if consistent, the Gospel according to Matthew), he or she should be obliged to produce evidence.

### *Valentinus*

As for Valentinus himself, despite what one might expect, some experts have confessed that ‘Whether Valentinus himself knew and used the gospel [of John] is uncertain’.<sup>40</sup> Of the handful of fragments of his work which have been preserved by others, some contact with John has been claimed with regard to two of them, but in each case the claim is dubious. Bentley Layton has suggested that John 6: 27 lies behind Valentinus’ statements about Jesus’ physical qualities in an excerpt from his *Epistle to Agathopoda* preserved by Clement of Alexandria (*Strom.* 3. 59. 3; Völker’s fragment 3; Layton’s fragment E).<sup>41</sup> Here, in Layton’s translation, Valentinus says, ‘He was continent, enduring all things. Jesus digested divinity (θεότητα Ἰησοῦς εἰργάζετο): he ate and drank in a special way, without excreting his solids.’

Layton writes that Valentinus’ ‘exaggerated statement about Jesus’ digestion may be based on a New Testament story of Jesus’ command to the people of Tiberias in John 6: 27, playing upon the double meaning of the Greek verb ‘to labor for,’ which can also mean ‘to digest’: ‘Jesus answered them . . . “Do not *labor for* (or *digest*) the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life, which the son of man will give you”’.<sup>42</sup> This, however, seems fairly far-fetched. Besides the question of the proper way to translate Valentinus’ εἰργάζετο,<sup>43</sup> the food Jesus speaks of in John 6: 27 is ‘the bread of life’ (6: 35), while Valentinus is obviously talking here about a special ability of the body of Jesus to process and retain real, physical victuals in a supernatural way.<sup>44</sup> Markschies rejects Layton’s interpret-

<sup>39</sup> According to Mark T. Riley, ‘Q. S. Fl. Tertulliani Adversus Valentinianos. Text, Translation, and Commentary’ (Ph.D. dissertation, Stanford University, 1971), 16, ‘There is no evidence that he [i.e. Tertullian] knew anything about the Valentinians apart from what Irenaeus says’. And Tertullian does not repeat the specific material on the Johannine Prologue from *AH* 1. 8. 5. While this may not bode well for Tertullian’s reputation as a scrupulous researcher, nor does the fact that Tertullian did not have a Valentinian treatise in front of him encourage the idea that these treatises, including the exegesis of John 1: 1–18, were widely available.

<sup>40</sup> Pagels, *Gnostic Exegesis*, 24, who cites for this also von Loewenich, *Das Johannes-Verständnis*, 72–4, and Sanders, *Fourth Gospel*, 33–4. Von Loewenich, *Das Johannes-Verständnis*, 71 n. 1, says ‘Es ist fraglich, ob schon die ältesten Valentinianer das Joh-Ev gekannt haben’.

<sup>41</sup> W. Völker, *Quellen zur Geschichte der christlichen Gnosis* (Tübingen, 1932), 60; Layton, *The Gnostic Scriptures*, 239.

<sup>42</sup> Layton, *The Gnostic Scriptures*, 238.

<sup>43</sup> See C. Markschies, *Valentinus Gnosticus? Untersuchungen zur valentinianischen Gnosis mit einem Kommentar zu den Fragmenten Valentins*, WUNT 65 (Tübingen, 1992), 91–8.

<sup>44</sup> E. Procter, *Christian Controversy in Alexandria* (New York, 1995), 69–70 observes that Clement, in *Strom.* 6. 71. 2–3, actually takes over basically the view of Valentinus as his own, after criticizing

ation,<sup>45</sup> preferring the translation, 'Jesus *verwirklichte* seine Gottheit', Jesus realized, actualized, practised, or exercised, his deity.<sup>46</sup> Yet, of this translation, he writes, 'ist zumindest nicht ausgeschlossen, daß dabei auch eine biblische Anspielung auf die johanneische Vorstellung vom *Werk des Vaters* vorliegt, das der Logos und Sohn tut: Jesus praktizierte, übt die Gottheit als Werk aus', referring to John 5: 20, 36; 7: 3, 21; 9: 3, 4; 10: 25, 32, 37, 38; 14: 10, 11; 15: 24.<sup>47</sup> While it is certainly possible that such a concept of Jesus 'practising' or 'exercising' his deity might reflect a knowledge of this Johannine theme, the connection is not overt or unambiguous.

Another possible Johannine allusion has been claimed from Völker's fragment 7 (Layton's A),<sup>48</sup> preserved by Hippolytus (*Ref.* 6. 42. 2): 'For Valentinus says he saw a newborn babe, and questioned it to find out who it was. And the babe answered him saying that it was the Word (λόγος). Thereupon, he adds to this a certain pompous tale, intending to derive from this his attempt at a sect.' Robert M. Grant suggested an allusion here to John 1: 1.<sup>49</sup> Markschies, on the other hand, points out that the extract is too brief for us to tell whether Valentinus, like Justin, had a 'Logos-Theologie' or, if he did, what role it might have played in his own theology.<sup>50</sup> But he suggests another link to John in the presumed answer of the infant, behind Hippolytus' report, which would have begun with ἐγὼ εἶμι.<sup>51</sup> The report is of a vision which, according to Hippolytus, Valentinus claims he had, which gives the appearance of documenting the origins of Valentinus' system as the result of a revelation. The Logos mentioned here seems to be a manifestation of the Logos of the pleroma. This would be confirmed by analogy with the vision which Marcus, 'imitating his teacher', also claimed to have, as Hippolytus reports in the same passage. 'Marcus, making a similar attempt... asserts that the Tetrad came to him in the form of a woman'.<sup>52</sup> This Tetrad then related a story about the genesis of the aeons, the first of which to be emitted from the mouth of the self-existent Father was the

Valentinus in 3. 59. 3. Clement did modify Valentinus' idea, however, by insisting that Jesus' body was flesh and not merely of psychic substance, holding, however, that the Saviour ate and drank merely 'to prevent his disciples from thinking that he did not have a real physical body' (70).

<sup>45</sup> Markschies, *Valentinus Gnosticus?* 92.

<sup>46</sup> R. M. Grant, *Gnosticism: An Anthology* (London, 1961), 144, translates, 'Jesus exercised his divine nature'.

<sup>47</sup> Markschies, *Valentinus Gnosticus?* 97.

<sup>48</sup> W. Völker, *Quellen zur Geschichte der Christlichen Gnosis* (Tübingen, 1932) 59; Layton, *The Gnostic Scriptures*, 231. The translation here is Layton's.

<sup>49</sup> Grant, *Gnosticism*, 141, 'it can be imagined that the Logos is the Logos of Jewish speculation and the Fourth Gospel'.

<sup>50</sup> Markschies, *Valentinus Gnosticus?* 212.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.* 213.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.* 205–7, following L. Abrahamowski, 'Ein gnostischer Logostheologe: Umfang und Redaktor des gnostischen Sonderguts in Hippolyts "Widerlegung aller Häresien"', in *Drei christologische Untersuchungen*, BZNW 45 (Berlin, 1981), 18–62, sees this analogy as raising doubts about the historicity of the report about Valentinus, as if it might have been made up for the purpose of forming an antecedent for Marcus. This seems rather too sceptical.

Logos. Here again it is a representative of the pleroma which came to the Valentinian adept in human form, and here again the Logos in question is the heavenly aeon. If so, though a knowledge of John 1 may be presupposed, as it seems to have been in the Valentinian version of the pleromatic myth (see below), any possible allusion to John 1: 1 would be quite indirect. Hippolytus gives no indication that he recognized it as an allusion to John 1: 1. But if it ever was recognized as such, one must then reckon with the way Valentinus has used this prime Christological text and its intended and likely effects on an orthodox reader. If an orthodox reader were to make a connection with John 1: 1 (the Word being with God and being God), and possibly to John 1: 14 (the Word becoming flesh), or to John 1: 18 (the Word revealing the Father), the effect on that reader would most likely not have been a sudden revelation that the Fourth Gospel taught Valentinianism, but rather shock and revulsion that Valentinus should present the Logos, who was in the beginning with God and was God, who became flesh and dwelt among his people, full of grace and truth, who is in fact none other than the person of Jesus Christ, in the form of an otherworldly, aeonic visitor to Valentinus, come in the form of an infant to reveal the mysteries of the Valentinian system. We may reasonably guess that it would have struck the average Christian in Rome much as Valentinian exegesis struck Irenaeus in Gaul. If this represents Valentinus' appropriation of the Fourth Gospel's doctrine of the Logos, we may hardly hesitate to see in it a contempt for, even a mockery of, that doctrine. Such a use, as we shall later see, would indeed have parallels with other writers and is by no means out of the question historically. In this case, then, Valentinus' use of the Fourth Gospel might be proved, but with no credible or likely supportive consequences for the OJP. Even so, we probably should be cautious about drawing inferences from this brief and almost contextless (and contested) excerpt in any direction.

If we were to limit our sources for understanding Valentinus and his teaching to the small fragments extracted from his works, we should have doubtful cause to affirm that Valentinus 'received' the Fourth Gospel at all,<sup>53</sup> and should have to say that, if he did, he seems to have used it in rather an 'unreceptive' way. Some have supposed that Valentinus was the author of the Nag Hammadi work, the *Gospel of Truth*. If true, this would enable us to affirm with certainty that he used the Fourth Gospel. But the attribution is quite doubtful, as the text itself is anonymous and as nobody, including Irenaeus, who seems to have known this work, attributes it to him. I shall thus reserve comment about the *Gospel of Truth* until a later point. But because his later followers certainly used the Fourth Gospel, because we have seen enough evidence already (without yet examining

<sup>53</sup> Hengel, *Question*, 146 n. 43; Culpepper, *John*, 115, 'The fragments of Valentinus's work contain no clear evidence that he used the Gospel of John'.

Justin's writings) to make it virtually certain that the Fourth Gospel was being used in Rome by the orthodox at about this time, because the general tendency of the Valentinians, according to Irenaeus and Tertullian, was to use all of the Church's scriptures (*Praescr.* 38), and because of the likely, though not conclusive, evidence from the fragments cited above, we may, I think, be reasonably sure that Valentinus did use it. For positive evidence of this, however, we are left with secondary summaries of his system, ostensibly dependent upon some written work which has not survived independently, and about which there is now controversy about their true attribution. In *AH* 1. 11. 1 Irenaeus ascribes a version of the gnostic myth to Valentinus himself, 'who adapted the principles of the heresy called "Gnostic" to the peculiar character of his own school' (he connects it at one point with the summary he had made in 1. 1). It definitely appears that the names bestowed on certain members of the pleroma in this work have been derived from John's Prologue. Five of the six members of the primary Ogdoad who are the progeny of the primary (non-Johannine) duo, Arrhetus and Sige, have names which occur in John 1: 1-18: Pater and Aletheia, Logos and Zoe, and Anthropos (though not his consort Ecclesia). Some of the names of the remaining twenty-two aeons mentioned in 1. 1. 1 (to which Irenaeus refers in 1. 11. 1) are also arguably inspired by the Fourth Gospel (particularly Paracletos, Pistis, Agape). And the brief exposition attributed by the Latin text to Ptolemy in 1. 8. 5, which relates the Ogdoad directly to John's Prologue, would bear this out. In the system of 1. 8. 5 certain name changes make the connection more explicit. The name of Pater is taken from the second masculine aeon and given to Arrhetus instead. It is replaced by Monogenes, another name from John 1.<sup>54</sup> The name of Sige is replaced with Charis, which also occurs in John 1. The name Ecclesia, which does not itself appear in the Prologue or anywhere else in John's Gospel, is also defended by this author (Ptolemy?) as being implied in John 1: 4, in its mention of Anthropos, the putative conjunctive partner of Ecclesia. Thus it would appear that the 'Ptolemaean' scheme of 1. 8. 5 has been able to work all of the elite eight into the Johannine Prologue.<sup>55</sup> From Irenaeus' presentations in 1. 8. 5 and 1. 11. 1 it would seem that Valentinus, in his makeover of 'gnostic' pleromatic mythology, adapted it to John's Prologue by taking names from the Prologue and giving them to members of the pleroma,<sup>56</sup> and that this process was perfected by his disciple 'Ptolemy'. It should be recalled that later, in 3. 11. 7, Irenaeus will say that the followers of Valentinus used John copiously to illustrate

<sup>54</sup> Tertullian points out in *Val.* 7 that the name Monogenes for this figure is improper because he was not the only offspring of his father. This seems to be another sign that the name was not original to the system but was taken from an alien source.

<sup>55</sup> Cf. Pagels, *Gnostic Exegesis*, 37.

<sup>56</sup> See my comments on the *Apocryphon of John* below.

their ‘conjunctions’. This is just what is apparent from the accounts in *AH* 1. 1. 1; 1. 8. 5; 1. 11. 1.

It appears then that the author of the system summarized by Irenaeus in *AH* 1. 11. 1, whether Valentinus himself or a later follower, did certainly know and use the Fourth Gospel. As far as our evidence goes, this reliance is attested mainly or only from John’s Prologue. And it is virtually restricted to the pleromatic aspect of the Valentinian myth. That is, as we have seen above in the section on Irenaeus, there is not a preponderance of influence from the Fourth Gospel in other areas of Valentinianism as reproduced by Irenaeus. Now comes the delicate matter of trying to ascertain when this ‘adaptation’ of the gnostic myth with help from the Johannine Prologue was made. Let us start with Valentinus himself. Irenaeus tells us that Valentinus came to Rome in the time of Hyginus (136–40; *AH* 3. 4. 3), flourished under Pius (140–54(5)), and remained until Anicetus (154(5)–66). Irenaeus certainly had good contacts with Rome and was interested in the history of the church there, and there is no reason to think that his basic timeline is far askew.<sup>57</sup> Tertullian would later claim that Valentinus at one time expected to be made bishop, and that when these expectations were dashed he broke with the Church (*Val.* 4). If this is true the break probably came shortly after 140, following the election of Pius. We certainly would be on shaky ground to maintain that any radical departure from standard Christian theology such as is represented by Irenaeus’ summary in *AH* 1. 11. 1 could have been publicly made before the early 140s, and it may well be that the distinctive views which now characterize what is known as the Valentinian system were not in place for some years after that. At this point the researches of Christoph Marksches come back into play. Marksches has argued that Valentinus himself never was very ‘Valentinian’. Because of certain questionable aspects of the secondary reports of his teaching by Irenaeus and others, and because these reports do not match up exceptionally well with the fragments of Valentinus’ own writings which have survived, Marksches argues that we may not rely upon the former for our understanding of Valentinus but should regard them as reporting the views of later followers.<sup>58</sup> If Marksches is correct, the ‘gnostic myth’ was never

<sup>57</sup> I am not sure of Marksches’s reasons, ‘Valentinian Gnosticism’, 420, for saying that ‘Valentinus left Rome perhaps already in 155, at the latest in 161’ and for saying that Irenaeus’ visit to Rome in 177/8 was probably his first visit to the city. See my comments above on Irenaeus’ connections with Rome. It appears he was in Rome at the time of Polycarp’s death and probably also when Polycarp had visited Rome in 154/5. Thus Irenaeus would have been in Rome almost certainly while Valentinus was still alive and probably in Rome.

<sup>58</sup> Marksches, *Valentinus Gnosticus?* Idem, ‘Das Problem des historischen Valentin: Neue Forschungen zu Valentinus Gnosticus’, in E. A. Livingstone (ed.), *Studia Patristica*, 24 (Leuven, 1993), 382–9. In ‘New Research’, 225, he reports on his work, ‘an utterly elementary rule of text-interpretation was applied to the short passages which were mainly recorded by Clement of Alexandria and Hippolytus’; ‘A premise for this kind of interpretation however is that one does not ascribe anonymous treatises such as the so-called *Evangelium Veritatis* to Valentinus, and that one does not take the statements of the later anti-heretic authors of the established church Irenaeus, Clement and

appropriated by Valentinus at all but only by later followers. This means that 'the main period of formation of what we call "Valentinian Gnosticism" must have been after the middle of the fifties of the first [*sic*, i.e. second!] century',<sup>59</sup> that is, some time after Valentinus' death, which Irenaeus placed under Anicetus, between 155 and 166. On this supposition, then, we have no reason to think Valentinus made any special use of the Fourth Gospel (unless it was a derisory one), and will have to say that the Valentinian practice of illustrating their conjunctions from the Fourth Gospel came some time later than 155 and perhaps not until after 166. Though we would still have no definitive date for the adoption of the full 'gnostic myth' of aeons by members of the Valentinian school, and the takeover of names from the Johannine Prologue for them, Markschie's conclusions would deliver an added blow to the theory that Valentinian use of John caused or increased orthodox Johannophobia. For these conclusions would tend to allow even less time between the adaptation of the Johannine Prologue by later Valentinians to illustrate their syzygies and the recognized widespread emergence of Johannine use on the part of the orthodox.

Certain doubts remain, it must be said, about Markschie's reconstruction of the history of Valentinianism. As we saw above, his understanding of Ptolemy relies on the phrase *et Ptolemaeus quidem ita* in the Latin of l. 8. 5 being a much later and erroneous gloss. For Valentinus, it relies on Irenaeus being mistaken, or dissembling, in attributing the summary account of *AH* 1. 11. 1 to Valentinus. But Irenaeus distinguishes several varieties of Valentinian teaching, and had no need to make an uncertain attribution to Valentinus. The strength of Markschie's position, it seems to me, is that it takes seriously the differences between the extracts of Valentinus and Ptolemy's *Letter to Flora* on the one hand, and the reports of their systematic developments of the gnostic myth in Irenaeus and the heresiologists on the other, and it places before us the real possibility of evolution in Valentinus' own thought and in the early thought of his school. There may be other plausible ways to account for the difficulty. Irenaeus stresses the evasive and secretive habits of Valentinians in his day, confessing one thing in public but reserving a different meaning for the words (*AH* 1. 31. 4), which may have carried on the practices of their founder.<sup>60</sup> Alternatively, the evolution in Valentinus' own thought may indeed have been quite radical. Certainly by the time Justin published his *Dialogue with Trypho*, probably in *c.*155–60,

Hippolytus concerning Valentinus too seriously'. He states that 'In fact, Irenaeus hardly knew anything about Valentinus, and Clement and Hippolytus only knew fragments of texts from a later Valentinian commentary' (Ibid. 226).

<sup>59</sup> Markschie, 'New Research', at 226; for this statement he refers to *Valentinus Gnosticus?* 392–402.

<sup>60</sup> Procter, *Controversy*, 2–3, 'Apparently, Valentinus remained a member of the established Christian churches, reserving his radical interpretation of the scripture for selected disciples in a school setting outside the regular worship services'. Markschie, of course, rejects this approach to Valentinus.

when Valentinus was probably still alive or only recently deceased, there was an identifiable group called ‘Valentinians’ (οἱ Οὐαλεντινιανοί) because their doctrine originated with a man by that name (*Dial.* 35. 6).<sup>61</sup> Justin considers them false Christians and places them among others who ‘blaspheme the Maker of all things, and Christ who was foretold by Him as coming . . . with whom we have nothing in common, since we know them to be atheists, impious, unrighteous, and sinful, and confessors of Jesus in name only, instead of worshippers of Him’.

But even if we reject Markschies’s reconstruction outright, there is perhaps nothing to connect Valentinus to the Fourth Gospel beyond an apparent borrowing of names from the Johannine Prologue, unless it is a disparaging replacement of the Prologue’s Logos doctrine with another quite foreign one. It is still only with regard to Valentinus’ pupils, Ptolemy (possibly), Theodotus, and Heracleon, writing probably in the 160s, 170s, and 180s, and possibly later, just about contemporaneously with Hegesippus, Theophilus, Irenaeus, and Clement, that we can say Valentinian use of John flourished in any sense. And by now the floodgates of the Great Church’s use of John’s Gospel are already opened. From the presentation above it is clear that from at least the 170s Valentinian use of this Gospel could not have produced much negative reaction against it among the orthodox. In due time we shall be able to speak more clearly about the 160s and earlier.

### *Tatian*

Tatian’s *Diatessaron* was a Gospel harmony based on the four Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Yet I have noted that many scholars do not regard this as an indication of orthodox but of heterodox approval of the Fourth Gospel. Bauer wrote,

To be sure, Justin’s disciple Tatian placed the gospel of John on the same level as the synoptics, but he also broke with the church on account of profound differences in faith—poisoned, so Irenaeus thought, by the Valentinians and Marcion (AH 1. 28. 1 [= 1. 26. 1])—and he left the world capital to move once again toward the East. Thus Tatian cannot provide us with a satisfactory testimony concerning the moods and conditions within the ‘church’ at Rome . . .<sup>62</sup>

Raymond Brown too, while acknowledging the status of the Fourth Gospel in the *Diatessaron*, objected that ‘Tatian was an encratite who played down the value of the flesh, and so he should be reckoned on the heterodox side of the usage of John’.<sup>63</sup> Thus both these scholars, like others, regard Tatian’s work as one more piece of evidence for the heterodox monopoly

<sup>61</sup> As Markschies, ‘Valentinian Gnosticism’, 414, points out, these people probably simply called themselves ‘Christians’ and were called Valentinians by others.

<sup>62</sup> Bauer, *Orthodoxy and Heresy*, 206–7.

<sup>63</sup> Brown, *Community*, 148. Also Barrett, *John* (1978), 125.

on John. The main problem, unacknowledged by these authors, however, is that their assessment requires a relatively late dating of the *Diatessaron*, after Tatian's adoption of encratism. This, as we shall see, is quite questionable. Many have concluded that Justin himself used a synthetic compilation of at least the three Synoptic Gospels, and the more complete work of Tatian may simply have been a continuation of this effort. The second problem is that, even if the *Diatessaron* is from his 'heretical' period, it does not necessarily follow that his inclusion of John was done from heretical motives. Did the encratites too claim John as their 'special Gospel'? This has not yet been alleged. Further, just as important as Tatian's *Diatessaron* is his treatise, *Oratio ad Graecos*, in which he clearly used the Fourth Gospel, particularly the Prologue, several times (chs. 4 (John 4: 24), 5 (John 1: 1), 13 (John 1: 4, 5), 19 (John 1: 3). For the positions of Bauer and Brown to hold, it must also be maintained that this work too comes from Tatian's later, heretical period. But this, as we shall see, is apparently impossible. I shall deal with the important questions of the dating and the orthodoxy of Tatian's works in more detail at a later point. I only observe now that Tatian's value in supporting the OJP relies upon the strength of the case for a late dating of both of these works, after Tatian's defection from the catholics.

And as to Tatian's potential for inciting any orthodox Johannophobia, we must also keep the following in mind: the earlier the dates of the *Diatessaron* and the *Oratio ad Graecos*, the more clearly they indicate orthodox reception of John, and the later the dates, the more likely they *may* indicate heterodox use, but the less likely they could have been a significant cause of Johannophobia among the orthodox. We may have to conclude that the use of John in the *Diatessaron* does not indicate a heretical predilection for it any more than the use of Matthew, Mark, and Luke in the same work indicates a predilection for them.

It appears that the consensus view about the extent of orthodox Johannophobia must undergo yet more drastic revisions, if it is to survive at all. It should be clear that it can no longer rest its fortunes on Heracleon's commentary, or upon Theodotus' excerpts, or even on Ptolemy's exegesis of the Prologue, and that only limited help, if indeed any, can be derived from Valentinus himself. Nor can Tatian the encratite be considered a reliable crutch. Yet it is also true that most scholars believe the connections between the Fourth Gospel and gnosticism go back to a much earlier time, and that Johannophobia's chilling effects were felt from the time of the Gospel's origin until these Valentinian and encratite teachers began writing. But if this is the case, it is still not unreasonable to ask for evidence.

If such evidence exists, it is likely to be found in gnostic sources which have some reasonable claim to predating 170, and for them to be considered as strong forces they should predate 170 by some distance. I shall begin, then, with the earliest known gnostic systems of the second century and work back up to Ptolemy and Irenaeus.

*Basilides*

From the scholars cited at the beginning of this study in support of the OJP there is no claim of a particular knowledge or use of the Fourth Gospel by the heresies of the Samaritans Simon and Menander, or by the Antiochene Saturninus. Certainly from the descriptions of their systems in Irenaeus and other early heresiologists we would have no reason to think that any of them valued or even knew the Fourth Gospel. Of known gnostics, the first to be named as being in any way partial to John is Basilides of Alexandria, who is mentioned by Sanders and Gamble, and probably alluded to by others.<sup>64</sup>

According to Eusebius, Basilides taught in Egypt in the reign of Hadrian (117–38); according to Clement (*Strom.* 3. 75. 13–16; 7. 106. 4), Basilides lived in the time of Antoninus Pius.<sup>65</sup> That Basilides at this early time and in Egypt may have known John's Gospel is not at all, in my opinion, unlikely. He is contemporary with Papias, who knew the Fourth Gospel and, as I have argued, attributed it to John the apostle.<sup>66</sup> The papyrus fragment of John  $\text{P}^{52}$  may date from around this time, and was found in Egypt. We cannot be sure that it was copied in Egypt or when it arrived there, but most have seen it as evidence of the early inroads made by the Fourth Gospel among Christians in Egypt, and so it would offer some support for this possibility.

Basilides' use of John's Gospel, however, is known only from the account of his teaching given by Hippolytus of Rome in his *Refutation of All Heresies*, in the third or fourth decade of the third century. And there is a real problem here, because Hippolytus' account differs so markedly from those of Irenaeus and Clement of Alexandria (whose accounts contain no clear contacts with the Fourth Gospel) that most scholars now believe it reports the views not of Basilides himself but of some later followers (perhaps Isidore?).<sup>67</sup> It does not appear, then, that we can safely attribute the use of John's Gospel evident in Hippolytus' fragments to Basilides himself or to gnostic use in the reign of Hadrian. This aspect of the cases of Sanders, Gamble, and others for the OJP, then, does not appear solid. Still, if followers of Basilides later in the second century did use John, it may be instruct-

<sup>64</sup> Sanders, *Fourth Gospel*, 65. Gamble, *Canon*, 33.

<sup>65</sup> He may be, as Procter, *Controversy*, 1, says, 'the first Christian in Egypt about whom we have any certain knowledge'.

<sup>66</sup> C. E. Hill, 'What Papias Said about John', *JTS* ns 49 (1998), 582–629, and see below.

<sup>67</sup> Layton, *The Gnostic Scriptures*, 418–19 n. 2; G. Filoramo, *A History of Gnosticism*, tr. A. Alcock (ET: Oxford, 1990), 160–1; Procter, *Controversy*, 5 n. 4; W. A. Löhr, *Basilides und seine Schule: Eine Studie zur Theologie- und Kirchengeschichte des Zweiten Jahrhunderts*, WUNT 83 (Tübingen, 1996), 284, 322–3, who cites also G. May, *Schöpfung aus dem Nichts: Die Entstehung der Lehre von der creatio ex nihilo*, Archiv für Kulturgeschichte, 48 (Berlin, 1978), 66–7. Löhr, *Basilides*, 304 n. 76, thinks the reference to John 1: 9 in *Ref.* 7. 22. 4 in particular is not from Basilides but from a redactor. In developing his theory Sanders, *Fourth Gospel*, 51–5, however, explicitly favoured Hippolytus' account over that of Irenaeus; Hillmer, 'Second Century', 132–5, was more doubtful, concluding that it was unlikely from the work of Basilides.

ive for us to examine the report of Hippolytus to see the scope of their usage.

The first of the two 'citations' found in Hippolytus' account is a bit clouded by the question of its correct punctuation: 'And this, he says, is that which has been stated in the Gospels: "He was the true light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world"' (*Ref.* 7. 22. 4). On this punctuation, the reference to John 1: 9 would be from the follower of Basilides, but the reference to 'the Gospels' would be from Hippolytus. Or should the text be punctuated, "'And this", he says, "is that which has been stated in the Gospels: He was the true light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world"'? In this case the reference to 'the Gospels' comes from the Basilidean. Hippolytus' normal practice of copying from his sources verbatim, as observed by Marcovich,<sup>68</sup> would suggest the latter alternative. The other apparent citation comes in *Refutation* 7. 27, 'And that each thing, says (Basilides), has its own particular times, the Saviour is a sufficient (witness) when He observes, "mine hour is not yet come" (Jn. 2. 4)'. This, combined with either reading of *Refutation* 7. 22. 4 allows us to conclude that this writer did know John's Gospel.<sup>69</sup> And if we assume the second punctuation of the earlier citation in 7. 22. 4, it will have to be admitted not only that he knew John's Gospel, but that he refers this Johannine material to what is stated 'in the Gospels', as if referring to some well-known collection, of which John is an acknowledged member.<sup>70</sup> These quotations then would need to be seen as reflecting a fairly definite conception of John as an authoritative source of information about Jesus, however interpreted.

Some Basilidean author, then, certainly knew and used the Gospel according to John, though his placement in the second century is vague. But if this author thought John was a 'gnostic' Gospel he must have thought two or three of the Synoptic Gospels were too, for according to Irenaeus, Basilides himself must have known the Synoptic account of Simon of Cyrene carrying the cross in the stead of Jesus (Irenaeus, *AH* 1. 24. 4).<sup>71</sup> And Clement of Alexandria actually says that the Basilideans 'boast of

<sup>68</sup> M. Marcovich (ed.), *Hippolytus. Refutatio Omnium Haeresium*, *PTS* 25 (Berlin, 1986), 33, 50, 'That simply means that *Hippolytus' passion for plagiarizing his sources is a blessing for us*, since we can be reasonably sure that he is, as a rule, faithfully copying his source'.

<sup>69</sup> Though taking the first reading of *Ref.* 7. 22. 4 one might approach the matter as Helmut Koester approaches the matter of the Johannine material contained in the writings of Justin Martyr, that is, by attributing the Johannine material instead to a floating tradition used by both the Basilideans and the author or redactor of the Fourth Gospel. One might deal similarly with the other apparent citation, in *Ref.* 7. 27. But the correspondence with the Gospel seems too close for such a theory to be convincing, particularly if the writing on which Hippolytus depends is from the latter half of the 2nd cent.

<sup>70</sup> This is why Hillmer, 'Second Century', 133, thought it unlikely that this is from Basilides himself but from some followers after the middle of the 2nd cent.

<sup>71</sup> His use is apparently from Mark rather than Matthew or Luke (B. A. Pearson, 'Pre-Valentinian Gnosticism in Alexandria', in B. A. Pearson (ed.), *The Future of Early Christianity: Essays in Honor of Helmut Koester* (Minneapolis, 1991), 455–66, at 462)

adducing the opinion of Matthew', not of John (*Strom.* 7. 17 ANF). And in the account given by Hippolytus there is a clear allusion to Matthew 2: 1–2 (Hippolytus, *Ref.* 7. 27. 5) and a citation of Luke 1: 35 (Hippolytus, *Ref.* 7. 26. 9). Along with a gnostic John, then, we must also be willing to speak of a gnostic Matthew and a gnostic Luke; also a gnostic Genesis (Hippolytus *Ref.* 7. 22. 3; 23. 1; Clement Al, *Strom.* 4. 165. 3); a gnostic Exodus (Hippolytus, *Ref.* 7. 25. 4); a gnostic Job (Clement Al., *Strom.* 4. 83. 1); a gnostic Psalms (Hippolytus, *Ref.* 7. 22. 3, 15; 26. 2, 4); a gnostic Isaiah (Hippolytus, *Ref.* 7. 25. 3; 27. 3); a gnostic Acts of the Apostles (Hippolytus *Ref.* 7. 20. 1);<sup>72</sup> a gnostic Romans (Hippolytus, *Ref.* 7. 25. 1, 2; Origen, *Comm. Rom.* 5. 1); a gnostic 1 Corinthians (Hippolytus, *Ref.* 7. 26. 3); a gnostic 2 Corinthians (Hippolytus, *Ref.* 7. 26. 7); a gnostic Ephesians (Hippolytus, *Ref.* 7. 20. 3; 25. 5; 26. 4, 7); a gnostic Colossians (Hippolytus, *Ref.* 7. 25. 3); and probably a gnostic 1 Peter (Clement Al., *Strom.* 4. 81. 2–83. 2),<sup>73</sup> for all of these books, and surely more,<sup>74</sup> were apparently used in second-century expressions of Basilidean teaching.<sup>75</sup>

And no matter when Hippolytus' Basilidean author wrote, we should have to conclude that on the most generous of allowances there is certainly no preponderance of Johannine influence in his system, nothing which could justify thinking that John was specially prized by the Basilideans or regarded as unusually conducive to their system of thought. The citations of Basilidean teaching, some from Basilides' son Isidore, given by Clement of Alexandria, contain several references to the OT, to Matthew, and to 1 Corinthians, but none to John.<sup>76</sup> The citations in Hippolytus' account might indicate a 'reception' of the Fourth Gospel, but they show no close affinity with its thought. And this indeed is what we might expect from their own claims of apostolic succession. The Basilideans, we are told by Clement and Hippolytus, claimed to be the direct heirs of secret apostolic tradition, but the apostles whom they claimed as their progenitors were Peter, whose interpreter was Glaucias, the instructor of Basilides, and the replacement apostle, Matthias (*Strom.* 7. 106. 4; 7. 108. 1; cf. 3. 26. 3; *Ref.* 7. 20. 1). Their list of apostolic predecessors evidently did not include John. We are thus left with precious little on which to construct a theory that Basilides or his followers frightened off other Christians from using John.

<sup>72</sup> Whence he must have learnt about the disciple Matthias.

<sup>73</sup> Cf. Layton, *The Gnostic Scriptures*, 440–1.

<sup>74</sup> Including a gnostic Homer, whose help is enlisted in Hippolytus, *Ref.* 7. 22. 8.

<sup>75</sup> The use of these NT works in Hippolytus' treatment is precisely one reason Löhr, *Basilides*, 313 gives for regarding Hippolytus' *Vorlage* as from a later representative writing after 150, and not from Basilides himself. Taking as his base instead only the eight extracts made from Basilides' work by Clement and Origen (and collected by Layton), Pearson, 'Pre-Valentinian Gnosticism in Alexandria', 462, writes, 'The fragments of Basilides... show knowledge and use of the Pauline epistles (fig. F) and the Gospel of Matthew (fig. G)'. The last-named fragment, the most extensive one preserved, is from book 23 of Basilides' lost *Exegetica* and may constitute part of a commentary on 1 Peter 4.

<sup>76</sup> See Procter, *Controversy*, 7–9, 31–7, 65–6, 87–96, and notes.

It is more realistic to believe that the later Basilideans known to Hippolytus, like most of the second-century sects, besides using their own compositions, took over whatever parts of the more widely accepted Christian writings they believed could be used to advance their views or to add plausibility to their movement in the eyes of the general Christian population.

### *Carpocrates*

About contemporary with Basilides and also hailing from Egypt is the teacher Carpocrates, whose followers included a certain Marcellina who came to Rome during the episcopate of Anicetus (155–66) (*AH* 1. 25. 6). Carpocrates is one of the few heretics whose followers 'style themselves Gnostics', according to Irenaeus. This is of especial interest because his system evidently did not utilize the so-called basic 'gnostic myth'.<sup>77</sup> Yet the Carpocratians did teach a sort of adoptionism, somewhat like that of Cerinthus, and could be regarded as forerunners of Valentinus on this point. On the matter of Carpocrates' written authorities Birger Pearson says,

What is of primary importance for the present discussion is the written sources used by Carpocrates, to the extent that we can ascertain them from the account presented by Irenaeus. These sources turn out to be, chiefly, New Testament books. The dominical saying about agreeing with one's adversary (Matt 5: 25–26; Luke 12: 58–59) is used to bolster the doctrine that all sins must be completed in this life in order to escape reincarnation (*Adv. haer.* 1. 25. 4). A saying in the Gospel of Mark (4: 10–11) is used to bolster the Carpocratian claim to be in possession of Jesus' esoteric teaching (*Adv. haer.* 1. 25. 5). And there is an allusion to the (deutero-) Pauline doctrine of salvation by faith (Eph 2: 8), cited as a basis for Carpocratian ethics (*Adv. haer.* 1. 25. 5).<sup>78</sup>

So far, there is no mention of Carpocrates' use of the Fourth Gospel. Pearson says, 'The Gospel of Matthew, at least, seems to have been used, as well as a version of the Gospel of Mark', and possibly, *The Secret Gospel of Mark*.<sup>79</sup> The last-mentioned work, has, of course, come up because of Morton Smith's discovery of a letter attributed to Clement of Alexandria in which Clement speaks of a *SGM* and gives two excerpts from it.<sup>80</sup> Both of these excerpts arguably contain material which is reminiscent of certain features of the Fourth Gospel, mainly its account of Jesus' raising of Lazarus. A cloud hangs over this whole problem, for many scholars dispute the authenticity of the Clementine letter. And if one accepts it, there are many questions about the apocryphal Gospel which have been variously

<sup>77</sup> Layton, *The Gnostic Scriptures*, 199.

<sup>78</sup> Pearson, 'Pre-Valentinian Gnosticism in Alexandria', 464.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>80</sup> M. Smith, *Clement of Alexandria and a Secret Gospel of Mark* (Cambridge, Mass., 1973); *The Secret Gospel: The Discovery and Interpretation of the Secret Gospel According to Mark* (New York, 1973); 'Clement of Alexandria and Secret Mark: The Score at the End of the First Decade', *HTR* 75 (1982), 449–61.

answered by scholars. In particular, though ‘Clement’ says the apocryphal Gospel was written by Mark himself, no scholar of whom I am aware accepts this at face value,<sup>81</sup> and the work may or may not have antedated Carpocrates. Smith himself argued that the author of the *SGM* did not know John’s Gospel but that the two had a common source. Raymond Brown contested this, arguing persuasively that the author or compiler of *SGM*, whom Brown would place at around the middle of the second century, was familiar with the Fourth Gospel itself. He compares the method of the compiler with that of the author of the Egerton Gospel and Tatian’s *Diatessaron*. ‘[I]t is closer in technique to Egerton which weaves together into a consecutive narrative sentences and phrases from the four Gospels and an agraphon’.<sup>82</sup> The parts which Brown thinks are borrowed from John are ‘recast’ in Markan style to conform to the rest of the work, so that they do not preserve the distinctive vocabulary of John nor, of course, their original setting in the Johannine narrative. Franz Neiryneck, writing more recently, agrees, ‘The complexity of Synoptic and Johannine reminiscences and the combination of the parallels do not allow for the reconstruction of a pre-Markan or a pre-Johannine source. The contacts with the Lazarus story are undeniable (Jn 12,1; 11,1 Bethany, 2 ἦς ὁ ἀδελφός, 32 fell at his feet, μου ἀπέθανεν ὁ ἀδελφός) but scarcely enough to form a coherent story.’<sup>83</sup>

If we accept the authenticity of the Clementine letter, it must also be remembered that Clement is writing to Theodotus about Carpocratian re-interpretation of the *SGM* and falsification through a number of additions; the *SGM* itself, a copy of which is accessible to Clement, is neither Carpocratian nor heretical. At the most, then, we have a report about (later) Carpocratians using an apparently orthodox work which used the Fourth Gospel. By the time Clement wrote (probably the mid-190s or later),<sup>84</sup> however, I must emphasize again, there was no longer any real danger (if there ever was) of the Fourth Gospel being shunned by the orthodox because of supposed gnostic affinities or connections. The adoption of Johannine material in the *SGM* then can add nothing to the previous conclusion about the Carpocratians derived from the extant information in Irenaeus and other heresiologists. The portions of the *SGM* which offended Clement and Theodore are, after all, Carpocratian additions to what was alleged to be a modified version of Mark. If they were to cast shadows upon the

<sup>81</sup> Smith, ‘Score’, 457, wrote in 1982 that ‘Clement’s attribution of the gospel to “Mark” is universally rejected’.

<sup>82</sup> R. Brown, ‘The Relation of “The Secret Gospel of Mark” to the Fourth Gospel’, *CBQ* 36 (1974), 466–85 at 477.

<sup>83</sup> F. Neiryneck, ‘The Apocryphal Gospels and the Gospel of Mark’, in J.-M. Sevrin (ed.), *The New Testament in Early Christianity: La Réception des écrits néotestamentaires dans le christianisme primitif*, BETL 86 (1989), 123–75, at 170.

<sup>84</sup> If Clement’s letter is authentic, it is likely later than book 3 of the *Stromateis*, where Clement’s treatment of the Carpocratians bears no signs of any knowledge of the apocryphal Mark issue.

orthodox use of any Christian Gospel, it would surely have been Mark, not John.

We appear to have in the Carpocratians, then, an early Egyptian gnostic group which has left scarcely a trace of any use of the Fourth Gospel at all. Were they too, like the orthodox, scared off by other gnostics from using John? Were they perhaps scared off by the orthodox? We cannot now know, but here is one gnostic group at least which apparently could not have contributed to the phenomenon of orthodox Johannophobia.

### *Cerinthus*

Though the heretic Cerinthus, according to Irenaeus contemporary with the aged apostle John himself, has left no writings and cannot be cited as a direct example of the gnostic appropriation of John, his name surfaces at several points in the second and third centuries and some scholars have not hesitated to draw him into the history of the Johannine community.<sup>85</sup> 'Cerinthian thought', writes Raymond Brown, 'may represent a development of the interpretation of John advocated by the secessionists described in 1 John—a development as they moved down the path toward gnosticism'.<sup>86</sup> It is justifiable to think that there must have been some historical nexus between Cerinthus, at least the Cerinthian legacy, and the Johannine tradition.<sup>87</sup> This arises not only from the striking similarity between some of the aspects of Cerinthus' teaching as recorded by Irenaeus (*AH* 1. 26. 1) and the apparent views of the 'seceders' mentioned in 1 John.<sup>88</sup> Irenaeus reports the Polycarpan story of John and Cerinthus at the Ephesian baths (*AH* 3. 3. 4). He claims further that John wrote his Gospel and hints that he wrote his First Epistle to dispel Cerinthus' poison (*AH* 3. 11. 1; 16. 5).

In this context the *Epistula Apostolorum*, which sets itself explicitly against the teaching of Cerinthus and Simon, and which relies so heavily upon the Fourth Gospel, takes on a real significance. I have also suggested above that the Nag Hammadi document *Apocryphon of James*, with its notion of a cessation of prophecy which approximates that of the Johannophobes known to Irenaeus (*AH* 3. 11. 9), has ties with the Cerinthian heritage. This nexus so far observed is one of mutual antagonism between the Johannine and Cerinthus legacies. With Gaius, as we have seen, there is the somewhat ambiguous association of Cerinthus' chiliastic views with the Revelation of John, an association which at any rate is clearly seen in Dionysius' report of some who had charged that the heretic was the ghost author of Revelation. Growing out of the second-century context, even this bogus charge is based

<sup>85</sup> Brown, *Community*, 24, 149; *The Epistles of John*, 771.

<sup>86</sup> Brown, *The Epistles of John*, 771; cf. his *An Introduction to the New Testament* (New York, 1997), 391.

<sup>87</sup> This nexus, it is hoped, will be the subject of a future study.

<sup>88</sup> See Brown's list, *The Epistles of John*, 65, of modern scholars who connect the opponents in some way to Cerinthus.

on the supposition of an irreconcilable disparity between Cerinthus and John the Apostle, though it was made in an effort to discredit the Apocalypse and its supposed chiliasm as coming from John. Some scholars have posited on the other hand that it was Irenaeus, in an effort to claim the witness of the Fourth Gospel, who cunningly concocted the legend of the Ephesian bath-house and whose tendentious claim about John's motives in writing the Gospel masked the reality of an abiding, deep affinity between Cerinthian and Johannine thought.<sup>89</sup> The evidence of the *Ep. Apost.* and the *Ap. Jas.*, however, independently tends to support Irenaeus, as does the evidence of 1 John. We also are reminded that the Dionysian report associates only the Apocalypse, not the Gospel, with Cerinthus, and that it does so in terms of Cerinthus' chiliasm, not his docetism or gnosticism. It is only the later and somewhat dubious accounts of Epiphanius and Dionysius bar Salibi, which associate Cerinthus with the Gospel.

It is enough to point out here that the earliest evidence, from 1 John, *Ep. Apost.*, *ApocJas.*, and Irenaeus (Polycarp)<sup>90</sup> establishes a mutual antagonism between the Cerinthian and the Johannine traditions, and that the later evidence of Gaius, Dionysius of Alexandria, and even later writers, is consistent with this. I shall have some opportunity to touch upon this again when I consider the *Apocryphon of James* on its own. But the potential significance of such an antagonism, particularly if it can be seen as going back as far as the production of any of the Johannine writings, but even if it only pertains to the immediate Johannine and Cerinthian legacies, should be obvious. It constitutes a formulation derived from the sources themselves, a mapping-out of the theological terrain with regard to Johannism and gnosticism, which directly challenges the status quo of modern Johannine studies. The full import of its challenge, I think, has not yet been realized.

#### OTHER GNOSTIC GROUPS MENTIONED BY THE HERESIOLOGISTS: OPHITES, NAASSENES, PERETAE

Also roughly contemporary with Basilides and Carpocrates are various groups known to later writers by the names of Barbeloites, Ophites, Naasenes, Sethians, Cainites, and Peratae. Whether or not they were actually distinct groups, these all share an adherence to an early and originally pre-Valentinian form of the 'basic gnostic myth', and may be termed gnostics proper.<sup>91</sup> Irenaeus seems to describe three of these in successive chapters of

<sup>89</sup> e.g. Haenchen, *John 1*, 23–4. Even Brown's understanding of the seceders and their relation to Cerinthus requires that the early Cerinthians had a viable interpretation of the Johannine Gospel.

<sup>90</sup> C. E. Hill, 'Cerinthus, Gnostic or Chiliast?', *J ECS* 8 (2000), 135–72, at 155–8.

<sup>91</sup> Layton, *The Gnostic Scriptures*, p. xv; M. J. Edwards, 'Gnostics and Valentinians in the Church Fathers', *JTS* ns 40 (1989), 26–47. Presumably these came into being in Egypt, but this is not certain. Jerome in 387 mentioned Ophites and Borborites in his day in the province of Galatia (Preface to book 2 of his commentary on Galatians).

*AH*: the Barbeloites (*AH* 1. 29), the Ophites (*AH* 1. 30) and the Cainites (*AH* 1. 31. 1–2).<sup>92</sup> In the system of the Cainites and the Barbelo-agnostics as described by Irenaeus there is nothing which is reminiscent of Johannine themes. But the source of Irenaeus' description of the Barbeloites has been found in (some version of) the Nag Hammadi text entitled *The Apocryphon of John*. As the title indicates, it is presented as a revelation made to John, and this John is the son of Zebedee (1. 5–8). Though this work seems to know the attribution of the Apocalypse to John the son of Zebedee (2. 16–17), it shows only debatable signs of influence from the Fourth Gospel but is a full and classic presentation of the gnostic myth (or a portion of it). This text will be examined below, but simply from the description given by Irenaeus, one would have trouble arguing that 'Barbeloite' gnostics would have been the cause of any Johannophobia among the orthodox.

From the reports of the heresiologists there is also nothing in Ophite teaching which savours of Johannine theology and no good reason to imagine that John was specially prized by them in any way. The first report that they knew the Fourth Gospel comes not until the middle of the third-century when Ps. Tertullian tells us that they found a justification for their adoration of the serpentine form from Jesus' own words in John 3: 14: 'Christ himself (they say further) in his gospel imitates Moses' serpent's sacred power, in saying: "And as Moses upreared the serpent in the desert, so it behoveth the Son of man to be upreared (Jn. 3. 14)"' (*Adv. omn. haer.* 2).<sup>93</sup> From Irenaeus' account, the earliest we still have,<sup>94</sup> we may be confident that the Ophites know the Gospel of Luke, for they know about 'the barren Elizabeth', mother of John the Baptist (*AH* 1. 30. 7). They also know Paul's first letter to the Corinthians (*AH* 1. 30. 13). But above all, it is clear from all accounts that the Ophites made very heavy use of the book of Genesis and of the whole Old Testament (*AH* 1. 30; *C. Cels.* 6. 31–2). Of course their reading of the OT was a reading 'against the grain', an inversion of its concepts of good and evil, of the divine and the demonic. But just as subversive was their reading of the NT. Whatever possible effect their teaching could have had on the use of John in the Church is at least as likely for Luke and Paul, and that likelihood would have to be multiplied many times with regard to the OT.

But Origen's report that the great majority of Christians 'neither are acquainted with, nor concern themselves about, such matters' as the arcane mysteries of Ophite teachings (*C. Cels.* 6. 31), cannot be swept aside.<sup>95</sup>

<sup>92</sup> See now A. H. B. Logan, *Gnostic Truth and Christian Heresy* (Edinburgh, 1996), 1–29.

<sup>93</sup> Though Hippolytus affirms the use of this text by the Peratae, see below.

<sup>94</sup> Irenaeus does not use the term 'Ophite', though it is used by Theodoret who has preserved Irenaeus' Greek account. It is also apparent from the remarks of Celsus that he had come across Ophite teaching.

<sup>95</sup> *C. Cels.* 6. 31. Origen affirms that the Ophites 'neither acknowledge Jesus as Saviour, nor God, nor Teacher, nor Son of God' (*C. Cels.* 6. 30). A. B. Scott, 'Churches or Books? Sethian Social Organization', *JECs* 3 (1995), 109–22, at 118, points out that 'So far as we can tell from Origen's

Though Origen, writing in the third century, may not be the final authority on Christian society in the middle or later part of the second century, it is unlikely that the Ophites ever played a very influential role in the beliefs and practices of very many Christians, about the Gospel of John or about anything else. It has even been questioned whether they can be viewed as socially organized ‘groups’ at all, or whether they were instead scattered individual authors writing without the benefit of any social, cultic movements.<sup>96</sup> The chief importance of these groups, or individuals, as far as understanding early Christianity is concerned, is no doubt that they served in some way as sources for the great gnostic-Christian synthesizers and popularizers, the Valentinians.<sup>97</sup> And again, any extrapolations based upon their use of John 3: 14 have to be tempered by the fact that they also used other biblical books in very similar ways to support their distinctive ideas.<sup>98</sup> Their use of John along with other biblical books such as Genesis, Matthew, Luke, and 1 Corinthians is in fact more consistent with the judgement that John must have held a position comparable to these other books among the churches which customarily used them, from which churches the Ophites got the idea for using these books.

Our only knowledge of the sect known as the Naassenes comes from Hippolytus of Rome in *Refutation* 5. 6. 3–11. 1; 10. 9. 1. The Naassene document he used is of uncertain date, but is probably contemporary with Irenaeus.<sup>99</sup> It is quite obvious that its author knew the Gospel of John, as he is recorded as referring to at least ten passages of that Gospel.<sup>100</sup> The Naassenes are thus often cited as evidence of the gnostic predilection for

corpus, many of the groups which have often been regarded as the source of gnosticism did not exist in significant numbers in the third century, and this conclusion is supported by reports from a later date by Epiphanius and Theodoret who also say that such groups as the Sethians, Simonians and Cainites in their day have few if any members. Though it is not impossible that they could have existed as cult movements which simply had died out, this is also what we would have expected if they had existed as what Stark and Bainbridge would call an audience cult, since in this case the sense of group commitment would never have been strong’.

<sup>96</sup> See Scott, ‘Churches or Books?’, 120, ‘Rather than viewing Sethianism [i.e. pre-Valentinian gnosticism] as a group with a strong sense of its own boundaries, we conclude that its organizational structure may have been inherently weak’.

<sup>97</sup> Edwards, ‘Gnostics and Valentinians’, 46, observes that ‘while Irenaeus could write of the Gnostics [i.e. Ophites and the like] as though the mere rehearsal of their opinion would render them odious, the Valentinian heresy, which because it was both more profound and more orthodox, was much the more alluring, could be refuted only by longer arguments and an exposure of its real or supposed antecedents.’

<sup>98</sup> Pagels, *Gnostic Exegesis*, 15, ‘In Hippolytus’ discussion of their exegesis, references to John and Matthew occur frequently; they also cite Luke, Mark, and the Pauline letters’.

<sup>99</sup> Hillmer, ‘Second Century’, 116 n. 33, cites A. D. Nock in *Journal of Hellenic Studies*, 49, 115, for establishing that it must be from the Hadrianic period or later, for it comments on the Hymn to Attis, which is dated to that period. G. Salmon, ‘Ophites’, in *DCB* iv. 86, believes, probably correctly, that the author of this tract was not one of the originators of his sect but a later follower. J. Frickel, *Hellenistische Erlösung in christlicher Deutung: Die gnostische Naassenerschrift. Quellenkritische Studien—Strukturanalyse—Schichtenscheidung—Rekonstruktion der Anthropos-Lehrschrift*, Nag Hammadi Studies, 19 (Leiden, 1984), 160–71, places it between 150 and 190.

<sup>100</sup> For a detailed analysis of each, see Nagel, *Rezeption*, 299–315.

John. Just as we have seen with a number of other gnostics,<sup>101</sup> however, it is just as clear that this Naassene author knew the Gospel of Matthew, which is used even more copiously than John in this account,<sup>102</sup> Luke, Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, and most of the Old Testament, not to mention a certain *Gospel of Thomas* and the *Gospel according to the Egyptians*, as well as Homer and other non-Christian writings. In fact, to gain an idea of the character of this document, the description given by C. H. Dodd is instructive.

... the Naassene document cited at considerable length by Hippolytus (*Refut.* V. 1–11) appears to be in substance a commentary upon a hymn to Attis, the text of which is quoted (v. 9). In this hymn Attis, in the syncretistic fashion of the times, is identified with other divine figures, such as Pan, Osiris and Adonis. The writer takes the various names and titles given to the god in the hymn, and illustrates them by reference to other mythologies. His examples range over a wide field. Among other religions, he is acquainted with Judaism and Christianity, and as he quotes Homer, Empedocles and Anacreon, so he quotes the Old Testament, the canonical gospels, and apparently the apocryphal Gospel of Thomas. The work is in no sense an interpretation of Christianity. In so far as it has any particular religious aim, it would seem to be to show that all religions are manifestations of the one esoteric truth.<sup>103</sup>

Once again we can observe a familiar pattern of gnostic groups taking over books used among the catholics, along with a varying assortment of other texts, bits and pieces of which could be used in support of their teachings.<sup>104</sup> This Naassene author's use of the Fourth Gospel, like his use of the Bible generally, is often connected with his flesh/spirit dualism.<sup>105</sup> Thus his citation of John 3: 6, 'That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the spirit is spirit' in *Ref.* 5. 7. 40. His freedom with texts is seen in his manipulation of John 5: 37 (if indeed it is an allusion to this

<sup>101</sup> The Naassenes, according to Hippolytus, *Ref.* 5. 6. 4, did use the term γνωστικοί for themselves.

<sup>102</sup> Salmon states, 'Ophites', 85, 'The writer... makes free use of the New Testament. He seems to have used all the four Gospels, but that of which he makes most use is St. John's'. By my own count, however, John is cited almost but not quite as frequently as Matthew (Hillmer, 'Second Century', 118, agrees). In any case Pagels, *Gnostic Exegesis*, 16, is quite mistaken when she writes that 'the Naassenes and Peratae referred to the fourth gospel to the virtual exclusion of the synoptics' (*Ref* 5–7), a statement echoed by Sloyan, 'Gnostic Adoption', 125.

<sup>103</sup> C. H. Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge, 1953), 98–9.

<sup>104</sup> Salmon, 'Ophites', 85, mentions the Naassene author's 'tyrannical method of Scripture exegesis by which he can prove any doctrine out of any text'. Speaking of Hippolytus' Naassenes and Peratae, Pagels, *Gnostic Exegesis*, 15, says, 'they approach both Jewish and Christian writings as they approach classical poetry—as a corpus of symbolically written sacred literature'. Maria Grazia Lancellotti, *The Naassenes: A Gnostic Identity Among Judaism, Christianity, Classical and Ancient Near Eastern Traditions*, *Forschungen zur Anthropologie und Religionsgeschichte*, 35 (Münster, 2000), 285, 'As is the case for "pagan" sources, the Scriptures are also used by the Naassenes as a field of research in which to look for those "seeds of truth" which only they are able to recognize.' See Lancellotti's list of scriptural passages used in the Naassene sermon (285–7).

<sup>105</sup> Nagel, *Rezeption*, 300–1, who cites Frickel, *Erlösung*, 173.

text) to make it serve the interests of his brand of docetism.<sup>106</sup> John 5: 37, where Jesus speaks of the Father, ‘His voice you have never heard, his form you have never seen’,<sup>107</sup> becomes a statement about the descending redeemer spoken on the part of believers,

This, says he, is what is spoken: “We have heard his voice, no doubt, but we have not seen his shape.”<sup>108</sup> For the voice of him that is set apart and portrayed is heard; but (his) shape, which descends from above from the unportrayed one,—what sort it is, nobody knows. It resides, however, in an earthly mould, yet no one recognises it. (*Ref.* 5. 8. 14)<sup>109</sup>

That this author had access to a copy of John’s Gospel, that he seems to have regarded it as in some sense a ‘sacred’ text, can hardly be denied. Even so, in the light of his prolific use of other scriptures we cannot say there is a special attachment to John in this work, certainly no more than to Matthew. It may be that John’s own spirit/flesh dualism was found particularly congenial, though the dualism of the Naassene author is more metaphysical than ethical. But his acquisition of John and the other Christian writings may also simply reflect the greater accessibility of these particular writings in his locale in the second half of the second century. In any case, there is no reason to imagine that the Naassenes would have brought to the small numbers of Christians who might have paid attention to their writings more opprobrium onto John than onto Matthew or any of the other biblical books used by them.

The Peretae mentioned by Hippolytus and Clement are very probably not a group separate from the Naassenes (which in turn are probably not far removed from the Ophites described by Irenaeus), though their descriptions are based upon different exemplars.<sup>110</sup> Hippolytus twice informs his reader that prior to his exposure of it this heresy had gone unnoticed (5. 12. 1; 18. 1).<sup>111</sup> From the quotations of their treatises preserved by Hippolytus, their knowledge of at least Matthew, John, and Colossians, beyond the OT, is quite evident.<sup>112</sup> And they certainly must have known more biblical books, particularly if they are to be identified with the Naassenes. Whether they are to be considered separate from the Naassenes and Ophites or not,

<sup>106</sup> Hillmer, ‘Second Century’, 122.

<sup>107</sup> Ὅστε φωνὴν αὐτοῦ πῶποτε ἀκηκόατε οὔτε εἶδος αὐτοῦ ἑώρακάτε.

<sup>108</sup> Φωνὴν μὲν αὐτοῦ ἠκούσαμεν, εἶδος δὲ αὐτοῦ οὐχ ἑώρακάμεν.

<sup>109</sup> *ANF* translation (5. 3).

<sup>110</sup> Origen, *C. Cels.* 6. 28, says that the Ophites were founded by one Euphrates. This is the name given by Hippolytus as the founder of the Peratae (*Ref.* 5. 13. 9). Salmon, ‘Ophites’, 84–7, has satisfactorily shown that the Peratae and the Naassenes mentioned by Hippolytus are one and the same group.

<sup>111</sup> Salmon, ‘Ophites’, 86, ‘The works which Irenaeus refutes were in open circulation but in the time of Hippolytus the Gnostic sects were burrowing underground, and it is his pride to drag to light their secret documents, of which he was evidently an ardent collector’.

<sup>112</sup> Like the Ophites mentioned by Ps. Tertullian, *Adv. omn. haer.* 2, the Peratae according to Hippolytus cited John 3: 14 in support of the serpent (*Ref.* 5. 16. 11).

it is not likely that a group which Hippolytus had to introduce to his readers as his own discovery could be credited with dissuading numbers of Christians in the early second century from using the Gospel of John.

Irenaeus knew at least some writings of some of these groups, and it is only with regard to the Valentinians that he speaks of a 'copious use of that [Gospel] according to John, to illustrate their conjunctions' (*AH* 3. 11. 7). And this seems to have specific reference to the exegetical work of Ptolemy (or a later Valentinian) on John 1 which, as I have observed above, could, under the most favourable conditions, have produced but little orthodox Johannophobia, and most probably produced none. And so it is also with regard to non-Valentinian gnosticism, cited in patristic sources. These too have left us, so far, with a paralysing inability to affirm that the Fourth Gospel was 'especially favored in the second century by gnostic Christians',<sup>113</sup> that 'the gnostics adopted it as their special gospel',<sup>114</sup> or that it was 'much the preserve of heretics'.<sup>115</sup> This translates to an inability to affirm the basis for a theory of widespread orthodox Johannophobia.

### Surviving Gnostic Texts

Our knowledge of second- and third-century sects which are today commonly labelled gnostic is of course quite piecemeal. There must have been many writings, now lost to us, which would have improved our understanding of these sects significantly. While several gnostic or semi-gnostic texts were available at the time when J. N. Sanders wrote his book on the Fourth Gospel in the early Church, a new discovery was made shortly thereafter which promised to do just that. Indeed the Nag Hammadi finds were soon exploited by Hillmer, Barrett, Brown, and many others and have contributed inestimably to the current state of Johannine studies. Nor is it surprising that most experts initially concluded that these new finds supported the orthodox Johannophobia theory, for this theory has provided the working paradigm for the bulk of research. In support of the thesis 'that a wide acceptance of the Fourth Gospel came earlier among heterodox rather than among orthodox Christians', Raymond Brown pointed not only to Heraclion and Ptolemaeus, but to Nag Hammadi.

There is abundant evidence of familiarity with Johannine ideas in the recently published gnostic library from Nag Hammadi... For instance, there is a Word (*Logos*) christology in the *Tripartite Tractate*, and 'I AM' christology in the *Second Apocalypse of James*; also in *The Thunder, the Perfect Mind*, and in the *Trimorphic Protennoia* (where it is joined with a docetic account of the death of Jesus).<sup>116</sup>

<sup>113</sup> Gamble, 'Canonical Formulation of the New Testament', 185.

<sup>114</sup> Charlesworth, *Beloved Disciple*, 382.

<sup>115</sup> Trevett, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 197.

<sup>116</sup> R. E. Brown, *The Community of the Beloved Disciple* (New York, 1979), 147-8.

Koester notes also that ‘Some of the earlier writings from Nag Hammadi also display usage of the Fourth Gospel, e.g., the *Gospel of Philip*...the *Testimony of Truth*’.<sup>117</sup> What James M. Robinson says about Ernst Haenchen, that he ‘recognized in the Gnostic Gospels from Nag Hammadi the opportunity to trace the outcome of the Gnosticizing trajectory in which the Gospel of John is in some way involved, as a new way of casting light on John itself’, would pertain also to many students of these texts.<sup>118</sup> The discovery and publication of the Nag Hammadi texts has presented an opportunity hitherto unknown for illuminating the relationship between John and various forms of gnostic thought. In this chapter I shall examine surviving ‘gnostic’ texts, most of which come from Nag Hammadi, to see what light they cast upon the subject.

#### TEXTS WHICH ARE TOO LATE

Navigating with the Nag Hammadi tractates, of course, poses several special problems. Chief among these is always that most of the texts are not easy to date or to locate within a socio-religious context. Only a portion have any serious claim to the second century, and, obviously, if the work in question is not from the second century it cannot have affected second-century orthodox use.<sup>119</sup> In fact, from all that we have seen above, we should have to stipulate that if a given Nag Hammadi or other gnostic text was not in fairly wide circulation from a time well before c.170–5, when scholars today acknowledge that the Church’s use of the Fourth Gospel was burgeoning, it did not have much effect on orthodox use of John—unless its effect was to promote Johannophilia instead of Johannophobia.

This critical chronology has direct implications for the first document mentioned by Brown in the quotation above, the *Tripartite Tractate*. In their introduction to the work in the third edition of the *NHLE*, Attridge and Pagels state that, ‘Since the doctrine of the text represents a revised form of Valentinian theology which may be a response to the criticism of orthodox theologians such as Irenaeus or Hippolytus, the work was probably written in the early to mid third century.’<sup>120</sup> If these Nag Hammadi scholars are correct, this work exemplified by Brown fails the first test, the test of chronology. Orthodox Christians in c.170 or before have never seen it and cannot have been dissuaded from using the Fourth Gospel because of it.

<sup>117</sup> H. Koester, *Ancient Christian Gospels* (Philadelphia, 1990), 245–6, n. 6.

<sup>118</sup> J. M. Robinson, ‘Foreword’, in E. Haenchen, *John 1* (Philadelphia, 1984), p. xi.

<sup>119</sup> M. Hengel, *Die Johanneische Frage* (Tübingen, 1993), 45, thinks that the Nag Hammadi texts which use the Fourth Gospel, ‘in großer Mehrzahl in die 1. Hälfte des 3. und die 2. Hälfte des 2. Jahrhunderts gehören dürfen’.

<sup>120</sup> *NHLE*<sup>3</sup>, 58. The same authors in *CGL* i. 178, say ‘the first half of the third century A.D., although a date in the late third or early fourth century cannot be excluded’.

The same may probably be said about a work, the *Gospel of Philip*, which both Schnackenburg<sup>121</sup> and Koester cite as an early work which knows the Fourth Gospel. When Schnackenburg wrote, Robert McL. Wilson had recently dated it to the second half of the second century,<sup>122</sup> but as scholarship has progressed the tendency has been to view the work as coming from a generation or two later. J.-E. Ménarde placed it, 'tout au plus IIIe siècle'.<sup>123</sup> W. W. Isenberg thinks it was originally written probably in Syria, 'perhaps as late as the second half of the third century C.E.'.<sup>124</sup> Schenke dates it a little earlier, somewhere around 200, or even in the late second century, but certainly removed some distance from the first generation of Valentinian teachers.<sup>125</sup> But in any case, Röhl argues that its use of material from the Fourth Gospel is rather incidental and unreflective of the actual content or setting of the Gospel,<sup>126</sup> and even if the work could be as early as, say, 160–70, we now know that it could not have had a profound negative influence on the use of John among the churches.

*The Letter of Peter to Philip* is a Valentinian work which has been said to contain a paraphrase of the Johannine Prologue.<sup>127</sup> The resemblances, however, seem quite general and thematic only. Röhl agrees, saying that the author's allusions to the Fourth Gospel are 'eher akzidentiell'.<sup>128</sup> This 'epistle' also knows at least Matthew, Luke, and Acts,<sup>129</sup> and it too is probably post-Irenaean<sup>130</sup> and so could not have engendered any significant Johannophobia among the orthodox.

Here then is a group of Nag Hammadi texts which we may eliminate from consideration as having spawned any measurable Johannophobia among the orthodox. One may always argue the hypothetical possibility that later gnostic texts like these may reflect a use of John that went back much further into the second century. It may be merely accidental that similar texts do not survive from an earlier period. But such an argument if applied to the ques-

<sup>121</sup> R. Schnackenburg, *The Gospel according to St John* (London, 1968), 148–9, 195.

<sup>122</sup> R. McL. Wilson, *The Gospel of Philip. Translated from the Coptic Text, with an Introduction and Commentary* (London, 1962).

<sup>123</sup> J.-E. Ménarde, *L'Évangile selon Philippe: Introduction, Texte-Traduction, Commentaire* (Paris, 1967), 35.

<sup>124</sup> W. W. Isenberg, 'The Gospel of Philip (II, 3)', in *NHLE*<sup>3</sup> 139–41 at 141.

<sup>125</sup> H.-M. Schenke, 'The Gospel of Philip', *NTA*<sup>2</sup> i. 179–87 at 182–3.

<sup>126</sup> G. Röhl, *Die Rezeption des Johannesevangeliums in christlich-gnostischen Schriften aus Nag Hammadi* (Frankfurt am Main, 1991), 162–3.

<sup>127</sup> K. Koschorke, 'Eine gnostische Paraphrase des johanneischen Prologs', *VC* 33 (1979), 383–92.

<sup>128</sup> Röhl, *Rezeption*, 186. See here also his evaluation of Koschorke's claim.

<sup>129</sup> G. P. Luttikhuisen, 'The Letter of Peter to Philip and the New Testament', in R. McL. Wilson (ed.), *Nag Hammadi and Gnosis* (Leiden, 1978), 96–102, at 96, says that the author was 'thoroughly acquainted with' passages in Matthew, Luke, and Acts, 'and made free use of them; he does not quote literally'. See also M. Meyer, 'The Letter of Peter to Philip (VIII, 2)', in *NHLE*<sup>3</sup> 431–3 at 432, who thinks the reference to the 'four words' in 140, 25 is a reference to the four Gospels.

<sup>130</sup> Meyer, *NHLE*<sup>3</sup> 433, 'On the basis of the parallels with *The Apocryphon of John* and Irenaeus, we suggest that *The Letter of Peter to Philip* was written around the end of the second century C.E. or into the third'. H.-G. Bethge, 'The Letter of Peter to Philip', *NTA*<sup>2</sup> i. 342–7 at 344 agrees.

tion of orthodox Johannophobia has to cut both ways. For one must then allow for the possibility (and this will be a much more likely possibility, as we shall see later) that later orthodox use, such as is found in Theophilus, Irenaeus, and Tertullian, also reflects a much earlier orthodox use.

SUPERFICIAL, INCIDENTAL, OR QUESTIONABLE USE OF THE  
FOURTH GOSPEL

The test of chronology will necessarily reduce the number of texts which might be legitimately used to claim an early, widespread use of the Fourth Gospel among heterodox groups, and a cause for orthodox Johannophobia. Most of the Nag Hammadi texts cannot be said with any confidence to pass this test. Even for those texts which may not be disqualified by a probable date after 170 or so, several problems remain. Some texts which are sometimes invoked, such as the *Gospel of Philip* mentioned above, display only a superficial or questionable acquaintance with the Fourth Gospel such that any 'adoption' of the Fourth Gospel would not necessarily have been easily perceived by the reader/hearer. Naturally, if the adoption of the Fourth Gospel was so subtle (or if the reader was not sufficiently familiar with the Fourth Gospel) that the reader did not recognize it, then the tractate could hardly have provoked any Johannophobia among the orthodox. In this category I may mention a few more texts.

The Thunder, the Perfect Mind

Brown cited this text as an example of gnostic use of the Fourth Gospel and thus as generally supporting the theory of orthodox Johannophobia. The indications of the date of *The Thunder, the Perfect Mind* are ambiguous enough to allow for the possibility that it could have been written prior to c.170. On the other hand, there is no record of any mention of this work in the second century, and no trace of its effects. But if we assume that it was written sometime prior to 170 and that it was read by orthodox Christians, we may, I suggest, be quite confident that the average orthodox reader would have missed the 'I AM' Christology which Brown found in this work. The 'I AM' form of speech is used, to be sure, but its use hardly adorns or designates a 'Christology'. The speaker, according to George MacRae, is 'a female figure who is, except possibly for the title, otherwise not specifically identified'.<sup>131</sup> Douglas Parrott says, 'In the tractate, Thunder is allegorized as Perfect Mind, meaning the extension of the divine into the world (1, 1–2). The understanding of Perfect Mind appears to owe much to the Stoic notion of cosmic Pnuma, the active, intelligent element in all things, made up of air and fire.'<sup>132</sup> MacRae says this work 'contains no distinctively

<sup>131</sup> G. W. MacRae, 'The Thunder: Perfect Mind (VI, 2)', *NHLE*<sup>3</sup>, 295.

<sup>132</sup> *NHLE*<sup>3</sup>, 296. Layton, *The Gnostic Scriptures*, 77, however, thinks she is 'afterthought—also known as "life" (Zoe), the female instructing principle, and the holy spirit'.

Christian, Jewish, or gnostic allusions and does not seem clearly to presuppose any particular gnostic myth'.<sup>133</sup> Parrott agrees that it is not really appropriate even to classify this work as 'gnostic'.<sup>134</sup> If it is unlikely that the author's intent was to wean anyone away from 'mainstream' Christianity to some form of gnosticism, it is doubly unlikely that any orthodox Christian readers it might have had in the second century would have associated its 'I am' statements with their allegedly gnostic parallels in the Fourth Gospel. Therefore, *The Thunder, the Perfect Mind* is no evidence for gnostic use of John and it is, to say the least, unlikely that this work would have been the cause for any Johannophobia.

### Apocryphon of John

The next example has a somewhat better claim to knowledge of the Fourth Gospel. Even here, however, there is nothing resembling a 'citation' of the sort which advocates of the OJP typically want to require of orthodox writings. This is why Hillmer in fact denied that the parallels with John were 'clear and definite enough to allow a firm conclusion'.<sup>135</sup> He preferred to say that the two works were joined by a common tradition about a Revealer figure.<sup>136</sup>

It has long been apparent that Irenaeus in *Against Heresies* 1. 29 is familiar with a type of gnostic mythology which is closely related to the literary composition now known as the *Apocryphon of John*, known in three versions from Nag Hammadi and from the famous Berlin Codex (Papyrus Berolinensis no. 8502), discovered in 1896 though not published until 1955. All of these are in Coptic, though the original is thought to have been written in Greek. It is generally thought today that all four of our present texts of the *Apocryphon*<sup>137</sup> represent a somewhat later redaction than that which was known to Irenaeus around 180.<sup>138</sup> The *Apocryphon of John* contains 'one of the most classic narrations of the gnostic myth'.<sup>139</sup>

<sup>133</sup> *NHLE*<sup>3</sup> 296.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>135</sup> M. R. Hillmer, 'The Gospel of John in the Second Century' (Th.D. diss., Harvard University, Apr. 1966), 144. 'The dialogue section following the monologue in which John asks questions and Jesus replies, gives no indication of dependence on John or any close relationship with the gospel' (137); 'In the monologue [the part evidently known to Irenaeus] there are no explicit references to John and no clear quotations, but there are a number of important words which are also key terms in the Fourth Gospel' (137); on the 'frame' section, 'The similarities in all this material and the kind of situation in which they are presented are in no instance close enough to the Gospel of John to postulate direct dependence, and in addition have parallels in traditional gnostic materials' (143).

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.* 144.

<sup>137</sup> Codex III, 1 and BG (Berolinensis 8502) are translated from a short Greek recension, Cod. II, 1 and IV, 1 are from a longer Greek recension.

<sup>138</sup> Michael Waldstein and Frederik Wisse, *The Apocryphon of John: Synopsis of Nag Hammadi Codices II, 1; II, 1 and IV, 1 with BG 8502*, 2, Nag Hammadi Studies, 33 (Leiden, 1995), 1, say, 'Irenaeus... did most likely not know AJ but rather a Gnostic document which was the apparent source of the first part of the main revelation discourse in the book. AJ was written in Greek probably during the early part of the Third Century.'

<sup>139</sup> Layton, *The Gnostic Scriptures*, 23.

A. H. B. Logan argues plausibly that both the *Apocryphon of John* and an apparently earlier myth quoted by Irenaeus in *AH* 1. 29 were influenced by John's Prologue. 'In its present form the *Apocryphon* is clearly dependent on the fourth Gospel and the concerns of the Johannine circle and its interpreters.'<sup>140</sup> While we may agree that the *Apocryphon* and its earlier form known to Irenaeus may be dependent in some way on the Fourth Gospel, it is extremely unclear in what sense we may speak of the *Apocryphon* representing the concerns of any 'Johannine circle'. In any case, in describing the development of the myth in the *Apocryphon of John*, Logan argues,

that it is the growing influence of the Fourth Gospel and its Prologue in particular which has messed up what was a clear and orderly myth of the Father, Mother and Son. That myth, I would argue, originally had no Ennoia, or Logos, or Autogenes, or Truth; it involved the Father, the Invisible Spirit, deciding to reveal himself to Barbelo, i.e. the heavenly Wisdom or Sophia of the Wisdom of Solomon, a virginal spirit acting alone... As a result, and here the fundamentally *Christian* character of the myth comes into view, she, Barbelo, the *Virgin* Spirit, in a typical Gnostic projection of historical earthly beings and events into the heavenly world, as the archetype of the obedient virgin Mary, delighted with the heavenly revelation and visitation, conceives purely spiritually the (*monogenes*) Son...

What I submit has happened is that under the influence of the Fourth Gospel and its distinctive themes, the Son, Christ, has been assimilated to the male paternal characteristic, Light (the Light, which is Christ), so that the latter and the following characteristic, Thelema, have been omitted in Irenaeus's account. At the same time Logos has been added on to the end, with an appropriate female counterpart, Ennoia, being inserted before Prognosis and united with Logos.<sup>141</sup>

Logan goes on to suggest that Autogenes, who is the emission of Ennoia and Logos, 'is best seen as the heavenly archetype of John the Baptist, later than the Logos and witnessing to the Great Light... The presence of Truth as his consort, obscured, as much else in the *Apocryphon*, by its later identification of Christ and Autogenes, is also due to Johannine influence.'<sup>142</sup> We may see that this parallels and confirms what we have seen above with respect to Ptolemy and Heracleon, namely, that the Johannine Prologue was mined by those in the 'gnostic'/Valentinian tradition for names to be secondarily applied to the various members of the pleroma. As Logan says, 'What is important is the attempt to demonstrate how the myth has developed and how Johannine influence is secondary.'<sup>143</sup> This is surely a

<sup>140</sup> A. H. B. Logan, 'John and the Gnostics', *JSNVT* 43 (1991), 41–69, at 56. Logan himself argues that the myth in question has also been influenced at its formative stage by the birth narrative of Luke and perhaps by Hebrews 1–2 (54).

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.* 52–3.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.* 53.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.* 54.

more realistic and less theory-driven analysis than has sometimes been given of the *Apocryphon of John* and other gnostic texts.<sup>144</sup>

In passing, it is hard to overestimate the importance of the fact that this secondary Johannine influence is not used for primarily Christological reasons, but for 'Christianizing' a pleromatic mythology. It too fits quite well under Irenaeus' description of Valentinian use of John, which he said was characterized by the attempt to illustrate their 'conjunctions' or syzygies, except that with the Ptolemaean exegesis there was at least an explicit attempt to relate the myth to the Johannine text as a literary text.

This means that orthodox readers who came into contact with either the *Apocryphon of John* or the earlier version known to Irenaeus may possibly have recognized certain words characteristic of the Prologue of the Fourth Gospel taken over for the pleromatic aeons, as they may have recognized them in Valentinian works. But if so, if they were familiar with both works, it is likely that they also noticed how the Johannine terminology had simply been lifted out to serve the alien mythology of the *Apocryphon*—and was treated with no greater kindness than was the Genesis terminology and the story of the early chapters of Genesis.<sup>145</sup> If Irenaeus recognized the Johannine terminology, he did not conclude that the apocryphon's author was in the same 'trajectory' with the Fourth Gospel, and it certainly produced no Johannophobia in him. It has yet to be proved that the probable reaction of the typical orthodox reader would have been radically different, resulting in a recoiling away from the Fourth Gospel, particularly in view of the relatively superficial awareness of the Fourth Gospel which this work evinces. It is more probable that any recognition of the vocabulary of the Prologue in this document or any of its proposed ancestors would have been accompanied by the recognition that that vocabulary had been put to very questionable use, and would have provoked a reaction similar to the reaction

<sup>144</sup> This brings me to an example of a 'gnostic-John' paradigm controlling research. As Logan, 'John and the Gnostics', 49–50, summarizes the work of M. Tardieu, *Écrits gnostiques: Codex de Berlin, Sources gnostiques et manichéennes*, I (Paris, 1984) at 10, 33, 35–9, the latter thinks the *Ap. Jn.* 'is a Christian text composed of the same material as the Fourth Gospel... that it takes up a position at the heart of the Johannine school, and represents the manifesto of those who refused to compromise with Judaism... He would see the Pronoia hymn as going back to a dissident esoteric circle within the Johannine community, around the time of the final redaction of the Fourth Gospel (c. AD 120), and forming the basis of the threefold structure of our present *Apocryphon*'. But what cause is there to see the position of the *Apocryphon* as at the heart of the Johannine school, except the presupposition that it was so? The use of the Fourth Gospel in this apocryphon is practically confined to its use of the Prologue. And its use of the Prologue is essentially predatory, for the purpose of plastering over the pre-existing names of the pleromatic aeons with theological terms derived from a respected Christian source. This is just about the extent to which the *Ap. Jn.* is 'composed of the same material as the Fourth Gospel'.

<sup>145</sup> We have observed this phenomenon in relation to the Ophites above. Irenaeus' summary stops at the beginning of the section of the *Ap. Jn.* in which 'exposition' of the first chapters of Genesis begins. However, his summary betrays knowledge of at least some portion which explained the first verses of Gen. 1, as well as a portion (Cod. II, 11. 19–21; 13. 8–13; BG 44. 13–18) which contained the Isaianic prooftext (Isa. 45. 5) of the Creator's ignorant arrogance.

Irenaeus had to this work and to the work of the Ophites, of Ptolemy, and of others.

#### CRITICAL OR ADVERSARIAL USE OF THE FOURTH GOSPEL

Taking away such texts which could not have been written prior to *c.*170 or so and those which show only superficial or questionable use of the Fourth Gospel leaves us with relatively few texts. I shall examine in this section five texts for which a plausible case can be made for their existence and circulation prior to this time and which seem to show clear and credible signs of a knowledge of the Fourth Gospel. These are the *Trimorphic Protennoia*, the *Second Apocalypse of James*, the *Apocryphon of James*, the *Acts of John*, and the *Gospel of Thomas*. But that these texts therefore prove or illustrate (a) a heterodox affinity with and preference for John or (b) the probability that they or any other similar works engendered Johannophobia on the part of the orthodox, cannot be concluded. What is often overlooked is that several works which display an unmistakable knowledge of the Fourth Gospel show just as unmistakably a critical attitude towards it, or against some key aspect of it. Thus, despite the sweeping statements of some scholars, the use of the Fourth Gospel in a heterodox source does not necessarily denote a high admiration for that Gospel. It may indicate a 'reception' on the part of somebody, but not necessarily on the part of the authors of these works.

#### *Trimorphic Protennoia*

Brown also mentioned the *Trimorphic Protennoia* as a Nag Hammadi work which contains "a Word (*Logos*) christology" and an "I AM" christology, combined with a docetic account of Jesus' death'.<sup>146</sup> This is regarded by him as part of the evidence 'that a wide acceptance of the Fourth Gospel came earlier among heterodox rather than among orthodox Christians'.<sup>147</sup> The *Trimorphic Protennoia*, the first tractate in Codex XIII of the Nag Hammadi library, has in fact become for some the long-sought 'missing link'<sup>148</sup> which is thought to connect the Johannine Prologue to 'gnosticism'. According to George MacRae, 'The most clearly focused and concrete contribution to the discussion of a possible Gnostic background to the Fourth Gospel is the suggestion that the Johannine Prologue is related to

<sup>146</sup> Brown, *Community*, 147–8.

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.* 147.

<sup>148</sup> The phrase was applied by Logan, 'John and the Gnostics', 46, who, however, does not agree with such an analysis. It was used by James M. Robinson in the discussion following his paper at the 1978 Yale conference on gnosticism in the following way, 'Perhaps the triad in the *Trimorphic Protennoia* provides the missing link in explaining the development from the female Sophia of the Jewish Wisdom literature to the male Logos of the Johannine prologue, as well as accounting for the prominence of the Logos in the prologue' (J. M. Robinson, 'Sethians and Johannine Thought: The *Trimorphic Protennoia* and the Prologue of the Gospel of John', in B. Layton (ed.), *The Rediscovery of Gnosticism*, ii (Leiden, 1981), 642–70, at 663).

the mythological scheme of the Nag Hammadi *Trimorphic Protennoia* NHC XIII,1.<sup>149</sup>

But not all scholars agree on just how the two are related.<sup>150</sup> It is widely agreed that the *TP* as it now stands is from the middle or latter part of the second century, or somewhat later (many believe it is a product of a 'Sethian' or 'Barbeloite' school), and is dependent upon the Fourth Gospel. But many scholars regard the *TP* as a multi-stage composition. In its earliest stage of existence it is thought to have been a non-Christian, 'gnostic' document already related to the Johannine Prologue as twin products of 'gnosticizing' sapiential speculation.<sup>151</sup> Gesine (Schenke) Robinson believes that even in its first stage there were deep structural and verbal affinities with the Fourth Gospel which show both works shared an ultimate gnostic framework, and that the Johannine Prologue is a derivative adaptation of that gnostic outlook.<sup>152</sup> She sees minimal 'Christianization', in the final form, virtually limited to a few interpolations. But even if one supposes such an early and self-standing stage of composition, the resemblance to the Prologue of the Fourth Gospel at this stage may have been quite general.

<sup>149</sup> G. W. MacRae, 'Gnosticism and the Church of John's Gospel', in C. W. Hedrick and R. Hodgson, jun., (eds.), *Nag Hammadi, Gnosticism, and Early Christianity* (Peabody, Mass., 1986), 89–96, at 91. See also G. Robinson, 'The Trimorphic Protennoia and the Prologue of the Fourth Gospel', in J. E. Goehring (ed.), *Gnosticism and the Early Christian World: In Honor of James M. Robinson* (Sonoma, Calif., 1990), 37–49; E. Pagels has recently upheld this common 'religious milieu' in the appendix to her 'Exegesis of Genesis 1 in the Gospels of Thomas and John', *JBL* 118 (1999), 477–96, at 492–6.

<sup>150</sup> For a very helpful review of the history of scholarship on the relationship see now Nicola F. Denzey, 'Genesis Traditions in Conflict? The Use of Some Exegetical Traditions in the *Trimorphic Protennoia* and the Johannine Prologue', *VC* 55 (2001), 20–44.

<sup>151</sup> See Berliner Arbeitskreis für koptisch-gnostische Schriften, "'Die dreigestaltige Protennoia": Eine gnostische Offenbarungsrede in koptischer Sprache aus dem Fund von Nag Hammadi', *TLZ* 99 (1974), 731–46, at 733–4 (written by G. Schenke). Since the publication of Michael Williams's book, *Rethinking 'Gnosticism': An Argument for Dismantling a Dubious Category* (Princeton, 1996), we are witnessing a greater circumspection among scholars about the use of the terms 'gnostic' and 'gnosticism' (e.g. Pagels, 'Exegesis of Genesis 1'; Denzey, 'Genesis Traditions').

<sup>152</sup> G. Robinson, 'Trimorphic Protennoia and the Prologue'. To enter into the details of this proposal here would take a great deal of space. Some of the debate is subjective and regards perceptions deriving from a precommitment to a Bultmannian paradigm about the influence of a pre-Christian gnosticism. Robinson's oft-quoted sentence, 'One has the impression that the relevant statements of Protennoia stand in their natural context, whereas their parallels in the Johannine Prologue, as we find it in the fourth gospel, seem to have been artificially made serviceable to a purpose really alien to them' ('Die dreigestaltige Protennoia', col. 733, cited in J. M. Robinson, 'Sethians and Johannine Thought', 651, and repeated by a number of authors), is a case in point. It is certain that not every 'one' has come away from a study of the two works with that same 'impression'. Part of the debate concerns 'hard data', such as the hard data which are still lacking to prove the existence, let alone the wide circulation, of a pre-Johannine, 'Sethian' gnosticism which could have been a common source for the *TP* and the Prologue of the Fourth Gospel. What does 'one' see in the remainder of the Fourth Gospel, or in the Johannine Epistles, or in Ignatius, or Polycarp, of the highly developed myth of aeons in the Godhead which we see in 'Sethianism'? There is a kind of docetism in the background of these documents, against which they react, and perhaps a variety of speculative exegeses of Genesis, etc., but not 'gnosticism' in the pleromatic sense. There is still a ponderous gap between various strands of Jewish 'wisdom speculation' which spoke of Wisdom's descent to the world and the 'Sethian' conception of a plurality of divine aeons.

John Turner believes a first stage of writing, which he would place in the late first century, would have shared ‘the same pattern that underlies the Johannine Prologue, which . . . was likely also a product of a similar form of wisdom speculation’. That basic pattern has to do with the descent of a heavenly personification of divine wisdom into the lower world for the ultimate salvation of souls, and may bear no relationship to the Fourth Gospel beyond the basic similarity of the descent motif. Turner theorizes that the *TP* then underwent a Christianization, in which the Barbeloite editor drew upon material common to *The Apocryphon of John* and Irenaeus, *AH* 1. 29. Turner then suggests a further Christian supplementation in which the primary interaction with Johannine material comes. Thus, some who speak of multiple stages of production for the *Trimorphic Protennoia* recognize that it is precisely the later ‘Christianized’ stages, in which the work closely resembles the *Apocryphon of John* (probably known to Irenaeus in some form), which contain the most striking Johannine parallels.<sup>153</sup>

Still others, however, discount such compositional theories and regard the entire document as composed under Christian, and even Johannine, influence.<sup>154</sup> Logan, for instance, believes the work is post-Irenaeus and a later elaboration of the *Apocryphon of John*.<sup>155</sup> He sees Johannine influence not only in allusions but in ‘the underlying structure which the myth presupposed’; ‘thus it is not simply a matter of direct literal influence from John’s Gospel, but rather of that Gospel as a source among others, working at various levels, offering fresh perspectives in a continuing process of remythologization’.<sup>156</sup>

<sup>153</sup> Y. Janssens, ‘The Trimorphic Protennoia and the Fourth Gospel’, in A. H. B. Logan and A. J. Wedderburn (eds.), *The New Testament and Gnosis: Essays in Honor of Robert McL. Wilson* (Edinburgh, 1983), 229–43, at 242; E. Yamauchi, ‘The Issue of Pre-Christian Gnosticism Reviewed in the light of the Nag Hammadi Texts’, in J. D. Turner and A. McGuire (eds.), *The Nag Hammadi Library after Fifty Years* (Leiden, 1997), 85.

<sup>154</sup> A key study tending to show *TP*’s dependency upon John was done by J. Helderman, ‘“In ihren Zelten . . .” Bemerkungen bei Codex XIII Nag Hammadi p. 47: 14–18, im Hinblick auf Joh i 14’, in T. Baarda, A. F. J. Klijn, and W. C. van Unnik (eds.), *Miscellanea Neotestamentica* (Leiden, 1978), i. 181–211, esp. 208–11. See Y. Janssens, ‘Le Codex XIII de Nag Hammadi’, *Le Muséon*, 7 (1974), 341–413; idem, *La Protennoia Trimorphe (NH, XIII, 1)*, BCNH 4 (Quebec, 1978), written without knowledge of the views of the Berlin Arbeitskreis, and idem, ‘Une source gnostique du Prologue’, in M. de Jonge (ed.), *L’Evangile de Jean: Sources, rédaction, théologie*, BETL 44 (Gembloux, 1977), 355–8, where she still decides on Johannine use by the *TP*. Her conclusions on this, however, are more guarded in ‘The Trimorphic Protennoia and the Fourth Gospel’. For a review up to 1981 and statement of the issues, see E. M. Yamauchi, ‘Jewish Gnosticism? The Prologue of John, Mandaean Parallels and the Trimorphic Protennoia’, in R. van den Broek and M. J. Vermaseren (eds.), *Studies in Gnosticism and Hellenistic Religions Presented to Gilles Quispel on the Occasion of his 65th Birthday* (Leiden, 1981), 467–97, at 480–4, and to 1991, see Logan, ‘John and the Gnostics’.

<sup>155</sup> Logan, ‘John and the Gnostics’, 56–7, ‘My simple point is this: the form of the myth presupposed by the *Protennoia*, particularly in the cosmogonic section of the first part . . . is a more developed version of that underlying the *Apocryphon*.’ He points out that, in the *TP* 37. 3–20, ‘Christ’ is ‘explicitly identified with the (Johannine) Word’, and that Barbelo’s titles from the *Ap̄* are assimilated to the Word’ (57). Both these works, he argues, ‘represent secondary elaborations of the more primary form of the myth found in Irenaeus’ (57).

<sup>156</sup> Logan, ‘John and the Gnostics’, 57.

At any rate, the final form of the *TP* does appear to interact with Johannine material.<sup>157</sup> Turner writes,

In the third subtractate, traditional Christological titles such as Christ, Beloved, Son of God (i.e., 'Son of the Archigenetor') and Son of Man are polemically interpreted in a consciously docetic fashion so as to suggest that these titles were inappropriately applied to the human Jesus by the apostolic church. By implication, the apostolic Jesus is shown actually to be the Christ of the evil archons; the apostolic beloved is actually the Beloved of the archons; the apostolic Son of God is the Son of the ignorant world creator; and the apostolic Son of Man is only a human being among the sons of men.<sup>158</sup>

Turner then makes the critical observation, 'It is interesting that most of these reinterpretations of the Christology of the apostolic church in the *Trimorphic Protennoia* seem to depend on key passages from the Gospel of John to score their point in any acute fashion.'<sup>159</sup> Regardless of the accuracy of his theorized prehistory of the *TP*,<sup>160</sup> Turner is undoubtedly correct in that the final form, the form which definitely seems to know the Fourth Gospel, 'involved a deliberately polemical incorporation of Christian, specifically Johannine Christian, materials'.<sup>161</sup>

<sup>157</sup> Denzey, 'Genesis Traditions', has provided a valuable corrective to studies which have tended to consider the question of the relationship in too narrow terms. She has shown that much of the terminology, particularly the creation terminology, shared by the two texts is to be traced to their different ways of interpreting a common text, Genesis 1. This cannot account for all of the Johannine parallels, however, particularly the points at which the *TP* deals not simply with creation motifs, but also with soteriological 'incarnational motifs' (in the *TP*'s case, soteriological 'non-incarnational' motifs), some of which will be noted below. As is the case with J. D. Turner, 'Trimorphic Protennoia (XIII, I)' in *NHLE*<sup>3</sup> 511–13, Denzey's assumption (42) of some unspecified later, Christianizing redactions of the *TP* appears to leave room for actual literary dependence at the redactional level.

<sup>158</sup> Turner, *NHLE*<sup>3</sup> 512.

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.* Other writers such as G. Robinson, MacRae, and C. A. Evans, 'On the Prologue of John and the *Trimorphic Protennoia*', *NTS* 27 (1981), 395–401, apparently assume that these elements belong to the earlier substratum and are independent of any knowledge of the Fourth Gospel. But even if many of the creation and revelation parallels cited by Evans, 'Prologue', 397, may be assigned to an independent exegetical approach to Gen. 1 (Denzey, 'Genesis Traditions'), certain structural similarities and particularly the Christological parallels (or 'anti-parallels' as the case may be) cannot be traced to Genesis and presuppose a Christian source or sources. Whether this belongs to the original writing or only to a later redaction is the question to be answered.

<sup>160</sup> While there may or may not have been a pre-existing, non-Christian descent motif, it is by no means necessary to assume that this was ever represented by a documentary stage of the *TP*. I am personally not convinced that the theory of literary stages is necessary, despite G. Robinson's attempts. See Logan, 'John and the Gnostics'; *idem*, *Gnostic Truth and Christian Heresy*, (Edinburgh, 1996), 30, who argues that the *TP* (presumably the entire *TP*) is post-Irenaean.

<sup>161</sup> Turner, *NHLE*<sup>3</sup> 512–13. G. Robinson, 'Trimorphic Protennoia', 43, on the other hand, thinks that the secondary Christianization 'took place in a rather superficial way'. But she still regards 49. 6–22 as part of the Christianization: 'The point being scored is that such titles as Christ, Beloved, Son of God, Angel, and Son of man do not really belong to Jesus. They are conferred upon Jesus only because of a failure to recognize the true Redeemer' (44). She thinks 'the orthodox concept of Jesus "sitting at the right hand of God" seems to have been corrected in terms of the Sethian view, namely: After the resurrection Jesus neither sits at the right hand of the biblical God, Yaldabaoth, nor at the right hand of the highest unknown God, but rather at the right hand of his own father Seth in his light Oroiael where he belongs!' (44).

Here is why Turner's observations with regard to the Fourth Gospel make sense, and why Janssens could say that 'while identical terms occur in *Trimorphic Protennoia* and the Fourth Gospel, they do not have the same meaning'.<sup>162</sup> Despite the many apparent allusions to Johannine themes,<sup>163</sup> despite the main figure of the *TP* using 'I am' statements,<sup>164</sup> and despite his/her testifying, in terms of John 1: 1, that he/she is 'the Word' (46. 5, 14; 47. 15), there is no corresponding declaration that this Word 'became flesh' (John 1: 14; cf. 1 John 4: 2; 2 John 7). In its place we read the following:

The third time I revealed myself to them [in] their tents as Word and I revealed myself in the likeness of their shape. And I wore everyone's garment and I hid myself within them, and [they] did not know the one who empowers me. (47. 13–19)

... in that place I clothed myself [as] the Son of the Archigenetor, and I was like him until the end of his decree ... (49. 12–14)

And among the Angels I revealed myself in their likeness, and among the Powers as if I were one of them, but among the Sons of Man as if I were a Son of Man, even though I am Father of everyone. (49. 15–20)

As for me, I put on Jesus. I bore him from the cursed wood, and established him in the dwelling places of his Father. And those who watch over their dwelling places did not recognize me. (50. 12–16).

Helderman appears to be correct that the use of the word 'tents' in 47. 15 cited above (where the Coptic translator simply transliterates instead of translating Greek *σκηνή*) reflects not only a use of John 1: 14 ('and the Word became flesh and *ἔσκηνώσεν* among us') but a deliberate, polemical transformation of the Johannine conception into a 'pure docetism'.<sup>165</sup> The

<sup>162</sup> Janssens, 'The Trimorphic Protennoia and the Fourth Gospel', 242. Cf. Denzey, 'Genesis Traditions', 42, 'Although similar in form and language, the *Trimorphic Protennoia's* orientation differs radically from the Johannine Prologue'.

<sup>163</sup> See Y. Janssens, 'Une source gnostique du Prologue?' in M. de Jonge, *L'Évangile de Jean* (Gembloux, 1977), 355–8; Yamauchi, 'Jewish Gnosticism?', 482–3.

<sup>164</sup> Janssens, 'The Trimorphic Protennoia and the Fourth Gospel', 236, cites MacRae's ambiguous conclusions about the Johannine connections and says, 'I do not think that the use, although frequent, in both Trimorphic Protennoia and the Fourth Gospel, of the self-proclamation formula is sufficient proof of the influence of one of the two texts on the other.'

<sup>165</sup> 'Hierbei ist in *PT 47:14.15 die Pointe von Joh. i 14 absichtlich ungedeutet*', Helderman, 'In ihren Zelten ...', 206–7; 'dafür ist die Umdeutung zu bewusst *polemisch* im Hinblick auf Joh. i 14!', 208; cf. also 189, 195–7. Cf. Yamauchi, 'Jewish Gnosticism?', 483; Janssens, 'The Trimorphic Protennoia and the Fourth Gospel', 240–1; Nagel, *Rezeption*, 455. On *TP* 47. 16–17 see Helderman, 'In ihren Zelten ...', 201–5. G. Robinson, 'The Trimorphic Protennoia and the Prologue', 48, attempts to minimize the reversal, actually viewing the Johannine Prologue as 'summarizing' the last stage of Protennoia's revelation with the words 'the Logos became flesh', a summation which she alleges 'must have resulted of necessity' in 'a kind of docetism'. Denzey, 'Genesis Traditions', 40–1, is clear on the contrast between John 1: 14 and *TP* 45. 14–15, though she does not admit a literary relationship.

Logos did not tabernacle among them as flesh, but only revealed himself to them 'in their tents' and in 'the likeness of their shape'.

In addition, the *TP* espouses a notion of the Godhead and of creation quite different from that of the Prologue of the Fourth Gospel: 'And the great Demon [Yaltabaoth] began to produce aeons in the likeness of the real Aeons, except that he produced them out of his own power' (40. 4-7); 'And the Archigenetor of ignorance [Yaltabaoth] reigned over Chaos and the underworld and produced a man in my likeness' (40. 22-5). By contrast, the Prologue says of the Logos, 'All things were made through him, and apart from him nothing was made' (John 1: 3). If any reader was alert enough to catch the Johannine parallels, she<sup>166</sup> would surely know that what she was now reading undermined and sought to overthrow the teaching of the Johannine Prologue. That these points about creation would likely have been recognized in the second century is confirmed by Irenaeus, who used the Johannine Prologue to argue that John refutes the heretics on precisely these points in *AH* 3. 11. 1-3.<sup>167</sup>

What does all this mean for the question of the reception of the Fourth Gospel? With so many apparent borrowings from the Fourth Gospel, the docetic inversion of its incarnational Christology is all the more dramatic. Turner remarks that this final form of the *TP* should be assigned 'to the period of struggle over the interpretation of the Christology of the Fourth Gospel witnessed by the New Testament letters of John, perhaps the first quarter or half of the second century'.<sup>168</sup> This of course assumes that there was such a struggle. It would seem that the author of the *TP*, or its 'Christianizer', was at pains not merely to use but also to distance himself from the theology of the Fourth Gospel. In other words, he seems to be abandoning any struggle *for* the Fourth Gospel and its Christology (if there ever was one, which is more than doubtful), and instead trying to do it one better. In any case we have in the *TP* a work of which it can finally be said that it is a 'gnostic' production which knew and used the Fourth Gospel in a substantive way. And in it we see no simple claiming of that Gospel's authority, but a critical and antagonistic use of its expressions in the service of an opposing Christology!

This gnostic (Barbeloite or Sethian?) work then assumes a peculiar attitude towards the Fourth Gospel. It appropriates from John titles for Christ,

<sup>166</sup> It is perhaps fitting to use the example of a female reader, since some orthodox writers complained that certain gnostic teachers made female church members their special target (Irenaeus, *AH* 1. 13. 3).

<sup>167</sup> "All things," he says, "were made by him;" therefore in "all things" this creation of ours is [included], for we cannot concede to these men that [the words] "all things" are spoken in reference to those within their Pleroma. For if their Pleroma do indeed contain these, this creation, as being such, is not outside, as I have demonstrated...but if they are outside the Pleroma, which indeed appeared impossible, it follows, in that case, that their Pleroma cannot be "all things:" therefore this vast creation is not outside [the Pleroma]' (*AH* 3. 11. 2).

<sup>168</sup> Turner, *NHLE*<sup>3</sup> 513.

mainly but not exclusively from the Prologue, but applies them to the pleromatic aeon as well as to the descending Saviour who united himself temporarily with the human Jesus. Its employment of Johannine terms thus has affinities with that of the *Apocryphon of John* and the Valentinians. Central to its purpose in using this Gospel is the effort to ‘supersede’ it in a way which approaches the way the Ophites and others used the books of Genesis and Isaiah. It may not at this point be quite as negative, but it is certainly similarly predatory.

Not only, then, does the *Trimorphic Protennoia* with its ‘deliberately polemical incorporation of Christian, specifically Johannine Christian, materials’<sup>169</sup> fail to provide a credible rationale for orthodox Johannophobia, it is much easier to regard it as tending to the opposite result. If our hypothetical orthodox reader is favourably impressed with this document, she is inclined to adopt its thoughts and attitudes, including its implied attitude towards the incarnational Christology of the Fourth Gospel. That Gospel could only be ‘received’ by this author and his sympathetic readers with a very large amount of ‘correction’, the kind which involved gnostic, supersessionary exegesis. Thus, if our reader is in danger of developing a case of Johannophobia, the virus only grips her as she retreats from orthodoxy and joins herself to the supposedly superior doctrines of the *Trimorphic Protennoia*. The net result would be a stronger identification of the Fourth Gospel and its incarnational Christology with the orthodox circles she is leaving behind. If on the other hand our reader finds herself disagreeable to the contents of this work, her tendency, like that of Irenaeus, will be to be more firmly established in her orthodoxy and to appreciate what the *TP* depreciates. In this case her esteem for John’s Gospel can only grow. If there is any Johannophobia likely to be produced here, it is a heterodox, not an orthodox, strain.<sup>170</sup>

### *Second Apocalypse of James*

About the date of another text mentioned by Brown, the *Second Apocalypse of James*, ‘little can be said with certainty’, according to Charles Hedrick.<sup>171</sup>

<sup>169</sup> Turner, *NHLE*<sup>3</sup>, 512–13.

<sup>170</sup> I have found no good reason to follow the approach of the post-Bultmannian line of scholars, who try to place the Fourth Gospel and particularly its Prologue in the trajectory of a pre-Christian gnosis, now being adapted to Christianity. But it may not be unprofitable to consider where their analysis might lead us. If these scholars were correct, the Fourth Gospel’s Prologue would be indebted to the same kind of gnosticism as we see in the earliest stage (whatever that was) of the *TP*. But if so, scholars like G. Robinson seem to neglect or downplay the important, demythologizing departures of the Prologue. The modifications made in the Prologue, chiefly in terms of its incarnational Christology but also in its monotheistic conception of God, its version of creation (all three of which, incidentally, Irenaeus points to as contradicting his heretical opponents, *AH* 3. 11. 1–3), and even in its view of John the Baptist, all clearly demonstrate the distance it would place between this ‘gnostic’ background at its own testimony. In other words, in this case it is the Fourth Gospel which is staking out a polemical stance over against the ‘gnostic’ tradition. Such an antagonistic stance is likely to have made it not less but more acceptable to orthodox audiences.

<sup>171</sup> *NHLE*<sup>3</sup> 269.

Hedrick writes that 'the absence of allusions to the later developed gnostic systems, and the almost total absence of allusions to the New Testament tradition suggest an early date for the origin of the tractate'.<sup>172</sup> But just how early this might be, we cannot tell.

Brown has pointed to its use of 'I AM christology' as an indication of its knowledge of John. The first-person 'I AM' style is, however, employed in the Nag Hammadi Library by speakers other than Jesus (in *The Thunder, the Perfect Mind* and *Trimorphic Protennoia*, as we have seen). Thus it is entirely possible that the average reader might not have made any connection to the Jesus of the Fourth Gospel. The author of *Sec. Apoc. Jas.* certainly employs this style: 'I am he who received revelation from the Pleroma [of] Imperishability' (46. 6–8); 'I am the [...] whom I knew' (47. 14–16); 'I am surely dying, but it is in life that I shall be found' (48. 8–9); 'I am the brother in secret, who prayed to the Father...' (48. 22–4). But so far there is nothing which would instinctively bring the Fourth Gospel to mind. Soon, however, we meet a string of 'I am's, 'I [am the] first [son] who was begotten... I am the beloved. I am the righteous one. I am the son of [the Father]' (49. 5–12); and then, 'I am the stranger, and they have no knowledge of me in [their] thoughts' (51. 7–9). Though there are no quotations here, it is possible that an alert reader might have been vaguely reminded of statements of Jesus in John's Gospel. Perhaps even more likely to send her mind in the direction of John 1. 4 is what she saw in *Sec. Apoc. Jas.* 58. 6–8, 'He was [this one who] is the life. He was the light.' But in this case our orthodox reader will also have read in the immediately preceding words, 'He was that one whom he who created the heaven and the earth, and dwelled in it, did not see' (58. 2–6), a typically disparaging comment about the Creator. And at this point, if indeed not before, if she was alert enough to pick up the *possible* allusions to the Fourth Gospel's Prologue, she would have realized that the author she was now reading was not advancing the Fourth Gospel's 'trajectory' but was in fact attacking its doctrine. For that Gospel has the Word, who later became flesh, as the one through whom 'all things were made' and without whom 'was not anything made' (John 1: 3). Indeed, the reader had read only a page earlier, in 56. 20–57. 1, the author's use of Isaiah 45. 5, that classic gnostic proof-text for the ignorance and hubris of the Creator (used also by the anti-Johannine *Trimorphic Protennoia* and by the *Apocryphon of John*): 'I am the LORD, and there is no other, besides me there is no God' (Isa. 45: 5, etc.).

The *Sec. Apoc. Jas.* leaves us just about where the *TP* left us, with an early gnostic work which seems to know and to have been influenced at some level by the Fourth Gospel but which shows an overall negative, antagonistic, or supersessionary, attitude towards that Gospel. It is not easy to see how we should regard this as a legitimate 'trajectory' of the Fourth Gospel.

<sup>172</sup> Ibid. 270.

And how does this play out for the question of orthodox Johannophobia? There are no known traces of the knowledge of the *Sec. Apoc. Jas.* in the second century, leaving us with no evidentiary basis upon which to judge the effects which the *Sec. Apoc. Jas.* might have had on second-century orthodox believers. But from the text itself one would have to observe that, as with the *TP*, the impression most likely given to the orthodox reader, if any was given at all on this matter, would be that *Sec. Apoc. Jas.* does not ally itself with the Fourth Gospel but opposes it. And again, as with the *TP*, this would likely only have made an avowed orthodox reader more indignant in her support of the Fourth Gospel. If, on the other hand, she found the views of the *Sec. Apoc. Jas.* attractive and eventually converted to its form of Christianity, she is likely to have adopted the text's superior attitude towards several aspects of her old orthodox faith, including its view of the Fourth Gospel. The net result in either case is that a close adherence to the authority of the Fourth Gospel comes to be associated more clearly with orthodoxy, not with gnosticism.

The *Second Apocalypse of James*, then, like (at least the final form of ) the *Trimorphic Protennoia*, seems to assume the prior recognition of the Fourth Gospel in the Great Church and a fairly general knowledge of its contents. It is on the basis of this recognition that each develops its own more or less radical departures from the Fourth Gospel's theology.

#### *Apocryphon of James*

These observations about the *Trimorphic Protennoia* and the *Second Apocalypse of James* bring us to a Nag Hammadi text not mentioned by Brown, but mentioned by Hillmer and Culpepper,<sup>173</sup> whose knowledge of the Fourth Gospel and at least the First Epistle of John is very well attested. The *Apocryphon of James*, which I argued above may have connections with the group mentioned by Irenaeus in *AH* 3. 11. 9, purports to be a letter from James to a disciple, recording an encounter between Jesus and his twelve disciples 550 days after his resurrection.<sup>174</sup> In the story, James and Peter are selected by the Saviour to be 'filled' with the Holy Spirit and to receive new revelation consisting of parables, woes, and discourses, some of which have parallels with canonical Gospel materials. At the end of the revelatory section Jesus ascends to the Father and the two disciples follow him to the third heaven but are prevented from seeing the Majesty because the other disciples call them back. James and Peter relate part of their encounter to

<sup>173</sup> Hillmer, 'Second Century', 86–96; Culpepper, *John*, 118, who agrees with Cameron (see below) that 'the sayings of Jesus in this document may have been collected and composed prior to Irenaeus, during the first half of the second century'.

<sup>174</sup> Cf. the 445 days mentioned in *Ascension of Isaiah* 9. 16 and the eighteen months during which Irenaeus reports that the Valentinians said the Lord conversed with his disciples, according to Irenaeus, *AH* 1. 3.2; 30.14.

the other disciples, who are sent away by James, who then departs for Jerusalem.

The provenance of this work is under dispute, with dates ranging from the beginning of the second to the beginning of the third century, and Asia Minor, Syria, and Egypt all receiving some support as places of origin. Several scholars have noticed certain coincidences with the orthodox apocryphon *Epistula Apostolorum*, which they explain variously.

There has been a significant divide on the possible relationship between the *Ap. Jas.* and the canonical Gospels. Many, including Tuckett, Perkins, and Janssens, have regarded the similarities as a rather obvious indication that the *Ap. Jas.* knew these Gospels.<sup>175</sup> Others, such as Koester, Cameron, and Kirchner, argue on the basis of their form-critical methods that the *Ap. Jas.* delivers traditional sayings of Jesus independently of the four Gospels and usually in a more primitive form.<sup>176</sup> While both Tuckett and Perkins accept that the author may know independent tradition,<sup>177</sup> neither believes this can account for all the substantial parallels. I cannot here undertake a full review of the evidence, but shall instead point to a consideration which has been ignored by the proponents of an early, independent tradition in the *Ap. Jas.* and which seems to provide an essential part of the context for the question. That consideration is the open apologetic stance of the document, positioning itself against a perceived 'apostolic' or orthodox consensus, to the advantage of an allegedly superior point of view. In other words, it presupposes the existence of the majority Church and its ecclesiastical and 'canonical' paraphernalia, against which it is mounting its campaign for an alternative.

To illustrate this we need only look at the opening scene of the apocryphon, which relates an occasion 550 days after the resurrection, when the disciples were gathered and Jesus appeared to them: 'Now the twelve disciples [were] sitting all together at [the same time] and remembering what the Savior had said to each one of them, whether secretly or openly, they were setting it down in books. [And] I was writing what was in [my book]<sup>178</sup> ...'

<sup>175</sup> C. M. Tuckett, *Nag Hammadi and the Gospel Tradition: Synoptic Tradition in the Nag Hammadi Library* (Edinburgh, 1986). Tuckett concludes that 'ApocJas seems to presuppose Matthew's finished gospel. Lukan material (e.g. Lk 15. 8–10) is also known and this is probably due to knowledge of Luke's gospel itself. There is no evidence to suggest that Mark's gospel was known, but equally nothing to suggest that it was unknown' (97); P. Perkins, 'Johannine Traditions in *Ap. Jas.* (NHC I, 2)', *JBL* 101 (1982), 403–14; idem, *Gnosticism and the New Testament* (Minneapolis, 1993); Y. Janssens, 'Traits de la Passion dans l'*Epistula Iacobi Apocrypha*', *Le Muséon*, 88 (1975), 97–101, which details a dependence upon Luke in one section of the work.

<sup>176</sup> H. Koester, *Introduction to the New Testament*, ii (Berlin, 1982), 225; R. Cameron, *Sayings Traditions in the Apocryphon of James*, HTS 34 (Philadelphia, 1984); D. Kirchner, 'Apocryphon of James', *NTA*<sup>2</sup> i. 285–91 at 287.

<sup>177</sup> C. M. Tuckett, *Nag Hammadi and the Gospel Tradition* (Edinburgh, 1986), 97.

<sup>178</sup> Assuming the correctness of this restoration of the text, this reference to another book by James perhaps is to be connected to his mention of another 'secret book' sent to the addressee 'ten months ago' in 1. 30. F. E. Williams, 'The Apocryphon of James: I, 2: 1.1–16.30' in H. W. Attridge

(2. 7–16).<sup>179</sup> Based on his lengthy examination of the practice of ‘remembering’ the words of Jesus in the early Church, Cameron believes this demonstrates that the *Ap. Jas.* was written at ‘a time in which written texts with “scriptural” authority were not yet normative’,<sup>180</sup> when oral tradition could be safely appealed to and relied upon to the exclusion of anything written.<sup>181</sup> Koester says more specifically that ““Remembering” what Jesus had said, is a key term for the oral tradition’.<sup>182</sup> Cameron concludes,

In this scene [2. 7–16], the technical term of ‘remembering’ is used in a programmatic way to introduce those sayings which compose the body of discourse and dialogue in the *Ap. Jas.* The hermeneutical moment of ‘remembering’ what the Savior had said is disclosed when the Savior appeared; the manifestation of the ‘openness’ of Jesus’ teaching, therefore, is simultaneous with the ‘appearing’ of the risen Lord. Accordingly, the term ‘remembering’ is understood here as the introduction to a collection of ‘secret sayings’ of Jesus, and is used to refer to the composition of these sayings in ‘secret books,’ of which the *Ap. Jas.* is one.<sup>183</sup>

But this is clearly mistaken. The remembering activity in 2. 10 is coupled with a scribal activity, and refers to books being written by the twelve *before* the appearance of the Saviour on the 550th day.<sup>184</sup> The activity of the twelve of recording in books what they are remembering cannot therefore have to do with what is about to be ‘revealed’ to them by the Saviour, and is not to be identified with any ‘sayings traditions’<sup>185</sup> which might follow in the *Ap. Jas.* This is supported by the fact that the parables Jesus tells them,

(ed.), *Nag Hammadi Codex I (The Jung Codex): Introductions, Texts, Translations, Indices*, Nag Hammadi Studies, 22 (Leiden, 1985) (hereafter, Williams, NHS 22), 13–53, at 20, thinks the mention of a previous book is a fictitious detail ‘added for the sake of atmosphere’.

<sup>179</sup> Cameron’s translation, *Sayings*, 91.

<sup>180</sup> *Ibid.* 92, where he is citing his own words from ‘Apocryphon of James’, 56.

<sup>181</sup> Also Kirchner, *NTA*<sup>2</sup> i. 287, 290; F. E. Williams, ‘The Apocryphon of James (I, 2)’, in J. M. Robinson (gen. ed.), *The Nag Hammadi Library in English*, 3rd, completely revised edn. (San Francisco, 1988), 29–30 at 30 (hereafter Williams, *NHLE*<sup>3</sup>). Kirchner calls the phrase, ‘recall the words of the Lord’, a ‘transmission formula’. It rather appears to have to do with a polemical upstaging of the orthodox claim that their traditions, and particularly their Gospel writings, went back to authentic apostolic reminiscences of the Lord’s deeds and words. In the light of this, and more especially in the light of Perkins’s demonstration of a high saturation of Johannine allusions (‘Johannine Traditions’), it is strange that Kirchner would also say that ‘the treatment of the sayings tradition in *Ap. Jas.* . . . does not yet reveal any dependence on canonised texts’ (287).

<sup>182</sup> Koester, *ACG* 189.

<sup>183</sup> Cameron, *Sayings*, 129.

<sup>184</sup> Observed by Perkins, ‘Johannine Traditions’, 404, ‘The opening scene suggests that they wrote their accounts even before receiving gnosis from Peter and James’.

<sup>185</sup> Cameron, *Sayings*, 92, ‘*Ap. Jas.* 2. 7–16 intimates that it understood “remembering” as critical production and reproduction. An examination of the use of this technical term in early Christian literature will help clarify the ways in which sayings traditions that were available to the *Ap. Jas.* were understood and utilized in the composition of this document’. But the reference to remembering in 2. 10 has nothing to do with the ‘sayings’ delivered later. How does *Ap. Jas.* use ‘remember’ elsewhere? In 3. 12–16 Jesus says, ‘remember that you have seen the Son of Man, and spoken with him in person, and listened to him in person’. This may have to do with sayings of Jesus, but Kirchner points to an ‘ironical’ edge in this reminder. ‘By taking, for instance, the formula as it occurs on p. 3 in an ironical-paradoxical sense, it becomes possible to appreciate the following woe

of the date palm (7. 22–35), of the grain of wheat (8. 10–27), and the ear of grain (12. 22–7), are presented as new parables, not as mere interpretations of parables the disciples were 'remembering'. The author does not expound but merely refers by name to parables from the canonical Gospels,<sup>186</sup> parables obviously well known to the author and his readers: 'It was enough for some <to listen> to the teaching and understand "The Shepherds" and "The Seed" and "The Building" and "The Lamps of the Virgins" and "The Wage of the Workmen" and "The Didrachmae" and "The Woman"'.<sup>187</sup> 'It was enough for some', that is, for the common lot of Christians, but obviously not for James and Peter who are now the privileged recipients of extra revelation, which they could not have been 'remembering' at the opening of the scene.<sup>188</sup>

The connection in *Ap. Jas.* 2. 10's 'reminiscences' both with the apostles and with books cannot be ignored. Fifteen times Justin Martyr refers to the Church's Gospels as 'the memoirs of the apostles' or 'the memoirs which I say were drawn up by His apostles and those who followed them'.<sup>189</sup> In *Dial.* 106. 3 he refers to 'his memoirs', meaning Peter's, when citing information which is contained only in Mark. This of course relates to what Papias had said earlier about the nature of Mark's Gospel (*HE* 3. 39. 15). And it is not Papias' remembering of still unwritten sayings of Jesus that forms the parallel to the *Ap. Jas.*, but Mark's, or rather, Peter's

and benediction with their contrary import. The recollection formula is used in order to interpret sayings traditions through the form of revealed sayings. Sayings which according to *Ap. Jas.* derive from the earthly Jesus are rejected, since the Jesus of before Easter did not possess the character of revelation' (Kirchner, *NIA*<sup>2</sup>, 290). In 5. 33 Jesus says, 'Remember my cross and my death, and you will live!' This has no reference to sayings but to events, or narratives. In 10. 6 it is Jesus who has 'remembered' the disciples' tears and mourning and anguish. In 12. 35 Jesus urges the two disciples to 'remember me. And remember me because when I was with you, you did not know me'. This too has no direct reference to sayings.

<sup>186</sup> Even Koester, *ACG*, 197, agrees that this list refers to parables from the canonical Gospels. It is, he says, 'the only strong indication for a use of canonical gospels in this writing'. But, too predictably, he concludes that 'it is probably an interpolation'. On the contrary, the list of canonical parables is mentioned in order to give a rationale for the revelation of new ones. Koester supports his interpolation theory by observing Jesus' staying for 'eighteen days' with the disciples in 8. 3, just prior to the list. This is seen as a contradiction of the 550-day period after the resurrection, mentioned in 2. 19–21, and therefore is claimed as evidence of an interpolation. Kirchner's translation in *NIA*<sup>2</sup>, however, regards the word 'days' to be a slip and restores to 'eighteen months', which then corresponds well with the 550 days of ch. 2. D. Rouleau, *L'Épître apocryphe de Jacques* (Quebec, 1987), 115, suggests that the original read 'eighteen months of days'. This would also make an exact parallel to the Valentinians cited by Irenaeus, *AH* 1. 3. 2; 30. 14.

<sup>187</sup> The canonical sources, according to Koester, *ACG*, 196–7: The Shepherds, Luke 16: 4–6; The Seed, Mark 4: 3–9 or 4: 26–9 or 4: 30–2 (=Q 13. 18–19); The Building, Matt. 7: 24–7; Luke 6: 47–9; The Lamps of the Virgins, Matt. 25: 1–12; The Wage of the Workmen, Matt. 20: 1–15; The Didrachmae, Luke 16: 8–9; The Woman, Luke 18: 2–8.

<sup>188</sup> Perkins, *GNT*, 72, 'Apocryphon of James intends to invoke the authority of the canonical Gospels to bolster the esoteric, gnostic teaching presented in the treatise.'

<sup>189</sup> *I Apol.* 66. 3; 67. 4; *Dial.* 100. 4; 101. 3; 102. 5; 103. 6, 8; 104. 1; 105. 1, 5, 6; 106. 1, 3, 4; 107. 1. In addition, Justin attaches to his conflation of Luke 1: 31–2; Matt. 1: 20–1 in *I Apol.* 33. 5 the words, 'as they who have remembered all that concerns our Saviour Jesus Christ have taught (οἱ ἀπομνημονεύσαντες πάντα τὰ περὶ τοῦ σωτῆρος ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ ἐδίδαξαν)'.

remembering. Though Papias does not say explicitly that the Gospel of Mark is Peter's memoirs, he says it is either Mark's 'remembrances' of what Peter taught or, more probably, Mark's record of what Peter remembered. And if Papias reports that Mark wrote down accurately what he remembered of Peter's teaching (*HE* 3. 39. 15), then the written document already in Papias' day, and already in the day of the Elder whom Papias is here quoting, is known by its character as a 'memoir' or book of reminiscences. In a story of Mark's origin which Eusebius attributes to Clement of Alexandria and Papias, it is said that Peter's hearers besought Mark, 'seeing that he was Peter's follower, to leave them with a ὑπόμνημα of the teaching given them verbally' (Eusebius, *HE* 2. 15. 1). Whether Clement has another source for this besides Papias or not, this tradition characterizes Mark's Gospel as a record of Peter's reminiscences.

Thus when *Ap. Jas.* begins with a scene in which the apostles are not only 'remembering' what the Lord had said to them but are putting into books what they remember, this appears to be a tacit acknowledgement of what we find among Church writers from the early part of the second century on, namely that the Church had in its possession books which were generally accepted as the memoirs of the apostles about the life and teaching of Jesus. The 'revelation' to James and Peter which follows in the *Ap. Jas.* of course comes with the intention of doing the catholics one better.<sup>190</sup> The familiarity of *Ap. Jas.*'s author with early Christian tradition about its received Gospels may well be signified again when he has James remark that he has written this tract 'in Hebrew characters' (1. 16). This has the appearance of being aimed at offsetting the claim recorded by Papias (evidently from the same Elder who spoke of the origins of Mark) that Matthew first wrote his Gospel in Hebrew (Papias, in Euseb., *HE* 3. 39. 16). Cameron recognizes that 'In both cases, this reference is meant to guarantee the authority and secure the reliability of their respective gospel texts.'<sup>191</sup> The author's familiarity with the traditions contained in Papias even justify the suspicion that he knew Papias' work, or at least the tradition on which it is based, which may have been fairly commonly known by the time he wrote.

The entire character of the work thus bears out what Perkins says about the author of the *Ap. Jas.*, that he appears 'to recognize that the Gospel canon and apostolic authority must be claimed for gnostic exegesis'.<sup>192</sup> 'Gnostic Christians might even accept a canon of four Gospels and Acts as public teaching. But that canon will not lead to knowledge of the Father

<sup>190</sup> Rouleau, *L'Épître apocryphe de Jacques*, 99.

<sup>191</sup> Cameron, *Sayings*, 121-2: this claim 'is intended to locate this text in the earliest stages of the tradition. In this respect, the *Ap. Jas.* is to be compared with Papias's statement that the Gospel of Matthew was composed "in Hebrew."' But this raises the question of whether the author of the apocryphon (or the redactor of this final stage) does not then know the tradition given by Papias (which evidently is to be traced to his source, the Elder).

<sup>192</sup> Perkins, *GNT* 194.

unless the revelations of the heavenly Christ are used to interpret its content.<sup>193</sup> Whether or not there was when the author wrote any access to 'free tradition' of any age, this apocryphon bears witness to the existence of written documents thought to have been authored by apostles and which were well-known and probably even considered by its opponents as having a scriptural authority. Thus the author's polemic can be seen more clearly as an attempt to utilize but transcend the authoritative texts of the Church at large.

Perkins then is surely correct that this work presupposes the four Gospels and that it knows the Fourth Gospel particularly well. She comments only on its positive use of Johannine material, even suggesting that the author's use of John and 1 John amounts to a self-legitimization.<sup>194</sup> This may be true to a degree, but it is even clearer that the author's use of Johannine texts is at times quite critical. Perkins reads *Ap. Jas.* 11. 12–13 as signifying that 'the gnostics also claim that they are the ones for whom the Paraclete of 1 John 2: 1–2 intercedes. "Those without a Paraclete" (11, 12–13) are condemned.'<sup>195</sup> But this seems to rest on a mistranslation. 'Woe to you who need an advocate! Woe to you, who stand in need of grace!' (*NTA*), is Kirchner's translation. 'Malheur à vous qui avez besoin d'un défenseur. Malheur à vous qui avez besoin de la grâce', is given by Rouleau.<sup>196</sup> Says Kirchner, 'Ap. Jas. even pronounces a woe to those who think that they need an advocate, and extols those who earn grace through their own efforts'.<sup>197</sup> Such a judgement could hardly be more antagonistic towards the teaching of 1 John 1: 9; 2: 1–2.

This attitude towards Johannine teaching is not found only with regard to 1 John. In 2. 28–33 the Saviour says, 'Verily I say unto you, no one will ever enter the kingdom of heaven at my bidding, but (only) because you yourselves are full'. This should be compared to John 14: 6, 'Jesus said to him, "I am the way and the truth and the life; no one comes to the Father except through me"'. Against the testimony of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel, the author of *Ap. Jas.* does away with the need to come to the Father through Jesus. He who is 'full' can enter on his own. Jesus is a guide who has taught his disciples what to say to the archons on their way (8. 36). But he is not himself the way, the truth, and the life.<sup>198</sup> Though there is a

<sup>193</sup> Ibid.

<sup>194</sup> Perkins, 'Johannine Traditions', 413.

<sup>195</sup> Ibid. 411.

<sup>196</sup> Rouleau, *L'Épître apocryphe de Jacques*, 124–5. Rouleau relates the Paraclete here to the Spirit promised in John 7: 39; 14: 16, 26; 16: 7–11. But this fails to observe that (a) a filling with the Spirit is definitely encouraged in 2. 35–3. 20, and (b) this malediction follows directly upon the disciples' satisfaction at the word that the Saviour would intercede for them.

<sup>197</sup> Kirchner, *NTA*<sup>2</sup> 290. Cf. Williams, *NHS* 22, 23, 'the emphasis on salvation by one's own effort is notable'.

<sup>198</sup> Koester, *ACG*, 191.

significant overlap with the Fourth Gospel in conceptions and terminology, there is a clear distancing represented here.

Even more striking is what we read in 3. 17–25, ‘Woe to those who have seen the So[n of M]an! Blessed will they be who have not seen the man, who were not together with him, who did not speak with him, who did not listen to anything from him. Yours is life.’ This is not a simple restating of the blessing of those who believe without having seen, as Jesus tells Thomas in John 20: 29,<sup>199</sup> and a legitimization of the author’s group based on that Johannine passage, as Perkins suggests.<sup>200</sup> It is a woe pronounced upon the one who has seen, heard, conversed with the man Jesus, as if to say that such people have only known with their outward senses the earthly and not the heavenly being.<sup>201</sup> A comparison with the orthodox apocryphon *Ep. Apost.* 29 is instructive, ‘And we said to him, “Blessed are we, for we see and hear you as you speak to us, and our eyes have seen such mighty deeds that you have done.” And he answered and said to us, “But much more blessed will they be who do not see me and (yet) believe in me . . . .”’ (Eth.).<sup>202</sup> Here is a positive reflection on the same Gospel passage, John 20: 29, where both those who saw and heard Jesus and those who believe without sight are ‘blessed’, combined with a positive, probable appropriation of 1 John 1: 1–3. The difference between a blessing and a woe shows in the use of Johannine materials by the two authors a definite contrast in approach.

Perkins also saw in 3. 17–25 an allusion to 1 John 1: 1–3, ‘That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and touched with our hands, concerning the word of life . . . we proclaim also to you, so that you may have fellowship with us; and our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ’. She does not observe, however, that *Ap. Jas.* 3. 17–25 seems the very inverse of that text!

<sup>199</sup> Koester, *ACG*, 192. F. E. Williams, ‘NHC I, 2: The Apocryphon of James’, in H. W. Attridge (ed.), *Nag Hammadi Codex I (The Jung Codex): Notes*, Nag Hammadi Studies, 23 (Leiden, 1985), 7–37 (hereafter, Williams, *NHS* 23), 31, says ‘If correctly restored, this is the tractate’s most direct quotation of a NT passage’.

<sup>200</sup> Perkins, ‘Johannine Traditions’, 411.

<sup>201</sup> Williams, *NHS* 23, 11, ‘The woe is directed against orthodox Christians, whose religion is founded on the canonical Gospels; ‘though James and Peter have had this sort of experience of the Son of Man, their previously inadequate knowledge is now in process of enlargement’; J. van der Vliet, ‘Spirit and Prophecy in the Epistula Iacobi Apocrypha (NHC I, 2)’, *JC* 44 (1990), 30, ‘Thus, in our passage “hearing” refers without a shade of doubt to the disciples’ imperfect, external perception of Christ, which did not yet develop into belief and knowledge’.

<sup>202</sup> A similar view was known to Origen. He criticizes those who say that ‘those are more blessed who have not seen and yet believe, than those who have seen and have believed, and for this they quote the saying to Thomas at the end of the Gospel of John, Blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed. But it is not said here that those who have not seen and yet have believed are more blessed than those who have seen and believed. According to their view those after the Apostles are more blessed than the Apostles; than which nothing can be more foolish’ (*C. John* 10. 27, *ANF*).

'Blessed are they who have not been ill and have known relief before falling ill; yours is the kingdom of God' (3. 30–4). Helderman notes that this involves the idea of salvation as healing.<sup>203</sup> Others need 'healing' from their miserable state, but those are blessed who never needed healing from illness, but have always known rest. Deprived of the metaphor, this could easily be read as a positive statement of the doctrine which is denounced in 1 John 1: 8–10: 'If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us... If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.' In this case the author of *Ap. Jas.* would not be denying that Jesus can give rest to those who have the illness, but he would be claiming that there are some who have not known the illness.

'Or do you perhaps think that the Father is a lover of mankind, or that he is won over by means of prayers, or that he bestows grace on someone because of another, or that he listens to someone who asks (something of him)?' (11. 29–34). The NHLE<sup>3</sup> translation is milder,<sup>204</sup> but still poses an antithesis with 1 John, which teaches that one may indeed be given grace 'because of another', whether that other is Jesus Christ who became a propitiation for the sins of others (1 John 2: 1–2), or whether it be another believer, who asks on behalf of the sinning brother and is granted life (1 John 5: 14, 16).

Finally, I make an observation about the pseudepigraphy. That the selection of only two disciples, James and Peter, is polemical is generally admitted.<sup>205</sup> The author 'insists that the Lord did not wish to make its contents known to "the twelve"'.<sup>206</sup> But why, if the author knows the Gospel and First Epistle of John so well, has he not included John among the disciples selected for a new, superior revelation? Whether the James in view is the Lord's brother, as most have assumed, or is the son of Zebedee,<sup>207</sup> the omission of John hardly seems innocent. In the canonical Gospels it is Peter with James and John the sons of Zebedee who constitute the inner circle of Jesus' disciples. In Acts and Galatians, it is Peter, with James of Jerusalem and John son of Zebedee who are the pillars of the Church.<sup>208</sup> In either

<sup>203</sup> J. Helderman, 'Anapausis in the Epistula Jacobi Apocrypha', in R. McL. Wilson (ed.), *Nag Hammadi and Gnosis*, NHS 14 (Leiden, 1978), 36–7.

<sup>204</sup> NHLE<sup>3</sup> has 'without prayers' instead of 'by means of prayers'.

<sup>205</sup> Williams, NHS 22, 20–1, points to the author's elevation of James above Peter. 'One suspects that Peter, the typical representative of orthodox Christianity, has been introduced to lend authenticity to the variant tradition taught by our tractate. The observation that all twelve disciples "believed the revelation" (16. 2–5) may be there for the same purpose'. Cf. Rouleau, *L'Épître apocryphe de Jacques*, 100.

<sup>206</sup> Perkins, *GNT* 182. Also, Williams, NHLE<sup>3</sup> 30, 'The reporting of a special postresurrection appearance of Jesus, and the appeal to James as a source of secret and superior tradition, are means Gnostics often used to legitimate their message.'

<sup>207</sup> W. C. van Unnik, 'The Origin of the Recently Discovered "Apocryphon Jacobi"', *VC* 10 (1956), 146–56, 154, says, 'it is equally possible that James, the son of Zebedee, was meant, he belonging with Peter and his brother to the inner circle of Jesus' Disciples' Also Koester, *ACG* 188.

<sup>208</sup> Clement of Alexandria, according to Eusebius (*HE* 2. 1), records in his *Hypotyposes* the view that 'The Lord after the resurrection delivered the gnosis to James the Just and John and Peter.

association of Peter and one or the other James, John holds a firm place. In a text which knows so much Johannine tradition and, as we have seen, engages important parts of it in an adversarial way, we can hardly avoid reading such an omission as part of the stance of the author and his group, a stance which on the one hand shared general Johannine conceptions but which saw itself as at odds with its chief representatives. The author's use of so much Johannine material in an inverted or antithetical way would appear to be no less than a spurning of the apostle John. This forms a corollary to what I have already observed, that the *Ap. Jas.* had much in common with the group mentioned by Irenaeus in *AH* 3. 11. 9 which rejected the Fourth Gospel.

Far from being essentially a rival claimant of the mantle of Johannine Christianity, the *Apocryphon of James* instead manifests a settled and pronounced reaction against it. The apocryphon's repetition of certain Johannine concepts shows that these concepts were simply part of the playing field for anyone wanting to compete for adherents from among orthodox Church members. Certain things had to be taken for granted—at least ostensibly. It would not do, in these circles, to deny that certain men had heard Jesus, seen him, touched him, or that some of these men had handed down their records of Jesus' words and ministry to the Church. These things were apparently too well established and were not in dispute. The route taken by this author, and by Valentinian and other rivals generally, was to use but also supersede the apostolic testimony by one means or another, here, by selective, superior revelations.

The supersessionary attitude of this author towards the mainstream Church is in some ways clearer than is that of the *Second Apocalypse of James* or the *Trimorphic Protennoia*.<sup>209</sup> His predatory and polemical use of the Fourth Gospel and the First Epistle of John is even more pronounced. Thus, the reading of this work by our imaginary orthodox reader is even less likely to have provoked in her any Johannophobic sentiments, unless they are produced in her as a result of her acceptance of the author's 'advances' upon apostolic Christianity.

### Acts of John

Another clear example of a 'gnostic' reaction to the Fourth Gospel is contained in a work not found at Nag Hammadi, the *Acts of John*, a lengthy, romantic, and at crucial points heterodox portrayal of the son of Zebedee's

These delivered it to the rest of the Apostles... In this recounting of 'gnostic' tradition John is still in the favoured fraternity.

<sup>209</sup> Yet D. Rouleau, *L'Épître apocryphe de Jacques*, 17, observes that the polemic of this work is milder than is contained in *The Second Treatise of the Great Seth* and *The Testimony of Truth*, 'mais elle n'en est pas moins réelle et efficace'. Rouleau reads the inclusion of Peter as a sign of deference to 'la Grande Église, l'Église de Pierre'. He thinks it is most critical not of the Great Church *per se*, but of its hierarchical structures and mechanisms of institutional mediation (18).

ministry in and around Ephesus. As with most other gnostic texts, it is not possible to be precise or certain about its origins. Most however regard it as a composite document. In a major, recent study, P. J. Lalleman, following the lead of E. Junod and J.-D. Kaestli, divides the text into three parts: section A, chs. 18–86, 106–8, 110–15; section B, 87–93, 103–5; and section C, 94–102 and 109,<sup>210</sup> with at least two authors, one responsible for A and B, one for C. All agree that at least section C should be characterized as 'gnostic'.<sup>211</sup> It appears that an existing, somewhat heterodox 'novel', or 'novelistic biography', was taken over and supplemented by a more blatantly 'gnostic' writer as a platform for his views. Many scholars would place the composite document in the late second century or later, but Lalleman has recently argued for 'a date in the second quarter of the second century for the redaction of the final text'.<sup>212</sup> Based on similarities with the *Apoc̄jas.* and the *Ep. Apost.*, I think this proposal has merit, though I would place the work just before or after 150.<sup>213</sup>

Like the other texts considered in this section, the *AJ* without a doubt knows the Fourth Gospel;<sup>214</sup> it even assumes the attribution of that Gospel

<sup>210</sup> P. J. Lalleman, *The Acts of John* (Leuven, 1998), 25, etc.; Eric Junod and Jean-Daniel Kaestli, *L'Histoire des Actes apocryphes des apôtres du IIIe au IXe siècle: Le Cas des Actes de Jean*, Cahiers de la Revue de Théologie et de Philosophie, 7 (Geneva, 1982); idem (eds.), *Acta Iohannis*. Tomus 1: *Praefatio—Textus*; Tomus 2: *Textus alii—Commentarius, Indices*, Corpus Christianorum Series Apocryphorum 1, 2 (Turnhout, 1983). The original beginning is lost; the present chs. 1–17 are considered to be later, 4th or 5th cent., Lalleman, *Acts of John*, 12–13. Lalleman characterizes sections B and C together as a 'gospel' (45).

<sup>211</sup> Lalleman, *Acts of John*, does not think sections A and B are gnostic, agreeing with Junod and Kaestli. He points out that Zahn, 'Die Wanderungen des Apostels Johannes', *Neue kirchliche Zeitschrift* 10 (1899), 191–218 at 215, thought the author concealed his gnostic views in the first parts and revealed them at the end.

<sup>212</sup> Lalleman, *Acts of John*, 270, 272. He believes it must be older than and used by the *Apoc̄jn.* and probably the *Acts of Paul*, *Acts of Peter*, and *Apoc̄Pet.* (137, 151). The Johannine parallels make Lalleman think the work came from Asia Minor. Most others have favoured either Egypt or Syria. See K. Schäferdiek, 'The Acts of John', in *NTA*<sup>2</sup> ii. 152–71, at 166–7.

<sup>213</sup> See C. E. Hill, 'The *Epistula Apostolorum*: An Asian Tract from the Time of Polycarp', *J ECS* 7 (1999), 1–53. For this date for the *Acts* see also Braun, *Jean le Théologien*, 200–4.

<sup>214</sup> Schäferdiek, *NTA*<sup>2</sup> ii. 164, observes that the itinerary of John's travels in chs. 55–9 begins from Ephesus and proceeds to Smyrna, then to various unnamed towns and finally to Laodicea, thus mirroring the order of the seven churches given in Rev. 2–3. This was also held by T. Zahn, C. Schmidt, M. Blumenthal, and Hengel, *Frage*, 53. If correct, this also amounts to a recognition of the tradition which identified the author of the Fourth Gospel and the Apocalypse as the same John the apostle. But Lalleman, *Acts of John*, 18–19, rejects the idea that the mention of John's travels to Ephesus, Smyrna, and Laodicea, where material is missing between his time in Smyrna and in Laodicea, indicates a knowledge of Revelation. He says that 'the present research has not rendered a single indication that the author of the *AJ* knew Rev', and proposes an alternative model for John's route in the annual assize tour of the Roman governor of Asia, in which the governor administered justice. Yet, in citing for this idea E. Plümmacher, 'Apostolische Missionsreise und statthalterliche Assisetour', *ZNW* 85 (1994) 259–78, he says that Plümmacher's thesis 'implies that the route of John's Asiatic tour spanned the same cities as the governor's, which probably covered 13 or 14 cities, among which Miletus, Pergamon, Apameia, Laodicea, Smyrna and Ephesos, in a random order. Among these cities, Ephesos and Smyrna were most important for our author' (19 n. 75). Yet it remains that the *AJ* does not mention any of the other cities, only ones mentioned by Revelation.

to John the son of Zebedee.<sup>215</sup> This has been demonstrated many times and need not be reiterated here. But this is not evidence of gnostic love for this Gospel and, despite its common citation by supporters of the OJP, it can only give them cold comfort. The attitude of this author towards the Fourth Gospel has been observed by other scholars, and it is quite comparable to the attitude of other gnostic authors canvassed in this section. Luttikhuisen writes that in *AJ* 97–102, ‘the relation to the Gospel accounts, especially the Fourth Gospel, is oppositional: in clear contrast to the Gospel, Christ (the descended saviour) reveals to John, who had fled from the crucifixion scene unto the Mount of Olives, that he, Christ, is not the one who is crucified on the wooden cross in Jerusalem... the story concludes with the report that John laughs at the people around the cross in Jerusalem’.<sup>216</sup> Similarly, Lalleman concludes, ‘From the viewpoint of the later canon and of Orthodoxy, the type of intertextual relationship between John’s Gospel and the *AJ* is that of distortion. Our author’s specific outlook opposes “orthodox” readings of the Gospel.’<sup>217</sup>

One of the most telling examples of this author’s use of John is in 101. 8–9, where he denies that blood flowed from Jesus on the cross, in contradiction of John 19: 34: ‘You hear that I suffered, yet I suffered not; and that I suffered not, yet I did suffer; and that I was pierced, yet I was not lashed; that I was hanged, yet I was not hanged; that blood flowed from me, yet it did not flow...’ Lalleman observes, ‘This is unmistakably a form of substitution which implies a direct refutation of the verse from John...’<sup>218</sup> The pattern of the literary relationship is clearly polemical.<sup>219</sup>

<sup>215</sup> Note 89. 11, ‘when I reclined at table he would take me to his breast’ (ἀνακειμένον ἐμὲ ἐπὶ τὰ ἴδια στήθη ἐδέχεται); and 90. 4, ‘Then I, since he loved me (ἐγὼ δὲ οὖν, ἐπειδὴ ἐφίλει με), went quietly up to him’. Lalleman has even pointed to a portion of the *Acts* which probably alludes to John’s writing of the Gospel. In 88. 3–5 we read, ‘Ἐγὼ μὲν ὕμῖν οὐτὲ προσομιλεῖν οὐτὲ γράψαι χωρῶ ἅ τε εἶδον ἅ τε ἤκουσα (cf. 88. 6). Note the use of the word χωρεῖν, which is an apparent reflection on Jn. 21. 25.

<sup>216</sup> G. P. Luttikhuisen, ‘The Thought Pattern of Gnostic Mythologizers and their Use of Biblical Traditions’, in J. D. Turner and A. McGuire (eds.), *The Nag Hammadi Library after Fifty Years: Proceedings of the 1995 Society of Biblical Literature Commemoration*, Nag Hammadi and Manichaean Studies, 44 (Leiden, 1997), 89–101 at 92–3. Luttikhuisen writes of three gnostic texts in which the NT accounts of Jesus’ suffering on the cross are overturned, the *Letter of Peter to Philip*, the *Apocalypse of Peter* from Nag Hammadi Codex VII, and the *Acts of John*.

<sup>217</sup> Lalleman, *Acts of John*, 122. R. Pervo, ‘Johannine Trajectories in the Acts of John’, *Apocrypha*, 3 (1992), 47–68, sought to show that the *AJ* as a whole was a parodying commentary on the Fourth Gospel.

<sup>218</sup> Cf. the statement preserved in *Theod.* 62. 2 which, in reference to John 19: 37, says ‘but they pierced the appearance’.

<sup>219</sup> Lalleman, *Acts of John*, 116. Writing later of *AJ* 101, he says the words ‘blood flowed from me, yet it did not flow’ demonstrate that the author ‘knew or supposed that the flowing of the blood and the water in the Gospel of John were literally meant. The *AJ* deletes the element blood from the pair water and blood found in the Gospel, thus suggesting that “Christ came in water only”. This is exactly the otherwise unattested thought of the Johannine adversaries! These adversaries, whose beliefs are expressed in the *AJ*, held that Christ had only apparently or not at all been human’ (250). I think, however, that the point is not that ‘water’ flowed instead of blood, but simply that blood did not flow from the ‘true’ Lord, the one that speaks to the ‘Lord’ in ch. 92.

Both the gnostic and the anti-Johannine tendencies are, as all agree, most prominent in what Lalleman calls section C. He continues, 'On the whole, section C of the AJ is both familiar with the Gospel of John and opposed to it. It is a critical revision of the gospel.'<sup>220</sup> Lalleman believes that

Section B as a whole is an effort to replace other gospels, an act that has authority because it is allegedly carried out by one of the previous evangelists, John. Instead of a straightforward contradiction of these gospels, the author opts to reveal new knowledge that had not yet been expressed in writing before. But again we encounter a characteristic of the chapter's intertextual references: readers who do not know any other gospel will hardly notice the polemical attitude towards the Fourth Gospel; for them the AJ can well serve as *the* gospel.<sup>221</sup>

That it was intended to serve as 'a gospel' in the same sense in which the four Gospels were serving in the orthodox churches at this time is, however, highly questionable. It is not likely that the same attitude was required by the author of his readers towards any text, including his own. But Lalleman does appear to be correct in saying that even section B but especially section C adopt a polemical and supersessionary stance over and against the Fourth Gospel (while in no way denying its attribution to the apostle John). This is in fact quite similar to the *Apocryphon of James*, which, as we have seen, presupposes the existence and use in the Church of apostolic recollections of Jesus' words and ministry.

Lalleman's recent analysis is important for its bringing to light the antagonistic elements in the AJ with respect to the Fourth Gospel. To this extent he certifies for the AJ the tendencies which have been noted above with regard to other heterodox documents. Unfortunately, he follows a reconstruction of the literary and community history of the work which has little empirical basis. Following in the train of Koester, Kaestli, Pervo, and others, he argues that the AJ is part of a Johannine 'trajectory', where the word trajectory 'is used for a theological tradition which has socio-historical as well as literary features'.<sup>222</sup> Lalleman concludes that the differences between the Fourth Gospel and the AJ 'point to the existence of great theological differences among members of one "family", i.e. among recipients of the Fourth Gospel. Section C is a critical revision of that Gospel.'<sup>223</sup> If this

<sup>220</sup> Lalleman, *Acts of John*, 116.

<sup>221</sup> *Ibid.* 115.

<sup>222</sup> *Ibid.* 111, which see for bibliography. His assumptions are based to a degree on his view that the AJ reflects almost exactly the views of the opponents mentioned in the Johannine Epistles. See his arguments on pp. 246–52 which I shall consider elsewhere.

<sup>223</sup> Lalleman, *Acts of John*, 111. Cf. Pervo, 'Johannine Trajectories', who speaks of the authors of the AJ as members of 'johannine "schools" or circles' (58; 68); as representing 'one wing of the johannine tradition' (61). He regards the material in chs. 87–105 as 'intra-johannine development, as the result of fresh interpretation of and meditation upon the message contained in the Gospel. All of its tendencies have their roots within the multi-faceted aspects of johannine thought' (67). Nevertheless, Pervo everywhere observes the sometimes radical nature of this 'intra-johannine development'. He speaks of the author of chs. 94–102, the most 'gnostic' section, as an 'Anti-Ecclesiastical Redactor' (63). But why then is he not also an 'Anti-Johannine Redactor'?

'family' could be defined as loosely as 'readers of the Fourth Gospel', this may be true. But the assumption that the *AJ*'s author and his community were somehow in a direct 'socio-historical' line descending from the author and original recipients of the Fourth Gospel is a serious begging of the question.<sup>224</sup> Lalleman rightly rejects the speculative conclusion of Kaestli that section C of the *AJ* goes back to a time before the Fourth Gospel had been made 'orthodox'.<sup>225</sup> He rather prefers to think of the *AJ* as developing in a community which has grown a bit apart from its original Johannine context.

The *AJ* can be situated on the road from the Fourth Gospel to a form of Gnosticism, as it gives voice to groups such as those combated in the Johannine Epistles and by Ignatius in his Letters to the Smyrnaeans and the Trallians. The second, Gnostic part of the *AJ* gives us a view of the fate of this ultra-Johannine group at a later moment in its history: it has become so radical that it contradicts the very contents of the Gospel which had been at the root of its existence. The *AJ* may have originated at the same time as the Johannine and Ignatian Epistles, or later, in case the *AJ*'s spiritualising type of Christology survived.<sup>226</sup>

But who is to say that this road started from the Fourth Gospel, or at what point it passed through the Fourth Gospel? The Fourth Gospel could have been a relatively late stop.<sup>227</sup> One can certainly count up points of commonality between the two documents, such as the lack of overt concern for Church order; a soft-peddling of sacramental theology, a view of the miracles of Jesus as 'signs' pointing beyond themselves, the use of contrasting pairs. In this, and perhaps more, the *AJ* may indeed have been influenced by John.<sup>228</sup> But this is little more than would be expected in a situation in which the Fourth Gospel is already a familiar part of the ecclesiastical situation, and a necessary read for any who would compete with the orthodox interpretation of Christianity. If it points to anyone's prior claim on the Fourth Gospel that group would be the one opposed by the *AJ*. As Lalleman rightly observes, 'The polemics imply that the *AJ* also

<sup>224</sup> See also J. D. Kaestli, 'Remarques sur le rapport du quatrième evangile avec la gnose', in Kaestli et al. (eds.), *La Communauté johannique et son histoire* (Paris, 1990), 355, who says that group that produced the *AJ* 'fait partie de la postérité directe du mouvement johannique' (emphasis his).

<sup>225</sup> Lalleman, *Acts of John*, 118.

<sup>226</sup> *Ibid.* 255.

<sup>227</sup> 'The ultra-Johannine group which presents itself in section C is forced to combat the very Gospel that was formative of their thought' (122). But in what sense was it ever formative for their thought? 'As members of a Johannine community, acquainted with the Fourth Gospel, the adversaries laid extreme stress on its high Christology' (251). But, does it lay stress on the Fourth Gospel's high Christology, or on its own?

<sup>228</sup> Apart from the author's chosen subject matter (probably simply taken over by B and C from A), is his attachment to the Fourth Gospel really that much greater than his attachment to the Synoptics? Lalleman, *Acts of John*, 45, produces a chart which counts 27 references to John in section C, but also counts 14 references to Matthew, 10 to Mark, and 11 to Luke. He says, 'its familiarity with the Fourth Gospel does not hamper its knowledge of other Gospels' (246).

testifies to the fact that the Fourth Gospel was accepted and used in the non-Gnostic part of the church.<sup>229</sup>

This fact further calls into question the argument that the *AJ* is part of an authentic 'Johannine trajectory', particularly if one is assuming a socio-historical dimension. Lalleman concludes, 'From the viewpoint of the later canon and of Orthodoxy, the type of intertextual relationship between John's Gospel and the *AJ* is that of distortion. Our author's specific outlook opposes "orthodox" readings of the Gospel and has rightly been called ultra-Johannine.<sup>230</sup> Conversely, the author of the *AJ* would probably argue that his spiritualisation is the legitimate continuation of the trajectory.<sup>231</sup> The obvious question here is, in what sense can something that admittedly distorts and opposes John be called ultra-Johannine?<sup>232</sup> The author's method goes beyond, let us say, taking one Johannine theme to an extreme, to the neglect of another. He actually takes up certain teachings of the Johannine Gospel, such as the piercing of Jesus and his bleeding on the cross, and openly contests them. It is thus far from clear that the author, given his polemical and supersessionist attitude towards the Fourth Gospel, thinks his 'spiritualization' is the legitimate 'continuation' of the Johannine trajectory. More likely he thinks it is the legitimate *alternative* to the Johannine trajectory. After all, he is not simply contesting, for instance, I John or Irenaeus about the interpretation of the Fourth Gospel; he is contesting the Fourth Gospel. Instead of speaking of the *Acts of John* (particularly chs. 94–102; 109) as an initiation into Johannine gnosticism, it would be more accurate to call it an initiation into *anti-Johannine* gnosticism.

The date of the *AJ* is still uncertain. But as it stands it belongs a group of 'gnostic' or 'gnosticizing' texts which may be as early as the second century, perhaps as early as the first half of the second century, which have at least this much in common, that they display an essentially antagonistic attitude towards the Fourth Gospel.

<sup>229</sup> *Ibid.* 122. This is probably seen as well in the author's acceptance of the tradition that the Fourth Gospel was written by John the apostle, who resided in Ephesus. Both of these elements of the tradition are dismissed as legendary by the majority of scholars today. If the community behind the *AJ* had real socio-historical links to the original 'Johannine community', which was not led by John and was not situated in Ephesus, why did they accept, or perhaps invent, this tradition? They might conceivably invent such a tradition if they wanted to legitimate themselves through this Gospel. But such a motivation is called into question by the fact that they had to take such deep exceptions to this 'legitimizing device'. This suggests that these elements of the tradition were already in place when this author took them over.

<sup>230</sup> By P. Vielhauer, *Geschichte der unchristlichen Literatur* (Berlin, 1975), 472.

<sup>231</sup> Lalleman, *Acts of John*, 122. Again, 'This author even has to contradict the text of the Gospel in order to convey his spiritualising interpretation of it' (255).

<sup>232</sup> Pervo, 'Johannine Trajectories', 65, suggests 'This theologian has done to *John* something similar to what Marcion did to Paul, and, as in the case of Marcion, complaints about tampering with the johannine tradition ought not overlook similar tampering from another viewpoint. The author could quite probably claim that the object was to save the particularity of the johannine witness.' If so, while Marcion 'saved Paul' by means of 'editing', this author practised salvation by parody and contradiction. It still appears that supersession is the better model.

## Gospel of Truth

Another Nag Hammadi tractate which was surely influenced by the Fourth Gospel is the *Gospel of Truth*, a work which Bentley Layton calls 'One of the most brilliantly crafted works of ancient Christian literature'.<sup>233</sup> The tractate has no title in Codices I or XII of the Nag Hammadi texts where it occurs. Its first line, 'The gospel of truth is joy', however, makes it at least likely that it went by the title *Gospel of Truth*, and this happens to be the title of a Valentinian book mentioned by Irenaeus in *AH* 3. 11. 9. Thus it may be from as early as the mid-140s, or as late as about 180.

There seems to be now no consensus on how this Nag Hammadi work is related to Valentinianism. Many modern scholars have indeed concluded, based in part on parallels with fragments of Valentinus' works conserved in other places, that the *GTr* bears the fingerprints of the founder of that movement himself. But it must be admitted that neither the text itself nor the words of Irenaeus give any indication of this. Others have commented on the *GTr*'s failure to record the Valentinian pleromatic myth, or clearly to articulate Valentinian principles. Does it then reflect an early, underdeveloped form of Valentinianism? Or is it instead a later form which has toned down its overtly Valentinian features in response to orthodox criticism? Is it in fact Valentinian in any sense? Each position has had defenders. Harold Attridge has offered what appears to me to be a very plausible explanation of the character of the *GTr* in the light of these factors. He believes it is a text which 'deliberately conceals whatever might be the particular theology of its author, although there are abundant hints that this theology is a developed form of Valentinian speculation'.<sup>234</sup> And why the concealment? 'The presupposed theology is concealed so that the author may make an appeal to ordinary Christians, inviting them to share the basic insights of Valentinianism. Thus the text should be considered more exoteric than esoteric.'<sup>235</sup> As such, he argues, it was 'a text designed to be read and understood by people who do *not* share the fundamental theological presuppositions of its author'.<sup>236</sup> It undertakes its task, Attridge maintains, by taking aspects of the faith familiar to the ordinary Christian reader and reinterpreting them 'with unfamiliar metaphors'<sup>237</sup> which present an attractive face for Valentinianism. In this the *GTr* is not very different from the other works considered in this section, though it may approach its task a bit more self-consciously and perhaps executes it a bit more skilfully.

<sup>233</sup> Layton, *The Gnostic Scriptures*, 250.

<sup>234</sup> H. W. Attridge, 'The Gospel of Truth as an Exoteric Text', in C. W. Hedrick and R. Hodgson, jun., *Nag Hammadi, Gnosticism, and Early Christianity* (Peabody, Mass., 1986), 239–55, at 239–40.

<sup>235</sup> *Ibid.* 239–40.

<sup>236</sup> *Ibid.* 242.

<sup>237</sup> *Ibid.* 245.

What may we now say about the *GTr.*'s use of the Fourth Gospel and the rest of the Johannine literature? Koester is certainly in a small minority when he concludes that 'dependence upon the Gospel of John is not clear'.<sup>238</sup> His judgement is due not to any inability to find parallels with Johannine materials, however, but to his theory of the development of the Johannine tradition, according to which the Gospel of John is perceived as a very late production which relied on oral and written traditions which happen to show up independently in a fairly surprising variety of places (as we have already seen and will continue to see), the *GTr.* being but one. In a very helpful study of the author's use of biblical texts, on the other hand, Jacqueline Williams finds frequent references to the Gospel of John in this work, eleven of which she lists as probable, five as possible (one dubious).<sup>239</sup> The portions of the Fourth Gospel used range from the first to the twentieth chapters, though she emphasizes that 'it is sometimes difficult to be certain which texts are used', for some motifs occur several times in John.<sup>240</sup> This author knew not only the Fourth Gospel but also 1 John and the Revelation of John.<sup>241</sup> Williams's study seems to show that the entire Johannine corpus was important in the setting in which this author wrote, as was the Pauline, as was the Gospel according to Matthew, and the epistle to the Hebrews.<sup>242</sup> This apparently wide familiarity with what we now call New Testament texts<sup>243</sup> is an important aspect of the document. That the author could use Matthew and the book of Revelation at least seems to undermine the idea that whatever it cites or alludes to should be presumed to have gnostic affinities.

One might agree with Maurice Wiles that some aspects of the interpretation of John evident in the *GTr.* 'incorporate amongst other features a real grasp of some of the central themes of the Gospel'.<sup>244</sup> Perhaps one of these

<sup>238</sup> Koester, *ACG*, 245–6 n. 6.

<sup>239</sup> Jacquelin A. Williams, *Biblical Interpretation in the Gnostic Gospel of Truth from Nag Hammadi*, SBL Dissertation Series, 79 (Atlanta, Ga., 1988). Probable: *GTr.* 18. 18–21/John 14: 6; 21. 10–14, 20–23/John 12: 32; *GTr.* 22. 13–15/John 3: 8. Possible: *GTr.* 21. 32–4/John 10: 3 (64–6). Possible: *GTr.* 22. 2–4/John 3: 31 (67–9). See further C. K. Barrett, 'The Theological Vocabulary of the Fourth Gospel and the Gospel of Truth', in *Essays in John* (London, 1982), 50–64.

<sup>240</sup> Williams, *Biblical Interpretation*, 185.

<sup>241</sup> See Williams's caveats, *Biblical Interpretation*, 185–6.

<sup>242</sup> She finds only two dubious references for Luke and none for Mark. Others, such as Attridge, 'Exoteric', 242 n. 16, do see allusions to Mark and Luke.

<sup>243</sup> See the early and seminal study of W. C. van Unnik, 'The "Gospel of Truth" and the New Testament', in F. L. Cross (ed.), *The Jung Codex* (London, 1955), 79–129. Layton, *The Gnostic Scriptures*, 251, says 'It has been demonstrated that in *GTr.* Valentinus [*sic*] paraphrases, and so interprets, some thirty to sixty scriptural passages, almost all from New Testament books (Gn, Jn, 1 Jn, Rv, Mt, Rm, 1 Co, 2 Co, Ep, Col, and Heb)'. Layton thinks that 'Of these, it has been shown that the Johannine literature (including Rv) has had the most profound theological influence upon Valentinus's thought; the Pauline literature, less so; and Mt hardly at all. To a large degree the paraphrased passages have been verbally reshaped by abridgement or substitution, to make them agree with Valentinus's own theological perspective'.

<sup>244</sup> M. F. Wiles, *The Spiritual Gospel: The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel in the Early Church* (Cambridge, 1960), 97, which see for some examples.

might be the important theological affirmation of the unity of the Father and the Son (John 10: 30, etc.). But as Williams reports, the *GTr.* also tends to blur the distinction between the Son and the Father. And this tendency is seen in his interpretative use of verses from Matthew, Philippians, Hebrews and Revelation, as well as from John.<sup>245</sup> Whether or not the Fourth Gospel, compared to other NT works, had a more or a less profound effect on him, the way this author uses John is not appreciably different from the way he uses other early Christian texts. Williams says that the interpretation reflected in his biblical allusions ‘is not based on the original context’,<sup>246</sup> but that he regularly employs various but intelligible methods to revise those original contexts in accord with pre-existing ideals.<sup>247</sup>

A few specific Johannine allusions call for attention. ‘When the Word appeared, the one that is within the heart of those who utter it—it is not a sound alone but it became a body—a great disturbance took place’ (*GTr.* 26. 4–9). Williams thinks the verse to which this text alludes, John 1: 14, ‘And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us’, was ‘shocking’ to our author, who intentionally substituted the word ‘body’ for ‘flesh’.<sup>248</sup> This interpretative substitute may not at first sight seem to carry a greatly different meaning. It does not appear to be as drastic a change as we have seen in *TP* 47. 13–19, ‘The third time I revealed myself to them [in] their tents as Word and I revealed myself in the likeness of their shape. And I wore everyone’s garment and I hid myself within them, and [they] did not know the one who empowers me.’ But it would accord well with Attridge’s analysis of the aims of the author to present a more appealing side to the orthodox reader, presenting subtle shifts of meaning on the surface which may conceal greater ones beneath. What may lie beneath is what Irenaeus reports in *AH*. 1. 9. 3,

For, according to them, the Word did not originally become flesh. For they maintain that the Saviour assumed an animal body (ἐνδύσασθαι σῶμα ψυχικόν), formed in accordance with a special dispensation by an unspeakable providence, so

<sup>245</sup> Williams, *Biblical Interpretation*, 194.

<sup>246</sup> *Ibid.* 189.

<sup>247</sup> *Ibid.* 190–9. William Nelson, ‘The Interpretation of the Gospel of John in the Gnostic “Gospel of Truth”: A Study in the Development of Early Christian Theology’ (diss. Princeton University, 1963), 130–1 (cited from Röhl, *Rezeption*, 104–5) describes the author’s heavy use of Johannine terminology while showing a ‘drastic departure from the thought of the Gospel’. Nelson goes on to demonstrate the contrasting views of (a) man before God, (b) the redemptive work of Christ, (c) the appropriation of eternal life, in the Fourth Gospel and the *GTr.* Nelson writes, ‘Thus, it is quite clear that the author of the Gnostic treatise is using the terminology of the Fourth Gospel to suit his own particular theological purpose. For this reason he consciously emphasizes only those aspects of the Johannine teaching which can be made to fit into his own Gnostic system’ (130–1). While Röhl does not disagree with this overall assessment, he criticizes Nelson for a one-sided commitment to the Fourth Gospel as the postulated conceptual background for the relevant portions of the *GTr.* In the end, Röhl himself finds much less influence from the Fourth Gospel and he strongly contests the notion that the *GTr.* is some kind of natural development of the Fourth Gospel (108–30).

<sup>248</sup> Williams, *Biblical Interpretation*, 203.

as to become visible and palpable. But flesh is that which was of old formed for Adam by God out of the dust, and it is this that John has declared the Word of God became.

That is, the seemingly subtle shift from 'flesh' to 'body' may indeed mask a great deal of Valentinian theology—perhaps an example of how, to Irenaeus' mind, 'their language resembles ours, while their sentiments are very different' (Irenaeus, *AH* 1, *praef.* 2). At a later point the author reproaches the 'material' or 'hylic' ones for not recognizing the Son's true likeness: 'For the material ones were strangers and did not see his likeness and had not known him. For he came by means of fleshly form, while nothing blocked his course because incorruptibility is irresistible' (31. 1–8). His 'fleshly form' is what was seen by the hylics, who did not recognize him. This seems to confirm the author's docetism<sup>249</sup> and that there is a substantial difference intended in the change from 'flesh' to 'body' in *GTr.* 26. 4–9.

Another interesting example of the author's use of Johannine material is found in *GTr.* 21. 14, 20–3, 'all must go to him (the Father). Then, as <each> person gains knowledge, he receives his own, and he draws them to himself. . . and all must go to him and each person receive his own',<sup>250</sup> cf. John 12: 32, 'and I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself'. Williams writes,

Because the context of *GTr* does not refer to the death of Jesus as did John, the emphasis of the passage has been changed considerably. This is also true because the passage refers to the Father rather than to Jesus. . . Moreover, no resolution is offered of the ambiguous word 'all,' but the meaning is apparently that all who have knowledge (which comes from Jesus, 20: 34–21: 8) return to their origin within the Father.<sup>251</sup>

This removes the cross as the setting for Jesus' drawing of all men to himself and in fact removes Jesus from any instrumentality in this act, placing it in the hands of the individual and in the individual's acquisition of knowledge, even implying 'that this drawing is not dependent upon the Father's initiative'.<sup>252</sup> The distortion of John's doctrine here is a bit more pronounced than what is usual in *GTr.* In its tendency towards auto-soterism, denying the necessity of the redeeming work of Jesus, and doing so through interpretative distortion of Johannine texts, it is much like

<sup>249</sup> Braun, *Jean le théologien*, 119; Raymond Kuntzmann and Michèle Morgen, 'Un exemple de réception de la tradition johannique: 1 Jn 1, 1–5 et Évangile de Vérité NHI, p. 30, 16–31, 35', in A. Marchadour (ed.), *Origine et Postérité de l'Évangile de Jean: XIIIe Congrès de l'ACFEB Toulouse (1989)* (Paris, 1990), 265–76. The notes in *Nag Hammadi Codex I (The Jung Codex): Notes*, Nag Hammadi Studies, 23 (Leiden, 1985), 'NHC I,3: The Gospel of Truth', 39–135, at 88–9, by H. W. Attridge and G. W. MacRae, downplay this interpretation, but it would fit Attridge's overall explanation of the *GTr.* as an exoteric Valentinian text to a tee.

<sup>250</sup> Williams's translation.

<sup>251</sup> Williams, *Biblical Interpretation*, 61–2.

<sup>252</sup> *Ibid.* 193.

the *Apocryphon of James* 2. 28–33; 3. 30–4; 11. 12–13, 29–34, as observed above.

*GTr.* 18. 18–21 says ‘...Jesus, the Christ, enlightened those who were in darkness through oblivion. He enlightened them; he showed (them) a way; and the way is the truth which he taught them.’ This seems to rely on John 14: 6, ‘And Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but by me”’. Here the alterations again seem minor on the surface: it is after all still Jesus the Christ who enlightens and shows the way, that is, the truth which he taught them. Yet in John it is Jesus himself who is the way, the truth, and the life. He is the only way to the Father. Here again the *GTr.* is reminiscent of *Apoc̄Jas.* 11. 12–13 (see above). This is one of several Johannine allusions in *GTr.* which actually have the effect of diminishing John’s emphasis on Jesus in one way or another, sometimes by transferring attention to the Father (*GTr.* 24. 9–14,<sup>253</sup> cf. John 1: 18; *GTr.* 27. 8–9, cf. John 1: 18), sometimes to the believer (*GTr.* 21. 14, 20–3, cf. John 12: 31; *GTr.* 22. 2–4, cf. John 3: 31). In this sense, at least, one may say that the *GTr.*’s Christology is ‘lower’ than that of the Fourth Gospel, and lower than that of Irenaeus.

That this author knows John’s Gospel, then, is certain; this Gospel is apparently well known in his context and familiar to many of his intended readers. But we have seen enough to show us that this author’s use of the Fourth Gospel is anything but uniformly positive. We recognize elements of the critical appropriation of John which have been observed in *Trimorphic Protennoia*, *Second Apocalypse of James*, *Apocryphon of James*, and *Acts of John*. The opposition may be somewhat less direct in *GTr.*, the changes more subtle, but the ultimate aim does not seem to be very much different. This is directly contrary to the conventional wisdom about the *GTr.* and gnosticism in general and its relationship to the Fourth Gospel. That conventional wisdom also often lays down that that relationship was different as regards 1 John, which is presumed to have been less inviting to gnostic groups because, unlike the Fourth Gospel, it was written to combat incipient gnostic tendencies.<sup>254</sup> This also is not supported by *GTr.*, as we now shall observe.

*GTr.* 30. 26–32, ‘For, when they had seen him and had heard him, he granted them to taste him and to smell him and to touch the beloved Son’, seems to play on the words of 1 John 1: 1–2, ‘That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and touched with our hands, concerning the word of life—the life was manifest, and we saw it, and testify to it, and proclaim to you the eternal life which was with the Father and was made manifest to

<sup>253</sup> With regard to this, Williams, *Biblical Interpretation*, 76, says, ‘The import of the two passages is quite different. *GTr.* does not state that the Son makes the Father (or God) known, as John does, but that the Father manifests the Son’.

<sup>254</sup> e.g. Kuntzmann and Morgen, ‘Un exemple de réception’, 267.

us...'. At first glance, *GTr.* here does not so much contradict 1 John as transcend it regarding the supposed level of intimacy between the spiritual believer and the Son.<sup>255</sup> But Williams thinks that 'if Valentinus has used this passage, he has separated seeing and hearing the beloved Son from tasting, smelling, and touching him. He may wish to separate Jesus' earthly life from his resurrected life... In this case, sight and hearing would refer to Jesus' earthly life and taste, smell, and touch would refer to Jesus' post-resurrection state.'<sup>256</sup> These experiences would refer to the post-resurrection state and would be figurative expressions. That is, the 'touching' of the Saviour would thus be transferred from the pre-resurrected state of Jesus' incarnation in 1 John to a spiritual touching, tasting, and smelling of Jesus after his resurrection. Later in the same context the author refers to the 'fleshly form' of the Son, which, as Kuntzmann and Morgen point out, also contrasts with the emphasis in 1 John 1: 1-5 on the reality of the incarnation.<sup>257</sup>

Williams sees a probable allusion to 1 John 1: 5 in *GTr.* 35. 5-6, 'While their hope, for which they are waiting, is in waiting—they whose image is light with no shadow in it—then, at that time, the pleroma is proceeding to come'. Here, as in 1 John 1: 5, light is connected to divinity, though in *GTr.*, it is the divinity of the believer. Williams observes that here, "Light," however, is no longer an ethical image [as in 1 John]... which is contrasted with darkness. Rather, it is a metaphysical image which is contrasted, not with its logical or diametrical opposite ("darkness") but with "shadow," imagery which suggests a deficiency of (or in) light'.<sup>258</sup> Thus the author does not hesitate to invoke language which was probably familiar from 1 John, while applying it to a system of thought quite alien to that of 1 John.

In each allusion something is changed from the Johannine context, following the normal tendency of this author, producing a reorientation sometimes more, sometimes less extreme. What does stand out is that the author's treatment of the Fourth Gospel is essentially no different from his treatment of 1 John, and indeed, hardly different from his treatment of other texts which now make up the New Testament. There is certainly some kind of 'authority' invoked in each allusion, some form of legitimization is implicitly being sought. But the author's treatment increases the overall impression that he regards these existing 'authoritative' texts as quite pliable and, most importantly, subordinate to his own interests and agenda. This suggests (as indeed Attridge acknowledges) that the authority

<sup>255</sup> 'Le vocabulaire kérugmatique de 1 Jn 1, 1-5 entre ainsi au service de la mystique gnostique d'identification avec le Sauveur', *ibid.* 274. Kuntzmann and Morgen prefer to think of *GTr.* as using Johannine elements without knowledge of 1 John.

<sup>256</sup> Williams, *Biblical Interpretation*, 109.

<sup>257</sup> Kuntzmann and Morgen, 'Un exemple de réception', 275.

<sup>258</sup> Williams, *Biblical Interpretation*, 146.

invoked when alluding to these texts is one which was recognized by others and may not have pertained in the same way to the author himself.

From this survey of its use of the Johannine material, it is also evident that *GTr.* is unlikely to have engendered any orthodox Johannophobia. If the *GTr.* was, as Attridge thinks, 'a text designed to be read and understood by people who do *not* share the fundamental theological presuppositions of its author',<sup>259</sup> it certainly found such a reader in Irenaeus of Lyons. But Irenaeus, of course, was swayed by his reading of *GTr.* towards a negative view not of the Fourth Gospel, but of the *GTr.* One might suppose that Irenaeus was not representative of the likely orthodox readership in his day, being better trained to spot heresy in *GTr.*'s subtleties and perhaps more inclined to condemn it out of hand. But, as with other texts in this section, it appears that the only way an orthodox reader might slide into a negative attitude towards the Fourth Gospel is as she begins to adopt the views of the author of the *GTr.* If this was her reaction, she is just as likely to have taken up the same attitude towards Matthew, the Pauline Corpus, 1 John, and Revelation, for all of these are used by the *GTr.*, and in much the same way.

Layton writes, '*The Gospel of Truth*... is... one of the earliest witnesses to the contents of the proto-orthodox canon—in it Valentinus takes pains to express himself by paraphrasing and alluding to the New Testament passages, sometimes almost gratuitously'.<sup>260</sup> Layton also concludes that 'Valentinian canonical scripture in the proper sense was simply the proto-orthodox canon'.<sup>261</sup> It may be a misnomer to call anything 'Valentinian canonical scripture', but Layton's main point is no doubt correct: Valentinian use of written religious authorities, at least as instanced in the *GTr.*, witnesses to the prior existence of a body of new and authoritative Christian literature which was functioning as scripture in the churches from which Valentinians sought converts. The use of the Fourth Gospel in the *GTr.*, and perhaps in Valentinian exegesis in general, then, seems to say much more about the place it already held in the non-Valentinian churches than about any natural congruency between it and the Valentinian system.<sup>262</sup>

### Gospel of Thomas

There is probably no better known or discussed Nag Hammadi work than that which is known as the *Gospel of Thomas*. Occasionally this pseudepigraphon and its (alleged) knowledge of the Fourth Gospel are mentioned

<sup>259</sup> Attridge, 'Exoteric', 242.

<sup>260</sup> Layton, *The Gnostic Scriptures*, p. xxii.

<sup>261</sup> *Ibid.*, p. xxiii; cf. W. van Unnik, 'Gospel of Truth', 124.

<sup>262</sup> This in fact closely resembles the conclusion of F.-M. Braun over five decades ago. Braun, *Jean le théologien*, 130, 'Quoi qu'il en soit, si, comme son affectation d'orthodoxie le montre, l'auteur de l'*Évangile de Vérité* s'adressait aux fidèles, la conclusion qui'il me paraît impossible d'éluder est que, en faisant implicitement appel au quatrième Évangile, il le tenait pour un des écrits les plus chers au cœur de chrétiens.'

as evidence for the gnostic preference for that Gospel.<sup>263</sup> Conceivably, then, the *Gospel of Thomas* could have contributed to an orthodox avoidance of John.

The conclusion of an early study by Raymond Brown was that the *Gospel of Thomas* had indeed been influenced by John.<sup>264</sup> But today, over fifty years after the discovery of its full text and after countless studies, the origin of the *GT*, its date, character, and relation not only to John but to each of the canonical Gospels (and their alleged sources), are matters still warmly disputed by scholars. There is widespread agreement that the *GT* originated in Syria; the use of the name 'Judas Thomas', the special name for the apostle in that region, alone points to this conclusion. But Helmut Koester, following Giles Quispel, thinks 'the tradition of sayings of Jesus preserved in the *Gospel of Thomas* pre-dates the canonical Gospels and rules out the possibility of a dependence upon any of these Gospels'.<sup>265</sup> Koester is joined by a number of scholars in this view. Ismo Dunderberg would place both *Thomas* and John later than the Synoptics and nearly contemporaneous with each other, based on the way they use 'authenticating figures such as the Beloved Disciple in the Gospel of John and Thomas in the *Gospel of Thomas*'.<sup>266</sup> But Dunderberg also allows for the possibility that 'Although the form of this gospel may be more archaic than that of the Johannine discourses, it does not necessarily follow that all the materials included in the extant *Gospel of Thomas* are archaic'.<sup>267</sup> That is, some of the Johannine parallels might belong to a secondary development in *Thomas's* literary history. Stevan Davies has argued that *Thomas* comes from the Johannine community itself, at a stage earlier than the Fourth Gospel.<sup>268</sup> Many other scholars, on the other hand, have held that *Thomas*, as a literary work, is entirely a 'secondary' Gospel which used all four canonical Gospels, including John.<sup>269</sup>

<sup>263</sup> Barrett, *John* (1978), 66.

<sup>264</sup> Though the influence, Brown thought, was through an intermediary source. See R. E. Brown, 'The Gospel of Thomas and St John's Gospel', *NTS* 9 (1962-3), 155-77. J. Sell, 'Johannine Traditions in Logion 61 of the Gospel of Thomas', *Perspectives in Religious Studies*, 7 (1980), 23-37, argues that there was no intermediary source and that the dependence was on the finished form of John. Both these authors are criticized by I. Dunderberg, 'Thomas' I-sayings and the Gospel of John', in Risto Uro (ed.), *Thomas at the Crossroads: Essays on the Gospel of Thomas* (Edinburgh, 1998), 33-64, at 35-7.

<sup>265</sup> Koester, *ACG* 85-6. Beginning with his 'The Gospel of Thomas and the New Testament', *VC* 11 (1957), 189-207, the list of Quispel's works on *Thomas* would take up a great deal of space (J. K. Elliott, *The Apocryphal New Testament: A Collection of Apocryphal Christian Literature in an English Translation* (Oxford, 1993), 124, says there are at least thirty-five).

<sup>266</sup> I. Dunderberg, 'Thomas and the Beloved Disciple', in Risto Uro (ed.), *Thomas at the Crossroads: Essays on the Gospel of Thomas* (Edinburgh, 1998), 65-88, at 88.

<sup>267</sup> Dunderberg, 'I-sayings', 38-9.

<sup>268</sup> Stevan L. Davies, *The Gospel of Thomas and Christian Wisdom* (New York, 1983); idem, 'The Christology and Protology of the Gospel of Thomas', *JBL* 111 (1992), 663-82. Dunderberg, 'I-sayings', 39-40, criticizes Davies's theory as resting 'on a plethora of conjectures'.

<sup>269</sup> Koester, *ACG* 85, lists many, including the following. R. M. Grant, 'Notes on the Gospel of Thomas', *VC* 13 (1959), 170-80; E. Haenchen, *Die Botschaft des Thomas-Evangeliums* (Berlin, 1961);

H. J. W. Drijvers, writing about the well-known common variants found in *Thomas* and the *Diatessaron*, notes that

Instead of assuming an independent Jewish-Christian gospel that was used as well by the author of the *Gospel of Thomas* as by Tatian, it seems a much simpler and more satisfying explanation to assume that the author of the *Gospel of Thomas* used Tatian's *Diatessaron*; at least this would apply to the author of an original Syriac version that might have been different from the preserved Coptic version. It is of course quite possible that Tatian and, consequently, the author of the *Gospel of Thomas* knew and made use of extracanonical traditions that can be old and authentic, but that does not mean that the *Gospel of Thomas* as such is a representative of an independent gospel tradition.<sup>270</sup>

Drijvers thus favours a date of *c.*200 for the *GT*. An important, recent monograph by Nicholas Perrin makes an extremely strong case that the original Syriac *Thomas* is dependent on the Syriac *Diatessaron* and can be dated no earlier than the late second century.<sup>271</sup> If the author of *Thomas* used the *Diatessaron*, even if he did so some years before 200, it is plain that he could not have had much of a deleterious effect on the orthodox use of John. The same goes, needless to say, if Wolfgang Schrage's much criticized theory is correct that *Thomas*'s Synoptic parallels are based on the Coptic translation of these Gospels.<sup>272</sup>

The conclusions of scholars about this work, its community, date, composition, character, and relation to the Fourth Gospel or the Johannine community are indeed baffling in their diversity. Dunderberg has helpfully clarified some of the conflicting methods of scholars in this area<sup>273</sup> and

J. E. Ménard, *L'Évangile selon Thomas*, NHS 5 (Leiden, 1975); idem, 'La Tradition synoptique et l'Évangile selon Thomas', in F. Paschke (ed.), *Überlieferungsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen*, TU 125 (Berlin, 1981), 411–26; B. Dehandschutter, 'L'Évangile selon Thomas: Témoin d'une tradition pré-lucanienne?', in F. Neiryneck (ed.), *L'Évangile de Luc*, BETL 32 (Gembloux, 1973), 287–97; idem, 'L'Évangile de Thomas comme collection des paroles de Jésus', in J. Delobel (ed.), *LOGIA: Les paroles de Jésus—The Sayings of Jesus: Memorial Joseph Coppens*, BETL 59 (Leuven, 1982), 507–15; J.-M. Sevrin, 'L'Évangile selon Thomas: Paroles de Jésus et révélation gnostique', *RTL* 8 (1977), 265–92; K. R. Snodgrass, 'The Gospel of Thomas: A Secondary Gospel', *The Second Century*, 7 (1989–90), 19–38.

<sup>270</sup> H. J. W. Drijvers, 'Facts and Problems in Early Syriac-Speaking Christianity', *The Second Century*, 2 (1982), 157–75, at 173.

<sup>271</sup> Nicholas Perrin, *Thomas and Tatian: The Relationship between the Gospel of Thomas and the Diatessaron* (Atlanta, Ga., 2002). He examines the text of *Thomas* in terms of 'catchwords' which would have occurred in a Syriac original. This also results in a convenient explanation for the arrangement of the sayings (i.e. that it was influenced by catchwords or puns) (ibid. 169, 171–72). He finds also that the supposition of a Syriac (even as opposed to a western Aramaic) text often explains the origin of an odd Coptic word or phrase in the present Coptic text. Perrin finds evidence of a relation between *Thomas* and Tatian in the affinities between their encratic tendencies, in their shared textual peculiarities (noted by many authors, such as Quispel and Drijvers), and in their shared sequences of sayings (ibid. 188–9).

<sup>272</sup> W. Schrage, *Das Verhältnis des Thomas-Evangeliums zur synoptischen Tradition und zu den koptischen Evangelienübersetzungen*, BZNW 29 (Berlin, 1964). Later scholars have accounted for the similarities by attributing them to Coptic redaction and emphasizing the possibility that certain sayings in *Thomas* were added later, while pointing to the Greek fragments from Oxyrhynchus as proof of an earlier, Greek, recension. See the bibliography in Koester, *ACG* 85–6.

<sup>273</sup> Dunderberg, 'I-sayings', 41–3.

cautions against generalizing with regard to this document. 'Since it is possible that each saying of the *Gospel of Thomas* has a tradition history of its own, the extant *Gospel of Thomas* might show variation in its relationship to the canonical gospels'.<sup>274</sup> With this understood, there is no objection to the possibility of *GT* containing material which predates the Fourth Gospel. On the other hand, both the Diatessaronic agreements and the choice of Judas Thomas as the authenticating figure<sup>275</sup> seem to point to a late second-century Syrian environment. Perrin's recent work on *Thomas* and the *Diatessaron* substantiates this theory very significantly. And despite Koester's astounding assertion that the attestation for *Thomas* is 'just as strong as that for the canonical Gospels',<sup>276</sup> it does not appear that the existence of *Thomas* before c.200 can be proved from the evidence.<sup>277</sup> Thus, while the *GT* may contain some traditional sayings which had been ascribed to Jesus

<sup>274</sup> *Ibid.* 42–3.

<sup>275</sup> A. De Conick, '“Blessed are those Who Have Not Seen” (John 20: 29): Johannine Dramatization of an Early Christian Discourse', in John D. Turner and Anne McGuire (eds.), *The Nag Hammadi Library after Fifty Years: Proceedings of the 1995 Society of Biblical Literature Commemoration, Nag Hammadi and Manichaean Studies*, 44 (Leiden, 1997), 381–98, at 397, writes 'The assumption of this methodology is that the Johannine author is not painting an arbitrary picture of the apostle Thomas, the hero of Syrian Christianity, when he portrays him as a false hero whose mystical soteriology is corrected by Jesus'. But when exactly did Thomas become the hero of Syrian Christianity? Was it before the Fourth Gospel was written? And the name 'Didymos Judas Thomas' preserved in *GT*, as Drijvers points out, is a combination of the Lord's brother Judas with the apostle Thomas, whose name, as marked by the additional name Didymos, means twin. This extension of the name is a secondary development and seems to coincide with the kind of theology present in the *GT*, the *Acts of Thomas*, and in Tatian, whereby the believer becomes identified, as Thomas the twin was, with Jesus (Drijvers, 'Early Syriac-Speaking Christianity', 171–2; *idem*, 'East of Antioch. Forces and Structures in the Development of Early Syriac Theology', in Hans J. W. Drijvers, *East of Antioch. Studies in Early Syriac Christianity* (London, 1984), 1–27 at 15–16; *idem*, 'The Acts of Thomas', *NTA*<sup>2</sup>, 324–5.

<sup>276</sup> Koester, *ACG*, 77, referring to his article, 'Apocryphal and Canonical Gospels', *HTR* 73 (1980), 107–12. In the latter article, which gives Koester's view of the attestations of early Christian Gospel or Gospel-like materials in literary and documentary sources, one can find only four mentions of the *GT*: POxy. 1, dated 'End of 2c century and beginning of 3d century A.D'; POxy 654 and 655, both dated 'Third century'; and Tatian, whose use of *GT* in his *Diatess.*, Koester admits, is 'possible but not certain' (110 n. 18). From the same period Koester lists for John  $\Psi$ <sup>52</sup>, dated 'First half of the 2d century A.D';  $\Phi$ <sup>66</sup>, dated 'End of 2d century and beginning of 3d century A.D.';  $\Psi$ <sup>5</sup>, 9, 22, 28, 39, 45, 75, 80, dated 'Third century'; and then 'Valentinians', Clement of Alexandria, Tatian, and Irenaeus. Even from his own quite defective and tendentious list Koester's assertion cannot be supported. Nor does Koester mention here that the first 'attestations' to a 'Gospel according to Thomas' by name, by Hippolytus, Origen, and Eusebius, are all negative. It must be said, finally, that there exists a variant tradition under the name of Koester, 'Introduction', to 'Tractate 2. The Gospel according to Thomas', in B. Layton (ed.), *Nag Hammadi Codex II, 2–7 together with XIII, 2\**, *Brit. Lib. Or. 4926(1), and P. Oxy. 1, 645, 655*, Nag Hammadi Studies, 20 (Leiden, 1989), 38–49, concerning the *GT* which reads, 'All attestations before the third century are uncertain'.

<sup>277</sup> This was the conclusion of Tjitze Baarda in a paper read at the 1997 Society of Biblical Literature Meeting. Baarda specifically took Koester, Crossan, and others to task for their 'preconceived' notion of *Thomas*' independence of the canonical Gospels. The earliest firm attestation is P. Oxy. 1, dated by Grenfell and Hunt to c.200, the other two Oxyrhynchus fragments coming from around the middle of the 3rd cent. Baarda pointed out that Hippolytus' quotation (*Ref.* 5. 7. 20–22a) from a εὐαγγέλιον κατὰ θωμᾶν as used by the Naassenes does not really correspond to anything in the present text of our *GT*, even to saying 4, to which it is customarily compared. Both these speak of 'a child of seven', but Hippolytus has 'seven years', while *GT* has 'seven days', and

from a much earlier time, even possibly from before the publication of the Fourth Gospel, and while some of the theological tendencies of the *GT* may be as early as or earlier than this time, the literary work identifiable as the *Gospel of Thomas* is not likely to have been compiled and published until after the middle of the second century, very probably after the *Diatessaron*. It thus seems to me that the parallels often cited which do demonstrate that the author knew the Fourth Gospel, at least at a secondary level, come, as likely as not, only from the *Diatessaron*.

But what if one should want to credit a theory of pre-canonical, Jesus-tradition history like Koester's,<sup>278</sup> and regard the bulk of *Thomas* as containing Jesus material which is at least as early as and independent of the canonical Gospels? If it also existed as a literary document before John one will have to concede that its earliest readers, at least, could not have thought it reflected unfavourably on John, for the latter would not yet have been in existence. And what about readers in the second century? Regardless of which Gospel was written first, and even without coming to any firm conclusion with regard to literary dependence, or even about the common use of unwritten tradition, would a second-century member of the mainstream Christian Church who knew both Gospels have recognized in John a dangerous kindred spirit with *GT*? This would in any case be extremely doubtful. First of all, Koester identifies only six or eight out of 114 sayings in *GT* which are specially close to John.<sup>279</sup> This compares with 'seventy nine units in the *Gospel of Thomas* which have parallels in the Synoptic Gospels', forty-six of which are parallels with 'Q' and twenty-seven with Mark.<sup>280</sup> This general picture is confirmed by J. K. Elliott<sup>281</sup> and

the contexts are quite different, though it is possible that the text was manipulated by the Naasenes, by Hippolytus, or by both. There is also no way to tell if τὸ κατὰ Θωμᾶν Εὐαγγέλιον mentioned by Origen in *HomLuc.* 1. 5. 13 is a reference to our *GT*, particularly in the light of the Hippolytan reference.

<sup>278</sup> One should better speak of numerous particular theories regarding the original settings and forms of numerous individual sayings of Jesus, coupled with a complex theory of the Gospel according to John as 'the end product of a long development of the tradition about Jesus in the Johannine church' (*ACG* 123). Dunderberg observes that Koester's overall view of the development of sayings traditions 'seems to determine Koester's method and results as well... Scholars who presuppose a different view have been led to opposite conclusions by using the same method' ('I-sayings', 38, citing as an example J. H. Charlesworth and C. E. Evans, 'Jesus in the Agrapha and Apocryphal Gospels', in B. Chilton and C. E. Evans (eds.), *Studying the Historical Jesus: Evaluations of the State of Current Research*, NTTS 19 (Leiden, 1994), 479–533).

<sup>279</sup> H. Koester, 'The Gospel of Thomas (II, 2)' in *NHLE*<sup>3</sup>, 124–6 at 124–5, sayings 13, 19, 24, 38, 49, 92. From *ACG* one could add also sayings 1 and 108 (sayings 18b, 19c, and 111 concur only in the use of the metaphor of 'seeing' or 'tasting' death; sayings 24b, 50a, and 77a, along with John 11: 9–10; 12: 35–6; 8: 12, are said to be independent developments of 'the synoptic sayings about the light' (117)) (for another interpretation of the light imagery in logion 77 and elsewhere, see Pagels, 'Exegesis of Genesis 1', 483–8). Other parallels are more questionable.

<sup>280</sup> Koester, *ACG*, 87, 109; see his treatment, *ibid.* 86–113.

<sup>281</sup> Elliott, *ANT*, 133–34, identifies six parallels with John, though his lists differs somewhat: 1, 31, 38, 59, 71, 108. Of these, only 1 ('And he said, "He who finds the interpretation of these sayings will not taste death"'); cf. John 7: 37), 59 ('Jesus said, "Look upon the Living One as long as

others.<sup>282</sup> Whatever in *Thomas* might have reminded the orthodox reader of John, or whatever in John might have reminded her of *Thomas*, must have paled in importance compared to the questions which would have arisen from the use made by *Thomas* of materials she knew from the Synoptic Gospels.

And if somehow these questions blew past our reader and her attention was somehow stuck instead on the much fewer Johannine parallels, what is her reaction likely to have been? She no doubt would have perceived that the two authors were interpreting the sayings of Jesus in radically different ways, and that John's way was more clearly in line with the 'orthodoxy' she knew, while *Thomas's* was heading in another direction.<sup>283</sup> For as Koester says, 'If *Thomas* is dependent upon John, one must conclude that he deliberately generalized John's statements about the heavenly origin of Jesus and transformed them into the announcement that everyone who gains true knowledge can claim divine origin and return to it.'<sup>284</sup> And if on the other hand John is reacting to tradition independently developed by *Thomas*, then 'John already presupposed this generalized belief and rejected it deliberately. The believers do not arrive at salvation through knowledge about themselves, but through knowledge of Jesus.'<sup>285</sup> We may see some of the important divergences between John and *Thomas* in the following places.

you live, lest you die and seek to see him and you cannot see"; cf. John 7: 34; 8: 21; 13: 33), and 108 ('Jesus said, "He who drinks from my mouth will be as I am, and I shall be that person, and the hidden things will be revealed to him"'); cf. John 7: 37), do not also have Synoptic parallels.

<sup>282</sup> B. Blatz, 'The Coptic Gospel of Thomas', *NTA*<sup>2</sup>, 110–16, at 113, 'Roughly half of the sayings have parallels in the Synoptic Gospels'. Until recently, the literature on *Thomas* reflected this imbalance. Charlesworth, *Beloved Disciple*, 371, only a few years ago was able to lament that 'Not one monograph . . . is devoted to a study of the GosJn and this apocryphal gospel'. He observes that 'The most striking literary parallels are with Mt, then Lk, less with Mark, and very few with the GosJn. The links with the GosJn are more in terms of the proto-gnostic social environment and are ideological' (371 n. 61).

<sup>283</sup> And this is indeed consistent with what evidence we have for the early knowledge of the *GT*. We have no evidence of its existence from the 2nd cent., but some document, or documents, known as 'Gospel according to Thomas' begins to be noticed in the 3rd cent. If it is the book mentioned by Hippolytus (and as we have seen, this is doubtful) writing in Rome some time between 222 and 235, it is associated with the Naassenes (*Ref.* 5. 7. 20). Origen in Alexandria, only slightly later, would list the Thomasine Gospel as spurious (*Hom. Luc.* 1. 5. 13); Eusebius not only as spurious, but to be 'shunned as altogether wicked and impious' (*HE* 3. 25. 6). These writers do not link it in any way with John and certainly show no signs of suffering from Johannophobia themselves. Their negative judgements of the *GT* and positive appreciations of the Fourth Gospel are our only empirical evidence of the possible effects of *GT* on orthodox regard for John.

<sup>284</sup> Koester, *ACG*, 119.

<sup>285</sup> *Ibid.* 'The saying about "seeking me and not finding me" (John 13: 3) is then used to reject both the notion of Jesus as the paradigm for the Gnostic believer and the concept of the discovery of one's own divine origin' (*ibid.* 120). The reason for the concentration of parallels in the farewell discourses and in John 7: 38–8: 56 is that 'John is here discussing a tradition of sayings which proclaim a salvation that is based upon the knowledge of one's origin', sayings which he then altered.

## GOSPEL ACCORDING TO THOMAS

#49 Blessed are the solitary and elect, for you will find the kingdom. For you are from it and to it you will return.

#50a If they say to you, ‘Where did you come from?’, say to them, ‘We came from the light, the place where the light came into being on its own accord . . .’

#19a Blessed is he who came into being before he came into being.

## GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN

16.28 I came from the Father and have come into the world; again, I am leaving the world and going to the Father.

19.8 When Pilate heard these words, he was the more afraid; 9 he entered the praetorium again and said to Jesus, ‘Where are you from?’

1.9 The true light that enlightens every man was coming into the world.

8.12 Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, ‘I am the light of the world . . .’

8.58 Jesus said to them, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, Before Abraham was, I am’.

Other important ways in which John and *Thomas* part company have been noted by several recent scholars.<sup>286</sup> ‘Davies focuses primarily on similarities between Thomas and John’, writes Elaine Pagels in a recent article, ‘but what I find even more striking are the differences’.<sup>287</sup> I would agree. Indeed, could we perhaps be witnessing a certain maturing in Thomasine studies, even in Nag Hammadi studies in general, which is getting over the initial excitement created by the discovery of Johannine parallels and is settling in on asking how *Thomas* compares with John in the *use* of common traditions of various kinds, regardless of the legitimate but still unresolved matter of direct or indirect literary dependence? It seems to me, too, that when it is asked how John and *Thomas* use their common material, it is the distance between them which stands out most markedly. If indeed *Thomas* used John—and this holds to some extent even if it knew John only secondarily through the *Diatessaron*—it did so in a critical and adversarial way, transforming what John said about Jesus and generalizing it to the ‘Thomasine’ Christian, and shifting the focus from belief in Jesus to knowledge of

<sup>286</sup> See G. J. Riley, *Resurrection Reconsidered: Thomas and John in Controversy* (Minneapolis, 1995); idem, ‘The Gospel of Thomas in Recent Scholarship’, *Currents in Research*, 2 (1994), 227–52, at 240; A. D. De Conick, *Seek to See Him: Ascent and Vision Mysticism in the Gospel of Thomas*, VCSuppl. 33 (Leiden, 1996); eadem, ‘Blessed are those who have not seen’, 381–98; Pagels, ‘Exegesis of Genesis 1’, 477–96. Pagels sees John as ‘actively engaged in polemic against specific patterns of Genesis exegesis he intended his prologue to refute’ (479), patterns of exegesis which are present in *Thomas* (though, Pagels shows, not only in *Thomas*).

<sup>287</sup> Pagels, ‘Exegesis of Genesis 1’, 479. ‘According to log. 24, Jesus himself rebukes those who seek access to God elsewhere, even—or perhaps especially—those who seek it by trying to follow Jesus himself. The disciples who ask Jesus to “show us the place where you are, since it is necessary for us to seek it” (log. 24), do not even merit a direct reply for so misguided a request . . . He directs the disciple not toward himself (as does the Jesus of John 14: 6) but toward the light hidden within’ (487).

one's heavenly origin as the vehicle of salvation. If on the other hand John used *Thomas*, or if it simply interacted with traditions and ideas which eventually found expression in *Thomas*, then its interaction is predominantly critical.

The *Gospel of Thomas*, then, can hardly be regarded as evidence of a popularity of John's Gospel among 'gnostic' or heterodox Christians. If indeed it interacted with John, it stands alongside *Trimorphic Protennoia*, the *Second Apocalypse of James*, the *Apocryphon of James*, the *Acts of John*, and the *Gospel of Truth*, as examples of heterodox works which show a predominantly antagonistic—a Johannophobic—rather than congenial 'reception'.

This investigation obliges me to agree with some recent studies which have tended to lower the estimation of the number of second-century, gnostic-related figures or texts which used the Fourth Gospel. The information about Basilides fails to establish use of it on his part, though Basilideans later used it, along with many other scriptural texts. The Carpocratians do not appear to have used it. The *Apocryphon of John* may have got some names for its syzygies from the Prologue of John, a practice later perfected by the Valentinians, but apart from this it shows no interest in the Gospel. At the beginning of this chapter I noted two widespread assumptions in the literature: that gnostic use of the Fourth Gospel must have discouraged orthodox use, and that any gnostic use of the Fourth Gospel was evidence of a gnostic reception of and affinity with this Gospel. We can now see how misleading these assumptions can be and what be-devilment they have actually caused. First of all, many of the authors and texts often cited as instancing the gnostic monopoly on John come from a time after the orthodox reception of John is plainly visible. This goes most especially for the celebrated commentary of Heracleon, which is probably not from before about 180 (more likely a decade or more later) and seems to represent a Valentinian approach which has modified its exegesis based upon criticism of people such as Irenaeus. Some also of the Nag Hammadi texts often called upon are too late to have inhibited orthodox appreciation of John, and it is unlikely that they would have done so in any case. Others show only a superficial or questionable use of John. It is a characteristic of nearly all the texts examined, that they use the other canonical Gospels, Paul, and various portions of the Old and New Testaments in much the same way. Far from revealing an orthodox fear of the Fourth Gospel, these works instead seem to require that this Gospel was already being used and accorded a high status in the Great Church; that it simply formed part of the backdrop in the ecclesiastical settings in which these works were composed. This is particularly the case with those works just discussed, which exhibit a critical or adversarial approach to the Fourth Gospel, indicating that it must have been used and highly valued in the Great Church, with whom these authors were engaging in competition for adherents.

Thus the second assumption, that all gnostic use of John signifies gnostic affinity, or participation in a gnostic-Johannine trajectory, is shown to be equally false. The six works canvassed above demonstrate the surprising tendency of the earliest gnostic sources to use the Fourth Gospel in essentially an antagonistic or critical way. This seems in fact to be the case with every document I have found which plausibly predates *c.*170 and is not directly connected with Valentinian exegetical treatises<sup>288</sup> (it even may pertain to some of Valentinus' own work). This predominantly polemical use of the Fourth Gospel (and 1 John) which has now been documented in at least the *Trimorphic Protennoia*, the *Second Apocalypse of James*, the *Apocryphon of James*, the *Acts of John*, the *Gospel of Truth*, and probably in *Gospel of Thomas* has been observed by several individual scholars, but its import has not been realized for the matter of the reception of the Johannine Gospel in the second century. In fact the paradigm has exercised so strong an influence that even when the adversarial appropriation of John has been clearly recognized, some interpreters have sought to submerge the conflict and transpose it into an inter-Johannine, family squabble over the interpretation of the Fourth Gospel. But these works do not merely discredit the interpretations of John contained in 1 John or Irenaeus, they take issue with the teaching of John itself. And nowhere is this more pronounced than in the area of John's Christology. Thus the 'affinity' between these gnostic authors and John often appears quite affected, largely for the sake of making inroads among opponents, and sometimes in the bald attempt to supersede the authority of writings acknowledged to be apostolic.

The window on the orthodox provided by these works also has another consequence with which we shall have to reckon, namely, that the earlier these particular gnostic works are dated, the earlier we must recognize a fairly firmly established usage of John's Gospel in the Church at large.

Further, in works such as *Apocalypse of James* and the *Gospel of Truth* where there is an apparent knowledge of 1 John, we find no noticeable difference in the attitude displayed towards the Fourth Gospel and towards 1 John, as the currently predominant model would seem to require. These authors are no more accepting of the theological affirmations of the Fourth Gospel than of those of 1 John, which, among other things, privileges the witness of those who saw, heard, and touched the Word of Life (1 John 1: 1-4).

This evidence thus demonstrates that the assumption of a deep affinity for the Fourth Gospel among such individuals and groups as are represented by these texts has been by and large grossly mistaken. The strategies employed by these several authors are much more in line with the heterodox strategies which Irenaeus mentions at the beginning of *AH* 3, strategies

<sup>288</sup> Namely, the Ptolemaian work cited in *AH* 1. 8. 5 which interpreted the Johannine Prologue in terms of the Valentinian pleroma; the work of Theodotus (along with probably the source used by Irenaeus) cited by Clement; and Heracleon's commentary.

to supersede or 'improve upon' the apostles, interpreting apostolic scriptures with reference to secret 'tradition' passed down orally.

For it is unlawful to assert that they preached before they possessed 'perfect knowledge,' as some do even venture to say, boasting themselves as improvers of the apostles. (3. 1. 1)

When, however, they are confuted from the Scriptures, they turn round and accuse these same Scriptures, as if they were not correct, nor of authority, and [assert] that they are ambiguous, and that the truth cannot be extracted from them by those who are ignorant of tradition. For [they allege] that the truth was not delivered by means of written documents, but *vivâ voce*... (3. 2. 1)

For [they maintain] that the apostles intermingled the things of the law with the words of the Saviour; and that not the apostles alone, but even the Lord Himself, spoke as at one time from the Demiurge, at another from the intermediate place, and yet again from the Pleroma, but that they themselves, indubitably, unsulliedly, and purely, have knowledge of the hidden mystery... It comes to this, therefore, that these men do now consent neither to Scripture nor to tradition. (3. 2. 2)

With attitudes and approaches such as these in play, one did not have to follow Marcion in rejecting any of the Church's literature, but could by all means 'receive' each and every writing, if armed with a code for interpreting it and, as the ace up one's sleeve, with the notion that the apostolic writings themselves by no means held the last word.

This phenomenon of an alleged supersession of the apostolic scriptures and traditions provides a better context also for viewing the group that Irenaeus mentioned in *AH* 3. 11. 9 which is said to have rejected John's Gospel. The ostensible reason Irenaeus gives in his brief account has to do with this group's aversion to the Johannine doctrine of the Paraclete Spirit. But in the literature reviewed here this makes sense as part of a polemic against 'official' or apostolic Christianity, which put great stock in the writings claimed to have been handed down by the apostles and their disciples. For the Paraclete in John's Gospel serves to authenticate the witness of the original disciples of Jesus by leading them in all the truth, declaring to them the things that are to come and the things that belong to Jesus, and giving them remembrance of all that Jesus said to them (John 14: 26; 16: 12-14). The earlier linking of the *Apocryphon of James* with the group mentioned by Irenaeus may now be affirmed, not in the sense of an absolute identification, but by way of acknowledging the close alignment of certain basic principles which belong to the setting of the heterodox-orthodox struggle in the second century leading up to Irenaeus.

The only Johannophobia we have been able to document, then, is found not among orthodox writers, probably not even with Gaius, but in the anonymous group mentioned by Irenaeus and in the authors of the *Trimorphic Protennoia*, the *Second Apocalypse of James*, the *Apocryphon of James*, the *Acts of John* 94-102, 109, the *Gospel of Truth*, and the *Gospel of Thomas*. And contrary to the

prevailing hypothesis, there is, as Hengel has already observed, no reason to think that gnostic use of John's Gospel (outside Valentinian circles) was ever widespread at all.<sup>289</sup> Even the Valentinians, while Irenaeus attests that they 'make copious use of that according to John, to illustrate their conjunctions' (*AH* 3. 11. 7), apart from their use of the Prologue, where they believed their 'conjunctions' were illustrated, show no more attachment to John than they do for Matthew or Paul (it is to be recalled that Heracleon also wrote exegetical comments, perhaps a commentary, on Luke). Indeed the Valentinians and works like the *Gospel of Truth* tended to use all the Church's Gospels and apparently whatever else might have constituted the Church's 'canon' at that time (much as Tertullian has reported).

### **John, the Gnostics' Gospel?**

This, again, does not line up well with the nearly universal conviction that John was the 'special Gospel' of gnostics and heretics precisely because it was eminently conducive to their systems of thought, or because it shared with them some of their deepest religious commitments.<sup>290</sup> What are the gnostics supposed to have liked about John, or what constituted the ground of the unity which John is supposed to have shared with them? A judicious attempt at answering this question was made years ago by Maurice Wiles. We can still use his work as the basis for a fruitful discussion. Wiles summarized 'four important respects in which the Gnostic could find grounds within the Gospel itself appearing to support an interpretation along lines characteristic of his own peculiar way of thought'.<sup>291</sup> These are, (*a*) the philosophical character of the Prologue, (*b*) dualism, (*c*) docetism, and (*d*) determinism. Each of these aspects of John's Gospel, Wiles believes, provided some basis for Valentinian use, though in each case he concedes that their exegesis falls far short of discovering John's own views in these areas.

#### JOHN'S DETERMINISM

Of the four aspects named, it is probably John's 'determinism' which might most easily be seen as favouring the gnostics over the orthodox. At any rate, John's determinism presented certain problems for later orthodox theologians who developed the doctrine of free will in the face of Valentinian and then Manichaean determinism.<sup>292</sup> And yet, several factors prevent us from

<sup>289</sup> Certainly there is no reason to think it was 'the great battle-ground...between Gnosticism and Catholicism', Sanders, *Fourth Gospel*, 66.

<sup>290</sup> Against this see now J.-M. Sevrin, 'Le Quatrième Évangile et le gnosticisme: Questions de méthode', in J.-D. Kaestli *et al.* (eds.), *La Communauté johannique et son Histoire* (Paris, 1990), 251–68.

<sup>291</sup> Wiles, *Spiritual Gospel*, 98.

<sup>292</sup> *Ibid.* 107–11; note particularly Origen, *Comm. John* 20. 24, 28, 29, 33.

saying that gnosticism was some kind of natural outgrowth of 'Johannine determinism' or that that they necessarily came from a common stock.

First, if the Johannine tradition has a vital notion of predestination, so does the Pauline (Rom. 9: 6–29; Eph. 1: 3–6; 2: 10; 1 Thess. 1: 4; 2 Thess. 2: 13–14; Tit. 1: 1). In fact, any problems faced by later orthodox defenders of free will were problems handed to them not only by John and Paul but by other parts of the NT and orthodox tradition (Acts 2: 23; 4: 27–8; 13: 48; 1 Pet. 1: 2; 2 Pet. 1: 10).<sup>293</sup> The *Gospel of Truth* made use of the Johannine Apocalypse's image of the book of life to support its notion of predestination (19. 34–21. 3).

Nor do we even need to look outside first-century Palestinian Judaism for anticipations of John's understanding of predestination. Determinism among the Essenes and at Qumran is well documented. In fact, one proponent of the OJP is on record saying that he believes that the Jewish sect of the Essenes 'bequeathed to western civilization the concept of predestination', and that John was influenced by Qumran in this area.<sup>294</sup>

Secondly, a predestinarian outlook is not absent from the Christian anti-docetic or anti-gnostic writers themselves. We see for instance that a very early anti-docetist, Polycarp, speaks of 'those who have been truly chosen (ἀληθῶς . . . ἐκλελεγμένων) by God and our Lord' (*Ad Phil.* 1. 1), and, in very Johannine terms, of others who are 'of the devil' (*Ad Phil.* 7. 1; cf. John 8: 44). Polycarp reiterates the divine monergism of Ephesians 2: 5, 8, 9, 'by grace ye are saved, not by works but by the will of God through Jesus Christ' (*Ad Phil.* 1. 3), and clearly teaches that faith itself is a gift of God (3. 2; 4. 2). Another early anti-docetist, Ignatius of Antioch, addresses the church at Ephesus as 'predestined from eternity for abiding and unchangeable glory, united and chosen through true suffering by the will of the Father and Jesus Christ our God' (*Eph.*, praescr.).<sup>295</sup> Irenaeus too, though he may also write in ways which seem to contradict it, confesses that 'when the number is completed, which He had predetermined in His own counsel,

<sup>293</sup> Wiles, *Spiritual Gospel*, 107, points to the Basilideans' use of John 2: 4 ('My hour is not yet come'): 'Basilides therefore claims that Jesus himself is witness to the truth of the conception of fixed times for particular events' (Hippolytus, *Ref.* 7. 27. 5, see my treatment above). But in the context we find that the Basilideans (not Basilides himself) also claimed Rom. 8: 19–21 and Matt. 2: 1–2 as support for this conception. Nor is it clear that Hippolytus disagrees with the bare notion of 'fixed times for particular events' or with the NT verses used to support this it. He only objects to the Basilidean understanding of the 'times and events'.

<sup>294</sup> J. H. Charlesworth, 'The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Gospel according to John', in R. A. Culpepper and C. C. Black (eds.), *Exploring the Gospel of John* (Louisville, Ky., 1996), 65–97, at 83–4. Charlesworth says that he, M. Broshi (*The Dead Sea Scrolls* (Tokyo, 1979), 12–20), and Flusser (*The Spiritual History of the Dead Sea Sect* (Tel Aviv, 1989), 46) 'independently came to the startling conclusion that the Essenes bequeathed to western civilization the concept of predestination' (96 n. 78). See also, among others, J. C. VanderKam, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Today* (Grand Rapids, Mich., 1994), 109.

<sup>295</sup> . . . τῆ προωρισμένη πρὸ αἰῶνων εἶναι διὰ παντὸς εἰς δόξαν παράμονον ἄρεπτον, ἠνωμένη καὶ ἐκλελεγμένη ἐν πάθει ἀληθινῷ ἐν θελήματι τοῦ πατρὸς καὶ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν . . . cf. Eph. 1: 3–14.

all those who have been enrolled for life shall rise again' (*AH* 2. 33. 5). It is not as if a notion of divine election and predestination was the peculiar possession of gnostics and Valentinians. One has to inquire into the types of determinism which were being advocated.

This brings us to a third point. It will have to be admitted that differences between Johannine predestinarianism and Valentinian, in particular, are more than trifling. To be specific, John provides no support (apart from one's pre-acceptance of the Valentinian system and assuming John teaches it allegorically) for the distinctively Valentinian idea of what has been called 'substantive determinism', the gnostic threefold division of humanity into hylic, psychic, and spiritual natures, on the basis of which each will attain to a predetermined end.<sup>296</sup> Irenaeus charges that this sort of 'similar to similar' determinism, which places even God under its necessity,<sup>297</sup> agrees with the Stoics and others who are ignorant of God (*AH* 2. 14. 4). Not only does Irenaeus fail to see any link at all with John, he sees testimony to the volitional aspects of faith precisely in John 3: 16, among other places (*AH* 4. 37. 5). The orthodox were at least on firm ground when insisting that the Fourth Gospel teaches the necessity of a transition for the elect, who must be 'drawn' to the Son by the Father and must 'become' children of God by a new birth and by faith, not by a simple revelation of their essentially divine natures.<sup>298</sup>

Finally, it has yet to be shown that the Fourth Gospel was ever invoked by the gnostics to support their brand of 'determinism' in a particular or customary way, any more than were several other NT writings. The *Gospel of Truth* in fact finds support for its determinism not in the Fourth Gospel but in the book of life motif from the book of Revelation.

### JOHN'S PHILOSOPHICAL PROLOGUE

With regard to John's Prologue, we may affirm without reservation a historically verifiable attraction to proponents of the 'basic gnostic myth'. But this appears to have begun as quite superficial, and to have remained so even with the Valentinians, who, however, at least gave attention to the text as a literary entity. And we have already seen how the persuasive power of pleromatic exegesis of John 1 appears dependent upon a prior acceptance

<sup>296</sup> See Pagels, *Gnostic Exegesis*, 48–9, 83–113; Sevrin, 'Le Quatrième Évangile et le gnosticisme', 265; W. A. Löhr, 'Gnostic Determinism Reconsidered', *VC* 46 (1992), 381–90.

<sup>297</sup> 'Then again, as to the opinion that everything of necessity passes away to those things out of which they maintain it was also formed, and that God is the slave of this necessity, so that He cannot impart immortality to what is mortal, or bestow incorruption on what is corruptible, but every one passes into a substance similar in nature to itself, both those who are named Stoics from the portico, and indeed all that are ignorant of God, poets and historians alike, make the same affirmation' (*AH* 2. 14. 4).

<sup>298</sup> Origen, *Comm. John* 19. 20 (John. 15: 19); 28. 21 (John 11: 51); 20. 33 (John 1: 12); see Wiles, *Spiritual Gospel*, 108–9.

of the gnostic myth and the distinctively Valentinian hermeneutic. According to the judgement of a wide variety of scholars, the great bulk of gnostic use of John was characterized by what would today generally be called an excessively 'eisegetical' approach.

Wiles himself observed that 'the difference between Irenaeus and the Gnostics... is between an approach which is under the strict control of historical fact and one which allows free rein to the speculative imagination'.<sup>299</sup> Pagels, who has made an admirable effort to enter sympathetically into the Valentinian frame of mind, emphasizes that Valentinian exegesis of John assumes a prior acceptance of Valentinian principles. As she says, 'The characteristically Valentinian exegetical practices, such as their selective use of passages to fit into the framework of the exegesis, the hypostatization of nouns, and their interpretation of events as symbols of spiritual processes can be shown, likewise, to derive from their theological outlook'.<sup>300</sup> The gnostic theologians 'recognized that to explicate the symbolic truths hidden in scripture would require nothing less than to develop a new hermeneutical method—and this is precisely what they have done'.<sup>301</sup> 'Knowledge of the myth and its theological basis forms the essential prerequisite' not only for understanding Valentinian theology, but 'for understanding Valentinian exegesis'.<sup>302</sup> In order to see how this worked, I cite Pagels at length.

We have already seen how Ptolemy interprets Jn 1 1–4, and how he (having decided on the pleromic framework for his exegesis) has selected for comment only those passages which he considers refer to the pleroma. His theological instruction into the 'mystery' of the tetrads enables Ptolemy to recognize that Jn 1. 4 signifies the second tetrad. It indicates, he explains, the emergence of Zoe in her syzygos Anthropos (AH 1. 8. 5). This indicates in pleromic terms how the elect emerge in the unfolding of the divine life. Another such passage that bears reference to the pleroma is Jn 1. 14. In this passage... Ptolemy finds hidden reference to the primary pleromic tetrad, consisting of the Father, Charis, Monogenes, and Aletheia. He perceives (according to his initiation into Valentinian theology) that in Jn 1. 14 John 'clearly sets forth the first tetrad, when he speaks of the Father and Charis, and Monogenes and Aletheia.' Secondly, Ptolemy notes that the verse may also refer to the savior as he appears in the kenoma, as 'fruit of the pleroma,' bearing within himself the powers of all the aions, so that he 'can be called by the names of all of them' (including Monogenes, Aletheia, and Charis). Thirdly, the verse may be taken to refer to the 'logos made flesh, whose glory we beheld,' that is, to the savior manifested in material form in the cosmos. As no corporeality exists either in the

<sup>299</sup> Wiles, *Spiritual Gospel*, 99. Cf. G. Salmon, 'Heracleon', *DCB* iv. 899, 'Instances of this kind [i.e. Heracleon's restriction of the word cosmos in John 1: 3 to the visible creation] where the interpreter is forced to reject the most obvious meaning of the text are sufficiently numerous to shew that the gospel was not written in the interests of Valentinianism'.

<sup>300</sup> Pagels, *Gnostic Exegesis*, 46.

<sup>301</sup> *Ibid.* 14.

<sup>302</sup> *Ibid.* 34.

pleroma or in the kenoma, the savior comes into visible form only as he enters into the cosmos and assumes the existence of the psychic Christ and the body of Jesus... Not only is the visible logos himself not the Monogenes, but he is separated from him by whole realms of being.<sup>303</sup>

Without first adopting the pleromic myth and the 'new hermeneutical method' it enables, it is, to say the least, extremely doubtful that non-Valentinian Christians would ever have recognized the myth in the Fourth Gospel's Prologue,<sup>304</sup> let alone in its subsequent portrayal of Jesus' life and ministry.

Even Sanders conceded that 'the forced character' of Theodotus' comments on John's Prologue, 'ingenious though they are, makes it obvious that the main lines of the Valentinian system represent something independent of the Fourth Gospel'.<sup>305</sup> And yet Sanders still argued, in words that seem to have influenced many other scholars, that John and the gnostics 'employ the same religious and philosophical or theosophical terminology'.<sup>306</sup> This is already problematic, if we are to suppose that John meant by the concepts of Logos, Monogenes, Charis, etc., just what the Valentinians meant by them. But Sanders also went beyond this to suggest that the similar terminology 'may conceal a larger identity of ideology than one is inclined to admit'.<sup>307</sup> But the argument from terminology to ideology is neither straightforward nor safe, for at least three reasons. First, it is instructive to note that Valentinian pleromatic exegesis of the first chapter of John bears an uncanny resemblance to Ophite exegesis of the first chapters of Genesis (see Irenaeus, *AH* 1. 30). Apart from the greater chronological distance

<sup>303</sup> Pagels, *Gnostic Exegesis*, 37.

<sup>304</sup> M. Donovan, *One Right Reading?* (Collegeville, Minn., 1997), 36, observes about the Valentinian exegesis recorded by Irenaeus that it 'relates passages joined only by common words or allusions and does not hesitate to interpret texts apart from their obvious meaning in their context. This methodology has much in common with the approach Irenaeus himself uses. It is in the area of theological presuppositions that he and they part company.' But Donovan is being overly generous at this point, vastly overstating the similarities and minimizing the differences in the methods of Irenaeus and the Valentinians noted by other scholars. That Irenaeus too at times interprets more in accordance with theological preconception than in accordance with consistently applied 'natural' methods, still does not (*pace* Donovan) place his exegesis on quite the same level as that of the Valentinian interpreters he criticizes. The 'theological presuppositions' themselves, in this case, have a reciprocal relationship with a set of textual authorities, which results in the conclusion that some presuppositions are more textually legitimate than others.

<sup>305</sup> Sanders, *Fourth Gospel*, 65.

<sup>306</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>307</sup> *Ibid.* See further, *ibid.* 56–7, 'But even if they are fully hypostatized entities, it must be remembered that this is only carrying out to an extent unwarranted by any specifically *religious* need or experience the process begun in principle by the author of the Fourth Gospel when he wrote "In the beginning was the Word... and the word became flesh". One must remember that the Christian origin of Valentinus and even his orthodoxy (in Alexandria) are unquestionable. It was only in Rome that his orthodoxy was challenged.' Sanders appears to be dependent here upon Tertullian's narrative of Valentinus' history. But as Tertullian tells it, it was not that Valentinus was always a Valentinian and it only happened to be noticed and challenged after he had spent several years in Rome. It was that he had remained orthodox and had not published any of his distinctive teachings until that time.

which separated them from the text involved, one could just as easily say that the Ophites shared with the author of Genesis the 'religious and philosophical or theosophical terminology' of Bythus, Light, Spirit, First Man, Eve, The Mother of the Living, Serpent, Iao, Sabaoth, Adoneus, Eloeus, etc. (all terms shared by the Ophites in Irenaeus, *AH* 1. 30. 1, 11, and the Genesis author or editor). Then one could note the remarkable similarity between Ophite terminology and that of Genesis, and just as easily propose that these conceal a larger identity of ideology than one is inclined to admit. These cases of gnostic exegetical exploitation are really quite similar and should be studied before assertions are made about John's affinity with Valentinians and Sethites on the basis of religious terms common to both of them.

Second, the terminological argument also cuts in another direction. If we are going to put stock in terminology, it should not be forgotten that the Fourth Gospel shares even more of its lexicon with 1 John, and probably no one has ever accused the author of that letter of being a gnostic.<sup>308</sup> For the author of 1 John, the words Arche, Logos, Zoe, Aion, Pater, Huios, Iesus, Christos (all contained in the first four verses of 1 John) bear no resemblance to Valentinian aeons—and by all appearances, the author of 1 John stands in a much closer relationship, both chronologically and theologically, to the author of the Fourth Gospel than does any of the trio, Ptolemy, Theodotus, or Heracleon.

Third, we have already seen that there is every reason to believe that the earliest forms of the gnostic myth themselves shared very little if any common terminology with the Prologue. Aeons which originally bore other names were given Johannine names in the Valentinian system, and this conformity increased from the system attributed to Valentinus in *AH* 1. 11 to that attributed to Ptolemy or one of his followers in 1. 8. 5.

<sup>308</sup> In Johannine studies one has to be careful before saying without qualification that any particular hypothesis has never been tried. Something approaching a 'gnostic' reading of 1 John has actually been given by Francois Vouga, who wants to argue that 'the Johannine Epistles with their particular polemical traits, could very well be understood as the precursors of the Gnostic polemic against the proto-Catholic church, such as we can observe so remarkably in the Apocalypse of Peter or in the Testimony of Truth' ('The Johannine School: A Gnostic Tradition in Primitive Christianity?', *Biblica*, 69 (1988), 371–85, at 380). Vouga elsewhere, relying on the fact that the early orthodox allusions to 1 John 4: 2–3 are not literal citations, and supposing that 1 John 5: 5–6 refers disparagingly not to a docetic heresy but to a eucharistic one, argues that both the Gospel and the Letters of John were the legitimate inheritance of the gnostics and were reclaimed by the orthodox only through some questionable interventions (F. Vouga, 'Jean et la gnose', in A. Marchadour (ed.), *Origine et postérité de l'évangile de Jean: XIIIe congrès de l'ACFEB Toulouse (1989)* (Paris, 1990), 107–25, at 119). Vouga is at least correct, against most, that the heterodox of the 2nd cent. show about the same attitude towards the First Letter as they do towards the Gospel. But he makes far too much of the paraphrastic reference to 1 John 4: 2–3; 2 John 7 in Polycarp and the textual variation of 1 John 4: 2 found in Irenaeus and Tertullian, and on the other hand takes no account of the antagonistic use of the Johannine books by several heterodox sources. Vouga also couches his exegesis of Johannine texts in terms, such as 'Révélateur', and concepts which are prejudicial towards the fashioning of lines of connection with later gnostic works.

Thus J. N. Sanders's idea that John was 'spoiling the Egyptians' by taking their gnostic terminology and clothing the original *kerygma* with it<sup>309</sup> appears to be just the opposite of what the sources reveal. We know that the Valentinians, and perhaps some of the 'gnostics' before them, 'spoiled' John's Prologue. Did John himself spoil some even earlier gnostic source, scramble their pleromatic syzygies, demythologize their gnostic content, and overlay them onto a basically historical and Jewish framework? Despite decades of scholarly energy spent on the question, we are still far from being able to affirm that anything like such a gnostic myth existed when the Prologue to the Fourth Gospel was written,<sup>310</sup> let alone that the author knew it, and let alone that he thought it important enough to require him to adapt it so rigorously and so artificially in his Prologue. Sanders's statement about spoiling the Egyptians was made before the discovery of the Qumran documents. And these latter show at least that a penchant for abstract nouns, the use of dualizing expressions of opposites such as darkness and light, truth and falsehood, and a robust notion of predestination cannot be seen as reliable indicators of a 'gnostic' intellectual milieu.

#### JOHN'S DUALISM

As to dualism as well, a general affirmation can certainly be made: both John on the one hand and the gnostics and Valentinians on the other held to some form of dualism. We have seen that the author of the Naassene document discovered by Hippolytus did call upon John 3: 14 in support of his flesh/spirit dualism. But as we have observed, the Jewish sectarians at Qumran also had an unmistakably 'dualistic' outlook,<sup>311</sup> and, more importantly, so did Paul and, more importantly still, so did the author of 1-3 John. Revelation too presents what is often called a 'stark dualism' in apocalyptic form.<sup>312</sup> The dualism of the Johannine Apocalypse has even been related to that of the Fourth Gospel by students of apocalyptic.<sup>313</sup> In

<sup>309</sup> Sanders, *Fourth Gospel*, 65.

<sup>310</sup> Sevrin, 'Le Quatrième Évangile et le gnosticisme', 262, 'One may doubtless speak of a pre-Christian gnosticism in the logical sense of the term, that is to say, a gnosticism Christianized secondarily and on the surface, but in the chronological sense, such a gnosticism remains to be discovered'. In the 1st cent. Sevrin thinks, one can only speak of isolated gnostic motifs.

<sup>311</sup> Charlesworth, 'Dead Sea Scrolls', 68-75, 81-3, who, again, argues for dependence of John on Qumran.

<sup>312</sup> Much of what Latke, 'Gnostic Jesus', 151, says about the dualism of the Fourth Gospel could be said equally of the Revelation.

<sup>313</sup> C. Rowland, 'The Parting of the Ways: The Evidence of Jewish and Christian Apocalyptic and Mystical Material', in J. D. G. Dunn (ed.), *Jews and Christians: The Parting of the Ways A.D. 70 to 135* (Grand Rapids/Mich., 1999 repr. of 1992 orig.), 2213-38, at 228, 'The contrast between appearance and reality with the latter laid bare by the revelation, the drawing back of the veil which hides God's mysteries, is one of the fundamental aspects of apocalyptic. That epistemology is fundamental to the Fourth Gospel also. Since the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls we have become [sic] used to finding the background to these ideas in such sectarian sources. The Apocalypse's concern to offer the truth of the situation, whether it be the spiritual condition of the

fact, 'dualism' may be viewed so broadly as to encompass a great many expressions of both Christianity and Judaism in this period. The question is always about the kind of dualism which is signified. The 'historical dualism in which the Old Testament was associated entirely with the demiurge and the New was regarded as in radical opposition to it' is, as Wiles says, 'a less plausible interpretation of the Gospel than the cosmological one'.<sup>314</sup> As Wiles also says, the principal means used by the orthodox for meeting such a dualist interpretation was 'the demonstration of positive teaching in the Gospel, which showed Jesus to be utterly at one both with the God of creation and with the God of the Old Testament. In this task it was the Prologue which provided the most important evidence'.<sup>315</sup> This last sentence is as profound as it is shocking. The point to be observed here is that Valentinian and gnostic dualistic exegesis of John was still controlled by their underlying presupposition of what Wiles call a 'historical' dualism between the God of creation (and OT) and the highest God of the pleroma, and by their method of selective and allegorical exegesis. From this approach neither the Gospel of John, nor those of Matthew, Mark, or Luke, nor the writings of Paul, nor just about any other piece of literature the Valentinians set their eyes upon, could be entirely protected.

#### JOHN'S 'DOCETISM'

Of great importance for our study is the Valentinian case for docetism from John's Gospel. Where did the Gnostics find support for their docetism in John? The answer we should expect from reading much of twentieth-century scholarship would have to be quite simple: 'on every page'. After all, some have said that John's Christology itself clothes itself 'in the form of a naive docetism',<sup>316</sup> presenting 'God going about on the earth';<sup>317</sup> others, with more restraint, simply that 'the Gospel was readily susceptible of a docetic reading';<sup>318</sup> and others that 'John must be seen as one stage in the

churches or the reality of the unfolding of the divine purposes, is matched by the Fourth Gospel's dualistic contrasts which serve to throw into the sharpest possible relief the impoverished character of the world and the blindness of its inhabitants. Here as elsewhere both Revelation and the Fourth Gospel are indebted to the apocalyptic tradition'.

<sup>314</sup> Wiles, *Spiritual Gospel*, 101. Even MacRae, 'Gnosticism and the Church', 94-5, concedes, 'Though I think it probable that the dualistic pattern of Johannine thought is indebted to contemporary Gnostic ideas, it is clear that the Fourth Gospel has adapted a cosmic dualism to its own purposes, which are not ultimately Gnostic'; 'the dualism of John by itself is not clear evidence of Gnostic influence'.

<sup>315</sup> Wiles, *Spiritual Gospel*, 102.

<sup>316</sup> E. Käsemann, *The Testament of Jesus: A Study of the Gospel of John in the Light of Chapter 17* (ET: Philadelphia, 1968), 26.

<sup>317</sup> *Ibid.* 9, citing the earlier work of F. C. Bauer, *Kritische Untersuchungen Über die kanonischen Evangelien* (1847), 87, 313; G. P. Wetter, *Der Sohn Gottes* (1916), 149; E. Hirsch, *Das vierte Evangelium* (1936), 138.

<sup>318</sup> J. Ashton, *Understanding the Fourth Gospel* (Oxford, 1990), 194.

development of full-blown gnosticism'.<sup>319</sup> These evaluations do nothing, then, to prepare us for Wiles's unexpected confession that 'the Gnostics did not always find it easy to derive their docetism from the text of the Gospel!'.<sup>320</sup> In fact, Wiles has to go all the way to a fourth-century, Syrian, fictional debate between an orthodox and a Manichaean to find a 'gnostic', exegetical claim for a docetic Christology from John's Gospel.<sup>321</sup>

The surprising reality is that the very aspects of the Fourth Gospel usually held up by modern scholars as approaching (or in the case of Käsemann and others, as representing) a docetic Christology do not appear to have been seen that way by the gnostics who allegedly found John so conducive to their system of thought. A great part of Valentinian Johannine exegesis was centred on the Prologue, where John's abstract theological terms were metamorphosed into names for the Valentinian syzygies. It is apparent that Valentinians must have read the rest of the Gospel, just as they read the rest of the Church's Bible, assuming their Valentinian Christology, but it is not easy to see where they would have found passages which offered promise for Valentinian Christological exegesis, particularly as support for their distinctive quadripartite Christology.<sup>322</sup>

While the authors of the *Gospel of Truth* and the *Gospel of Thomas* may have been attracted to the Fourth Gospel's teaching on the unity of the Son with the Father, it is also plain that they had to distort it in the direction of blurring the distinction between Jesus and the Father, and by portraying not only Jesus' heavenly origin and unity with the Father, but also the believer's. We have observed that texts such as these certainly display a 'lower' Christology than that of the Fourth Gospel in that they deprive Jesus of his uniqueness, both as divine and as redeemer, by opening these categories to every enlightened believer. It is also apparent that several authors in using the Fourth Gospel had to alter or attack its teachings

<sup>319</sup> Barrett, *John* (1955), 66. And yet, on the same page he wrote, 'it remains substantially true that the gnostics used John because out of it, by exegesis sound or unsound, they were able to win support and enrichment for preconceived theories and mythologies'. But if it was their 'preconceived theories and mythologies' that they were supporting, this does not excite confidence that gnostic attraction to John was due to a strong common bond in religious experience and conceptions. It sounds more like they might have used John, as they used many other previously existing Christian texts, adventitiously, exploiting it for their own purposes without a deep appreciation for the author's original thought. So, if 'we should not be justified in speaking of second-century gnosticism as in any sense a creation of John', in what sense can it then be maintained that 'John must be seen as one stage in the development of full-blown gnosticism'?

<sup>320</sup> Wiles, *Spiritual Gospel*, 107.

<sup>321</sup> *Ibid.* 106, namely, Hegemonius, *Acta Archelai*, 54. And this, as it turns out, is based as much on what John does not say as upon what he does say. That is, John does not clearly refer to the birth of Jesus, and refers to him as being 'sent' from heaven. One could imagine docetists hoping for a clearer Johannine exegetical basis for their docetism.

<sup>322</sup> It has of course been maintained by others that John is in reality quite visibly anti-docetic. See Sevrin, 'Le Quatrième Évangile et le gnosticisme', 265; U. Schnelle, *Antidocetic Christology in the Gospel of John: An Investigation of the Place of the Fourth Gospel in the Johannine School*, tr. L. M. Maloney (ET: Minneapolis, 1992).

about the incarnation and the real, bodily death of Jesus. In the apparently Ptolemaean exegesis preserved in the *Excerpta ex Theodoto* we find an obvious attempt at counter-interpretation of John 19: 34–7 (*Theod.* 61, 62),<sup>323</sup> denying that the body of Jesus which was pierced was real: 'but they pierced the appearance' (ἐξεκέντησαν δὲ τὸ φαινόμενον).<sup>324</sup> We have witnessed similar evasions of the teaching of John 19: 34–7 from the author of the *Acts of John* 101. 8–9, even implying 'a direct refutation of the verse from John'.<sup>325</sup> From these we would certainly get the impression that John was not an ally but a formidably enemy to these writers in these important matters of Christology.

#### EXPECTATION AND REALITY

This brings us to a very important realization which has, I think, rather profound implications. And that is the realization of a great gulf which exists between the expectation of gnostic use of the Fourth Gospel and the reality. In the face of the bulk of twentieth-century scholarship, why is the evidence for a docetic exegesis of John so miserably slim? Why does empirical reality not come anywhere close to meeting expectation? Two major, interrelated reasons can be identified. The first is that much of modern scholarship has approached the sources with an overly simplistic notion of Christological development in the Christian Church. That notion is essentially an evolutionary<sup>326</sup> one which moves on a more or less straight historical line from the conception of a purely human prophet/teacher/sage/revolutionary, etc., to the conception of a purely divine being, a heavenly revealer who came to earth to announce salvation of the heavenly elect. Generally speaking, the closer to the first end of that spectrum, the more primitive, Jewish, and original the Christology. The closer to the latter end, the more Hellenized and gnosticized the Christology. John's Gospel presents a Jesus who is much further along on the spectrum than do the Synoptics; hence, it is further along the line towards full-blown gnosticism. MacRae says that the Fourth Gospel

portrays Christ as a pre-existent, in some sense divine, figure who descends from the world of the Father into the created world for the purpose of offering salvation

<sup>323</sup> Cf. Kaestli, 'L'Exégèse valentinienne', 341.

<sup>324</sup> The opposition is noted by Hillmer, 'Second Century', 114, who says the author of this statement wrote 'in precise opposition to the meaning as represented in the gospel'.

<sup>325</sup> Lalleman, *Acts of John*, 116, who also concludes that the words 'blood flowed from me, yet it did not flow' demonstrate that the author 'knew or supposed that the flowing of the blood and the water in the Gospel of John were literally meant.

<sup>326</sup> Jack T. Sanders, 'Nag Hammadi, *Odes of Solomon* and NT Christological Hymns', in James E. Goehring (ed.), *Gnosticism and the Early Christian World* (Sonoma, Calif., 1990), 51–66, at 64–6, has some promising reflections on alternative evolutionary models which he applies to aspects of the question of the development of gnosticism *vis à vis* Christianity. The notion of direct trajectory here too comes out as decidedly inferior.

to humanity by revealing the Father. Apart from the question of the origin of this type of thought, one must recognize the fact that it resembles nothing in the ancient world so much as the Gnostic revealer myth.<sup>327</sup>

Nothing indeed, that is, except the 'orthodox revealer myth'! MacRae has omitted to mention that the Fourth Gospel's soteriology is not purely revelational, but demands faith in Jesus, and pointedly includes his 'taking away the sin of the world' (1: 29), his death 'for the people' (11: 50), and the shedding of his blood (6: 54–6; 19: 34). To dismiss these elements as secondary or redactional begs the question. The fact is that Christ's divine and heavenly pre-existence, temporary earthly sojourn, and subsequent heavenly enthronement, were part of the common Christology well before John wrote, well before the rise of any of the identifiably 'gnostic' systems, and remained so throughout the whole of the second century and ever since.<sup>328</sup> If John's presentation exceeds the Synoptic Gospels on this score, it does not very far exceed other NT expressions which had led up to the situation for Christians in Asia Minor at the end of the first century.

Beginning even in the first verse of what is probably his first letter, Galatians 1: 1, Paul explicitly places Jesus Christ with God the Father as representative of divine agency, to be contrasted with human agency.<sup>329</sup> (If 1 Thessalonians is his first letter, we have there Paul's association of Jesus with God the Father in the conferring of blessing (1: 1) and in the supernatural ability to direct Paul's way to his readers (3: 11).) That the divine and pre-existent Lord Jesus Christ was God's agent in creation is stated in terms which sound uncannily Johannine in 1 Corinthians 8: 6, 'and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist' (cf. δι' οὗ τὰ πάντα here with John 1: 3, πάντα δι' αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο). The pre-existence of Christ is assumed by Paul again in 1 Corinthians 10: 4, where he refers to Christ as the Rock which followed the Israelites in the wilderness. A full descent/ascent motif is plainly and uncontroversially assumed in Philippians 2: 5–11, which most scholars believe reflects an earlier hymnic or confessional expression. Whether the 'high Christology' of Colossians 1 is judged to be from Paul himself or not, it always belonged to the corpus of his writings and was in any case written before any of the second-century heterodox writers. Here the Son's pre-existence and role in creation (1: 16) is seamlessly connected to his incarnation and suffering (1: 20). Whether or not one wants to argue for some version of a pre-Pauline gnosticism, it will

<sup>327</sup> MacRae, 'Gnosticism and the Church', 93.

<sup>328</sup> Rom. 9: 5; 10: 9, 13; 1 Cor. 8: 6; Gal. 1: 1; Phil. 2: 4–11; Col. 1: 15–20; Heb. 1: 1–3. See N. T. Wright, *What St Paul Really Said: Was Paul of Tarsus the Real Founder of Christianity?* (Grand Rapids, Mich., 1997), 71, 'Paul, in short, seems to have held what generations of exegetes have imagined to be an impossibility; a thoroughly incarnational theology, grounded in a thoroughly Jewish worldview'.

<sup>329</sup> For Paul, see now R. Bauckham, *God Crucified: Monotheism and Christology in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, Mich., 1998).

have to be recognized that a 'developed', divine Christology, including the idea of a coming of a heavenly redeemer and his return to heaven, is assumed by Paul himself and by itself could not have been considered 'gnostic' or 'heterodox' in the first century. The Epistle to the Hebrews, heavily used by Clement of Rome, also testifies to the acceptance of a divine-human Christology among first-century, mainstream Christian congregations (1: 1-14; 3: 5-6, etc.)—and this in a letter written to a church greatly influenced by the OT and by current Jewish norms of faith and cultus. The deity of Jesus Christ is assumed in the Johannine Apocalypse (*passim*) and a descent/ascent scheme (arguably combined with the idea of a virgin birth) is presupposed in the vision of 12: 1-6. A divine-human Christology is undebatably present in Ignatius, Polycarp, Aristides, and Hermas from the early years of the second century.<sup>330</sup> And so this prominent teaching in John's Gospel could hardly have stood before even its very first readers as a clear sign of some early form of docetism, particularly with its pointed indications of Jesus' humanity. Did the Valentinians welcome John's Jesus, who had descended straight from the Father to offer salvation by revealing the Father? Perhaps, though they had to deal with other impediments in John's account of the interval between Jesus' descent and his later ascent. But the welcome certainly could have been no less enthusiastic among the orthodox, who were eager to point out that the Fourth Gospel spoke not simply of some heavenly aeon who descended, but of 'Jesus Christ', who 'became flesh' (John 1: 14; Irenaeus, *AH* 3. 11. 2), who was crucified and bled and died, who also rose from the dead.<sup>331</sup>

A second reason for the disparity between expectation and reality in gnostic use of the Fourth Gospel, particularly with respect to any attempt to support docetism, is that there has been much confusion about the character of the docetism which might have played a role in the origins of some of the Johannine writings. The full evidence for this will have to be presented in another place, but here I can simply state that what many have regarded as the most docetic aspects of the Fourth Gospel—its striking representations of Jesus' heavenly origin and divine life on earth, which for some, places a true incarnation in question<sup>332</sup>—actually constituted for the author his strongest salvo against docetism. For the best conclusion we can draw

<sup>330</sup> Ignatius, *I Eph.* praescr.; 7.2, etc.; Polycarp, *Ad Phil.* 12. 2; Aristides, *Apol.* 1; Hermas, *Shep. Sim.* 12; etc.

<sup>331</sup> It has been well said by J. D. G. Dunn, 'John and the Synoptics as a Theological Question', 306, 'For all the weight that John puts upon Jesus as revealer and as teaching by dialogue, these aspects can never be separated in John from the central fact that Jesus fulfilled his heavenly mission by dying and rising again. This motif is so persistent and so pervasive that it dominates the whole: for example, the persistent drumbeat references to the hour of his approaching death; the repeated motifs of his glorification, ascension, and uplifting on the cross; the Lamb that takes away the sin of the world; the flesh, given for the life of the world, which must be eaten and the blood, drunk; and so forth.'

<sup>332</sup> Käsemann, *Testament*, 9.

from the Johannine Gospel and Letters about its Christological opponents is that they held a kind of Cerinthian, adoptionist distinction between an earthly Jesus and a heavenly Christ. But John allows no such dichotomy, and presents on the one hand the divine Logos who 'became flesh', and on the other the human Jesus who was also divine; that he who suffered is he who arose and was glorified by his Father. Thus the assertions of Jesus' divinity and the depictions of his divine self-consciousness throughout the Gospel point out that the one who 'descended from heaven, the Son of man' (3: 13), who 'comes from above' and is above all (3: 31), is identical with Jesus the man and is not some separable, heavenly being. Not only is the 'Christ' human, but the man Jesus is divine. The significance of John's climactic purpose statement, 'but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name' (20: 31) may be that its identification of Jesus as the Christ and Son of God encompasses both the original sense of Christ as the Jewish Messiah, and also the later sense of pre-existent heavenly being, which the opponents in 1 John would not concede to the man, Jesus. To put it simply, Jesus is the Christ; he is not merely the Christ-bearer.

Ironically, then, this means that expressions of Jesus' deity in the Fourth Gospel are in fact, *contra* Käsemann, the strongest indicators of a non-docetic Christology. For the Cerinthians, Jesus was a man pure and simple, visited by a divine spirit. John's magnification of Jesus' divinity is not a movement in the direction of docetism but a movement directly against it. If the author of the Fourth Gospel wrote with a conscious awareness of the early stages of the Christological problem that is evident in 1 and 2 John, then it may be seen that his high Christology is not advancing a naive docetism but instead is denying probably the only form of docetism he knew. This in fact helps explain the way John's Gospel was used as a barrier against 'gnosticism', at least against Cerinthianism and Valentinianism, two forms of the adoptionist docetic Christology, throughout the second century. The language and theological themes of this Gospel are largely perpetuated by 1 and 2 John, whose docetic opponents bear a strong resemblance to later descriptions of Cerinthus' teaching (Irenaeus, *AH* 1. 26). The *Epistula Apostolorum* attacks a Cerinthian type of heterodoxy and uses the Johannine literature rather profusely. The *Apocryphon of James* and the gnostic parts of the *Acts of John* promote a religion which has many affinities to Cerinthian thought, and each uses the Fourth Gospel and First Epistle of John in a predatory, supersessionary, and sometimes hostile way. Irenaeus preserves the tradition, almost certainly passed down through Polycarp, that John wrote his Gospel (and by implication his First Epistle) against Cerinthus (*AH* 3. 3. 1). He relates Polycarp's story of a personal antagonism between John and Cerinthus (*AH* 3. 3. 4), and notes that a Cerinthian type of group (with resemblances to the *ApocJas.*) rejected John's Gospel and utilized Mark's to support their docetism (*AH* 3. 11. 9).

All this means that, rather than Irenaeus being the great innovator, as many have thought, pioneering an orthodox interpretation of the gnostic Gospel of John,<sup>333</sup> it appears that Valentinus, or more probably Ptolemy, was the creative genius who engineered a reinterpretation of the abstract nouns of the Johannine Prologue to adapt to a theory of pleromatic aeons and syzygies which had been borrowed from 'the gnostics'. Predominantly, the earliest appropriation of John on the part of gnostic writers was adversarial or supersessionary. In this sense it is they who appear to be the first Johannophobes. It was the Valentinians who found a new way of 'receiving' this Gospel, used by the mainstream Church, by finding names for its pleromatic aeons in John's 'philosophical Prologue'.

<sup>333</sup> Sanders, *Fourth Gospel*, 66.