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**THE *BOOKS OF JEU* AND THE *PISTIS SOPHIA*:  
SYSTEM, PRACTICE, AND DEVELOPMENT OF A  
RELIGIOUS GROUP**

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*Erin M. Evans*



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## ABSTRACT

The primary objective of this thesis is to argue that the *Books of Jeu* (in the Bruce Codex) and the *Pistis Sophia* (the Askew Codex) are the product of a hitherto largely unrecognized religious group or community emerging from the dynamic religious climate of the first four centuries of the Common Era. It presents evidence that they have their own coherent system of theology, cosmology and soteriology, and demonstrates the strong ties that bind the individual tractates contained within these texts to one another.

Chapter One provides a brief introduction to the history of the manuscripts, discusses methodology, presents definitions and a short thesis outline, and delivers a review of literature on the subject.

Chapter Two examines each of the texts under consideration, giving a brief overview of their contents; arguments are presented for their chronological order, the exclusion of certain texts and fragments from the wider codices, and reasons these texts should be considered products of a religious group as opposed to being pure literary products of individual thinkers.

Chapter Three traces the cosmology from the earliest to the latest of the texts, outlining shifts that take place and proposing explanations for these changes within an overall developmental framework.

Chapter Four examines the roles of individual figures from the earliest to the latest texts; it demonstrates that although on the surface these roles may seem to change, their underlying nature remains constant, supporting the notion that they are the products of a group with a consistent underlying system.

Chapter Five analyses the profusion of diagrams found in the two *Books of Jeu*, breaking them down into categories based on their nature and use as expressed by the texts. It further demonstrates that such images had a precedent in the religious and cultural atmosphere of Greco-Roman society.

Chapter Six discusses potential outside religious influences present in these texts, and shows that while they are highly syncretistic, outside ideas are always incorporated within the existing framework of the group's system: conflicting notions are subordinated to the existing theology and soteriology.

The thesis concludes that these texts represent evidence of a practicing religious group that remained active over a period of time, producing multiple texts by multiple authors, adapting to a changing religious climate but maintaining the ideas that remained central to their underlying theological and soteriological system.

## DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

I hereby declare that I have composed this thesis, the work is my own, and that this work has not been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification.

Erin Evans

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My family has also been greatly supportive, once the shock had worn off of discovering the school I had applied to "out East" was in fact across the Atlantic. Their acceptance of my unorthodox journey has been immensely appreciated, and their constant love and encouragement must be gratefully acknowledged. In particular my mother, Linda Evans, has been willing to proofread, check my reasoning, and listen to the frustrations of the moment.

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## ABBREVIATIONS

<i>1 En</i>	<i>1 Enoch (Ethiopic Apocalypse)</i>
<i>1 Jeu</i>	<i>The First Book of Jeu</i>
<i>1PS</i>	<i>Pistis Sophia, Book One</i>
<i>2 En</i>	<i>2 Enoch (Slavonic Apocalypse)</i>
<i>2 Jeu</i>	<i>The Second Book of Jeu</i>
<i>2PS</i>	<i>Pistis Sophia, Book Two</i>
<i>3 En</i>	<i>3 Enoch (Hebrew Apocalypse)</i>
<i>3PS</i>	<i>Pistis Sophia, Book Three</i>
<i>4PSa</i>	<i>Pistis Sophia, Book Four (Part One)</i>
<i>4PSb</i>	<i>Pistis Sophia, Book Four (Part Two)</i>
<i>AdvHaer</i>	<i>Adversus haereses</i>
<i>Allogenes</i>	<i>Allogenes</i>
<i>ApJohn</i>	<i>The Apocryphon of John</i>
<i>Cels</i>	<i>Contra Celsum</i>
<i>GosEg</i>	<i>The Gospel of the Egyptians</i>
<i>GosJud</i>	<i>The Gospel of Judas</i>
<i>GosPhil</i>	<i>The Gospel of Philip</i>
<i>GosThom</i>	<i>The Gospel of Thomas</i>
<i>GosTruth</i>	<i>The Gospel of Truth</i>
<i>Haer</i>	<i>Refutatio omnium haeresium</i>
<i>HypArch</i>	<i>The Hypostasis of the Archons</i>
<i>InterpKnow</i>	<i>Interpretation of Knowledge</i>
<i>Keph</i>	<i>The Kephalaia of the Teacher</i>
<i>Marsanes</i>	<i>Marsanes</i>
<i>Meta</i>	<i>Metamorphoses</i>
<i>OrigWorld</i>	<i>On the Origin of the World</i>
<i>Pan</i>	<i>Panarion</i>
<i>PG</i>	<i>Patrologia Graeca</i>
<i>PGM</i>	<i>Papyri Graecae Magicae</i>
<i>StelesSeth</i>	<i>The Three Steles of Seth</i>
<i>TrimProt</i>	<i>The Trimorphic Protennoia</i>
<i>TriTrac</i>	<i>The Tripartate Tractate</i>
<i>ValExp</i>	<i>A Valentinian Exposition</i>
<i>Zost</i>	<i>Zostrianos</i>

## CHAPTER 1

# INTRODUCTION TO THE TEXTS AND HISTORY OF SCHOLARSHIP

The study of some of the more esoteric branches of early Christianity, the so-called “Gnostic” sects, has long tantalized scholars. Certainly there is evidence that such branches were both varied and widespread; however, much of this evidence is in the form of polemic from the early Church fathers directed against these groups. The discovery of the Nag Hammadi library in 1945 provided a vast trove of new sources from a number of different early esoteric Christian groups without the veil of polemical venom, to the delight and edification of many modern scholars.<sup>1</sup>

The primary edition of the Nag Hammadi library in English scholarship is Brill’s five-volume *The Coptic Gnostic Library*.<sup>2</sup> On the cover of these volumes there is a set of esoteric symbols, with a different one highlighted on each to identify the volume. The publishers of this important edition clearly felt that these symbols epitomized the mysterious or mystical nature of the treatises contained in the library, and yet the texts which are the source of these images are not contained in this set; nor are they acknowledged in the cover design credits. This is testament to the obscurity these particular texts have faced, almost since their arrival in the West in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and certainly since the discovery of the Nag Hammadi library.

Prior to that discovery, only a handful of original non-mainstream esoteric Christian works were known. One of these was the *Pistis Sophia* in the Askew Codex, purchased in 1772.<sup>3</sup> The *Pistis Sophia* was and is an invaluable resource in the study of one of the forms of non-mainstream esoteric Christian thought, having preserved within it one of the most complete cosmologies so maligned by early mainstream Christian heresiologists. Before the discovery of the *Pistis Sophia*, however, another set of unique esoteric Christian texts had been found. In 1769 James Bruce obtained what has now come to be known as the Bruce Codex, which

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<sup>1</sup> On the discovery, contents and importance of the Nag Hammadi library, see J.M. Robinson’s introduction in *The Nag Hammadi Library in English* (first printed 1977; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1996), 1-26.

<sup>2</sup> J.M. Robinson, ed., *The Coptic Gnostic Library: A Complete Edition of the Nag Hammadi Codices*, Vols. I-V, Leiden: Brill, 2000.

<sup>3</sup> J.G. Buhle, *Literarische Briefwechsel von Johann David Michaelis*, Vol. 3 (Leipzig, 1796), 69.

contains a number of Coptic books.<sup>4</sup> There is only one title found in the codex, “The Book of the Great ΛΟΓΟΣ ΚΑΤΑ ΜΥΣΤΗΡΙΟΝ,” given at the end of one of the texts. Modern scholarship has come to divide the works into three books, giving them the names the *First* and *Second Book of Jeu*<sup>5</sup> and the rather un-creative title *Untitled Text*. The first two of these share ritual, cosmological and soteriological traits with the books of the *Pistis Sophia* that are not found in any other known texts, suggesting that they belonged to the same thought world at the very least, if not the same group of believers. It is furthermore these two *Books of Jeu* of the Bruce Codex that silently provide the images which feature prominently on the cover of *The Coptic Gnostic Library*.

The condition of the Bruce Codex is now poor, with large lacunae and ill-preserved papyrus leaves. Earlier scholars had access to more text than remains today, and transcriptions have made use of both the manuscript itself and previous transcriptions to fill in gaps.<sup>6</sup> The contents, nonetheless, should be of interest to the scholar of early non-mainstream esoteric Christian thought. That so little attention has been devoted to these texts despite the recent surge of interest in the field is somewhat perplexing; but then, the contents of the books are rather puzzling themselves, in comparison with other works surviving from the period.

## 1.1 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

This thesis will argue that a coherent theological or ideological system is evident spanning the *Books of Jeu*, the *Pistis Sophia*, and the fragmentary texts in the Bruce Codex. In this series of texts rife with mysteries and syncretistic elements, it will explore their underlying system of theogonic and cosmological ideology, and how this system is utilized in ritual and community practice. This thesis will thus shed

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<sup>4</sup> G. Robbins, *A Catalogue of a valuable collection of Oriental literature, collected by James Bruce, of Kinnaird* (1843), 35.

<sup>5</sup> These titles were first used for these texts by C. Schmidt, *Gnostische Schriften in koptischer Sprache aus dem Codex Brucianus* (Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung, 1892).

<sup>6</sup> At the time of writing this thesis, E. Créghéur at the University of Laval is working on a codicological study of the Bruce Codex, along with a new transcription and commentary. His work will be a very welcome addition to scholarship on those texts. The present work, however, is not concerned specifically with codicology or the order of the texts within the manuscript; rather it will focus on an analysis of the contents of these texts, their connections with the *Pistis Sophia*, and a proposal of their use and development.

light on a hitherto largely overlooked religious thought community emerging from the dynamic religious climate of the first centuries of the Common Era. Furthermore, it will be demonstrated that these texts did not derive from mainstream Christianity, and that despite increasing use of Jewish-Christian Scriptures and motifs in the later texts, these likely were adopted from non-mainstream Christian sources. As such, these texts will be examined within their own, rather than from a predominantly Christian, context. It will help give a more complete picture of the cultural and religious environment in which these texts developed, and show different ways in which religious concepts were adopted and modified by certain groups of people—whether they formed a sociologically identifiable community, or a looser group of intellectuals sharing ideas through texts. In doing so, it will show that these texts deserve to be studied in their own right, despite their tenuous connections to mainstream or the better-known non-mainstream Christian groups. Beyond the canonical texts, the well-known Jewish and Christian pseudepigrapha, the writings of the Church Fathers, the Nag Hammadi library, and the few other extant non-mainstream esoteric Christian codices, these texts present a relatively sizable body of information about a separate, unique group with a distinct system of beliefs and practices.

The present chapter will provide a brief introduction to the nature and history of the manuscripts, discuss methodology, deliver a review of literature on the subject, and give some key definitions. Ch. 2 will examine each of the texts under consideration, giving a brief overview of their contents. Arguments will be presented for their chronological order, the exclusion from the group of certain texts and fragments found in the codices, and reasons these texts should be considered products of a religious group as opposed to being pure literary products of individual thinkers.

Ch. 3 will trace the cosmology from the earliest to the latest of the texts, outlining shifts that take place and proposing explanations for these changes within an overall developmental framework. Ch. 4 will examine the roles of individual figures from the earliest to the latest texts; it will demonstrate that although on the surface these roles may seem to change, their underlying nature remains constant,

supporting the notion that they are the products of a group with a consistent underlying system.

Ch. 5 will present an analysis of the profusion of diagrams found in the two *Books of Jeu*, breaking them down into categories based on their nature and use as expressed by the texts. It will further demonstrate that such images had a precedent in the religious and cultural atmosphere of Greco-Roman society. Ch. 6 will discuss potential outside religious influences present in these texts, and show that while they are highly syncretistic, outside ideas are always incorporated within the extant framework of the group's system: conflicting notions are subordinated to the existing theology and soteriology. Finally, Ch. 7 will present concluding remarks and possible avenues for future research.

## 1.2 METHODOLOGY

Working with texts such as the *Books of Jeu* and the *Pistis Sophia*, when even the location of their discovery is unknown, determining their precise provenance or relationship to surrounding religious groups is nigh on impossible. However, using a literary-critical approach to the texts' contents, it becomes possible to trace their internal tradition history. This method looks for signs within the text suggesting redaction or multiple authorship, such as noteworthy differences in particular key themes or motifs between books or passages, sections which break narrative flow with clear beginning and end points, or the repetition of differing versions of the same story or set of information, sometimes in quick succession.<sup>7</sup> In so doing it broadly separates the larger texts into more coherent, logical divisions from which information about their possible purpose and history can be derived. This method of attempting to break a given text down into separate, original sources has been both much used and much criticized in looking at certain other individual texts such as the *Apocryphon of John*, which has multiple recensions and potentially includes several

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<sup>7</sup> On this method in a comparable sense in an Old Testament context, see N. Habel, *Literary Criticism of the Old Testament* (Guides to Biblical Scholarship: Old Testament Series; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971), 1-17; J. Barton, *Reading the Old Testament: Methods in Biblical Study* (1984; 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. London: Darton, Longman and Todd Ltd., 1996), 20-29. On literary-critical criteria in determining Christianization in Gnostic texts, see M. Krause, "The Christianization of Gnostic Texts," in *The New Testament and Gnosis: Essays in Honour of Robert McL. Wilson*, eds. A.H.B. Logan and A.J.M. Wedderburn (Edinburgh: T&T Clark Ltd., 1983), 187-194.

textual strata.<sup>8</sup> However, in the case of the *Books of Jeu* and the *Pistis Sophia*, where only one copy exists and several texts are combined in a manuscript with unclear order, uncertain immediate relationship to one another, or even at times indistinction as to where one book ends and another begins, it is necessary to do this groundwork as a basis for further analysis of the texts' contents. In highlighting repeated but variant versions of stories or lists in the *Books of Jeu* and the *Pistis Sophia*, this method also demonstrates that multiple texts or traditions had been previously produced by the group the authors of these texts represent, which were drawn upon in the production of these works.

Having built these foundations, it becomes possible to begin to relate these texts to elements of the teachings and practices of other esoteric religious traditions of the first few centuries of the Common Era. This thesis will further engage in comparative analysis of the *Books of Jeu* and the *Pistis Sophia* with a variety of contemporary religious concepts or movements, in order to trace the trajectory and development of their traditions. No argument will be made for direct dependence between the *Books of Jeu* or the *Pistis Sophia* and any other given text, but rather it will be shown that they were written within a cultural and religious milieu where the influence of the thoughts also extant in these various other groups was present. Although a large focus of this thesis is the development and exegesis of the system of the *Books of Jeu* and the *Pistis Sophia* within itself, connections to and developments of major religious and cultural subsets, such as Valentinianism, Sethianism, Manichaeism, and Greco-Egyptian branches of magic and astrology will be explored. Sufficient textual evidence remains from a variety of groups to begin a comparison of overarching themes and elements that were utilized in these religious circles and

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<sup>8</sup> For examples of the debate, J. Doresse presents the frame-story as a later, Christian addition to a more primitive core text, with the longer recension including further additions to the shorter (*Les livres secrets des gnostiques d'Égypte: Introduction aux écrits gnostiques coptes découverts à Khénoboskion* [Paris: Librairie Plon, 1958], 228-229). M. Waldstein and F. Wisse, in their introduction to the text, feel "there can be little doubt" that the longer version is a redaction of the shorter (*The Apocryphon of John: Synopsis of Nag Hammadi Codices II, 1; III, 1; and IV, 1 with BG 8502,2* [Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1995], 7). A.K. Helmbold suspects that the longer recension is prior, but despairs of the literary-critical method providing a useful analytical tool ("The Apocryphon of John: A Case Study in Literary Criticism," in the *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 13 [1970], 173-179). Z. Pleše feels that rather than breaking it down into potentially "original" parts, viewing the text as a coherent unit with a complex narrative strategy best accounts for the discrepancies in style or form throughout (*Poetics of the Gnostic Universe: Narrative and Cosmology in the Apocryphon of John* [Leiden: Brill, 2006], 17-19).

how these themes were creatively modified by the authors of the *Books of Jeu* and the *Pistis Sophia*.

The discussion will utilize source texts, such as those of the Nag Hammadi library, the Tchacos Codex, Manichaean texts and fragments, and the Greek Magical Papyri, in addition to information gleaned from heresiological reports and modern scholarship.

### 1.3 A TERMINOLOGICAL CONUNDRUM: WHAT IS ‘GNOSTIC’?

Because scholarship on the *Books of Jeu* and the *Pistis Sophia* has almost universally called them “Gnostic” texts, some discussion of this term and its meaning is necessary. As A. Marjanen has noted, “during the last 20 years the definition of ‘Gnosticism’ has become the most difficult issue in the study of ‘Gnosticism.’”<sup>9</sup> The Messina Colloquium in 1966 proposed that Gnostic sects involve

a coherent series of characteristics that can be summarized in the idea of a divine spark in man, deriving from the divine realm, fallen into this world of fate, birth and death, and needing to be awakened by the divine counterpart of the self in order to be finally reintegrated...not every *gnosis* is Gnosticism, but only that which involves in this perspective the idea of the divine consubstantiality of the spark that is in need of being awakened and reintegrated. This gnosis of Gnosticism involves the divine identity of the *knower* (the Gnostic), the *known* (the divine substance of one’s transcendent self) and the *means by which one knows* (gnosis as an implicit divine faculty is to be awakened and actualized. The gnosis is a revelation-tradition of a different type from the Biblical and Islamic revelation tradition).<sup>10</sup>

This definition has been widely disputed, debated, and reworked. M. Williams has proposed the term “biblical demiurgical” myths to replace the idea of Gnosticism, including groups which differentiate between the creator/controllers of the material world and the highest god or principle, and which incorporate Biblical concepts in so doing.<sup>11</sup> C. Marksches accepts the term “gnosis” and proposes an eight-point typological model, also incorporating this worldly demiurgical figure, along with the ideas of salvation coming through knowledge of the higher being and state from

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<sup>9</sup> A. Marjanen, “‘Gnosticism’,” 216, in *The Oxford Handbook of Early Christian Studies*, S.A. Ashbrook and D.G. Hunter, eds. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 203-219.

<sup>10</sup> U. Bianchi, ed., *Le Origini dello Gnosticismo: Colloquio di Messina 13-16 Aprile 1966* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1967), xxvi-xxvii.

<sup>11</sup> M. Williams, *Rethinking “Gnosticism”: An Argument for Dismantling a Dubious Category* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 51-52.

which humanity originated, and tendencies toward dualism.<sup>12</sup> K. King has noted that “Gnosticism has been classified as a marginal, sectarian, esoteric, mythical, syncretistic, parasitic, and Oriental religion, in contrast to mainstream, authentic, ethnic, rational, or universal religions, such as orthodox Christianity,”<sup>13</sup> and is more useful as a polemical term than for historical inquiry. She suggests that allowing Valentinianism, Thomasine Christianity, and some of the Sethian works to function as subcategories of Christianity would be more helpful than distinguishing them with the label “Gnostic” as an “other” set aside from what people today recognize as normative Christianity.<sup>14</sup>

B. Pearson proposes that “what we call Gnosticism originated among unknown Jews who incorporated aspects of Platonism into their innovative reinterpretations of their ancestral traditions.”<sup>15</sup> B. Layton suggests that it was rather a particular Christian school of thought that adopted Platonic notions and terminology, but which may have been referred to with many names by its opponents.<sup>16</sup> A. Logan also holds firm to the idea that the “Gnostics” can be identified as a single, discernable group with post-Christian origins, separate from but interacting with other groups that are frequently categorized as “Gnostic.”<sup>17</sup> More recently D. Brakke has also espoused the notion of limiting the term to a specific Christian school of thought, focusing particularly on the group’s unique myth as characterizing the backbone of its identity.<sup>18</sup> He limits use of the term more than Layton or Logan, restricting it to texts or contemporary references with significant ties to the central myth.<sup>19</sup> The group behind all of these proposals roughly

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<sup>12</sup> C. Marksches, *Gnosis: An Introduction*, J. Bowden, trans., (London: T&T Clark, Ltd., 2003), 16-17.

<sup>13</sup> K. King, *What is Gnosticism?* (Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2003), 3.

<sup>14</sup> K. King, *What is Gnosticism?*, 164.

<sup>15</sup> B.A. Pearson, *Ancient Gnosticism: Traditions and Literature* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007), 19.

<sup>16</sup> B. Layton, “Prolegomena to the Study of Ancient Gnosticism,” in L. Michael White and O. Larry Yarbrough, eds., *The Social World of the First Christians: Essays in Honor of Wayne A. Meeks* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 334-350.

<sup>17</sup> A.H.B. Logan, *The Gnostics: Identifying an Early Christian Cult* (London: T&T Clark, 2006).

<sup>18</sup> D. Brakke, *The Gnostics: Myth, Ritual, and Diversity in Early Christianity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010).

<sup>19</sup> For example, compare his list and discussion of evidence for the Gnostic School of Thought (*The Gnostics*, 49-51) with B. Layton’s list of alternate names for the group he accepts as Gnostic

corresponds to H.-M. Schenke's "Sethians," with more or less agreement with or refinement of his proposed set of systematic elements and his list of included texts.<sup>20</sup>

What about the texts that are the focus of this study? With such a variety of definitions of Gnosis, one would expect these texts to be called Gnostic by some, but to be excluded from this term by others. Works not specializing in a discussion of "Gnosticism" almost universally refer to the texts as Gnostic.<sup>21</sup> Discussions of the texts prior to and immediately following the discovery of the Nag Hammadi library also unsurprisingly refer to them as Gnostic.<sup>22</sup> However, more surprising is that

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("Prolegomena," 345), or with Logan's arguments for the whole of the Nag Hammadi library as belonging to a Gnostic cult (*The Gnostics*, 18-23).

<sup>20</sup> H.-M. Schenke, "The Phenomenon and Significance of Sethian Gnosticism," in *The Rediscovery of Gnosticism: Proceedings of the International Conference on Gnosticism at Yale, New Haven, Connecticut, March 28-31, 1978*, Vol. 2, B. Layton, ed. (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1980), 588-616.

<sup>21</sup> H.C. Puech, "The two Books of Jeu," in *New Testament Apocrypha, Volume 1*, W. Schneemelcher, ed., R. McL. Wilson, trans. (Cambridge: James Clarke & Co. Ltd., 1991), 370-373; H.C. Puech, "The Pistis Sophia," in *New Testament Apocrypha, Volume 1*, 361-369; F.L. Cross and E.A. Livingstone, eds., "Jeu, Books of," in *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. revised (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005) 880; F.L. Cross and E.A. Livingstone, eds., "Gnosticism," in *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 687; J.F. Kelly, "Jeu, Books of," in *The Concise Dictionary of Early Christianity*, (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1992), 85; J.F. Kelly, "Pistis Sophia," in *The Concise Dictionary of Early Christianity*, 140; G. Röwekamp, "Jeu, Books of," in *Dictionary of Early Christian Literature*, S. Döpp and W. Geerlings, eds., M. O'Connell, trans. (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2000), 318-319; G. Röwekamp, "Pistis Sophia," in *Dictionary of Early Christian Literature*, 491; C.R. Coulter and P. Turner, "Authades," in *Encyclopedia of Ancient Deities* (London: McFarland & Company, 2000), 83; R.A. Norris, "Gnostic Literature," 21, in *The Cambridge History of Early Christian Literature*, F. Young, L. Ayres, and A. Louth, eds. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 20-27, F.L. Horton, Jr., *The Melchizedek Tradition: A Critical Examination of the Sources to the Fifth Century A.D. and in the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 131-151; E. Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church: History, Theology, and Liturgy in the First Five Centuries* (Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2009), 296-299.

<sup>22</sup> C. Schmidt, *Gnostische Schriften in koptischer Sprache*; C. Schmidt, "Die in dem koptisch-gnostischen Codex Brucianus enthaltenen 'Beiden Bücher Jeu' in ihrem Verhältnis zu der Pistis Sophia untersucht," *Zeitschrift für wissenschaftliche Theologie* 37 (1894), 555-585; C. Schmidt, *Koptisch-gnostische Schriften*, Vol. 1: *Die Pistis Sophia. Die beiden Bücher des Jeû. Unbekanntes altgnostisches Werk* (Leipzig 1905); C. Schmidt, *Pistis Sophia: Ein gnostisches Originalwerk des dritten Jahrhunderts aus dem Koptischen übersetzt* (1925; reprint: Graz: Edition Geheimes Wissen, 2010); C. Schmidt, "Die Urschrift der Pistis Sophia," *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche*, 24 (1925), 218-240; A. von Harnack, *Über das gnostische Buch Pistis-Sophia; Brod und Wasser: die eucharistischen Elemente bei Justin: zwei Untersuchungen* (Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung, 1891); A. von Harnack, *Die Chronologie des altchristlichen Litteratur bis Eusebius*, Vol. 2: *die Chronologie der Litteratur von Irenaeus bis Eusebius* (Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung, 1904), 193-196; K.R. Köstlin, "Das gnostische System des Buches Pistis Sophia," in *Theologisches Jahrbücher* 13 (1854), 1-104, 137-196; G.R.S. Mead, *Fragments of a Faith Forgotten* (1905; reprint: New York: University Books, 1960); G.R.S. Mead, *Pistis Sophia: The Gnostic Tradition of Mary Magdalene, Jesus, and his Disciples* (1921; reprint: Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, Inc., 2005); T.S. Lea and F.B. Bond, *Gematria: A preliminary investigation of The Cabala* (1917; reprint: Thame: I-H-O Books, 2005); E. DeFaye, *Gnostiques et Gnosticisme: Étude Critique des Documents du Gnosticisme Chrétien aux Iles*

despite the dawn of intense debate as to what Gnosticism is, most scholars who refer to these texts still use the term “Gnostic” as a part of their description.<sup>23</sup> There is disagreement whether they should be classified as more “Sethian,” “Valentinian,” “Ophite,” “Manichaeon,” or some other subdivision, or what proportions of any of these elements they contain, but the term “Gnostic” remains for many scholars as a heuristic descriptor of the complex construction and development of ideas they contain.

In sum, a wide variety of opinions exist about the origins and development of what is “Gnostic,” and further whether such a term is at all viable or helpful. In recent scholarship there appear to be two primary views for the continued use of the term “Gnostic:” one which views it as an adjective, useful as a descriptor for a spectrum of texts or groups concerned particularly with esoteric knowledge provided by a revealer figure that is necessary to achieve salvation; and the second, which uses

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*et IIIe Siècles* (Paris: Librairie Orientaliste Paul Geuthner, 1925); F. Legge, *Forerunners and Rivals of Christianity Being Studies in Religious History from 330 B.C. to 330 A.D.*, Vol. 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1915), 134-202; F. Legge, “Introduction,” *Pistis Sophia*, G. Horner, ed. and trans.; London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1924), vii-xlvi; F.C. Burkitt, *Church and Gnosis: A study of Christian thought and speculation in the Second Century* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1932), 62-91; P.D. Scott-Moncrieff, *Paganism and Christianity in Egypt* (Cambridge: 1913); H. Leisegang, *Die Gnosis* (Leipzig: Alfred Kröner Verlag, 1924), 350-389; W. Anz, *Zur Frage nach dem Ursprung des Gnostizismus* (Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung, 1897); G. Massey, *Ancient Egypt: The Light of the World* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1907); E. Amélineau, “Les traités gnostiques d'Oxford,” in *Revue de l'histoire des religions* (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1890), 176-215, 261-294; E. Amélineau, *Notice sur le papyrus gnostique Bruce* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1891); E. Amélineau, *Pistis Sophia: Ouvrage gnostique de Valentin* (1895; reprint: Milan: Archè, 1975); J. Doresse, *Les livres secrets des gnostiques d'Égypte*, 74-87.

<sup>23</sup> H.-M. Schenke, “Vorwort,” in C. Schmidt, *Koptisch-gnostische Schriften*, Vol. 1: *Die Pistis Sophia. Die beiden Bücher des Jeû. Unbekanntes altgnostisches Werk 4., um das Vorwort erweiterte Auflage herausgegeben von Hans-Martin Schenke* (1905; revised 4<sup>th</sup> edition Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1981), xvi-xxxiv; C. Marksches, *Gnosis*, 40-41; A.H.B. Logan, *Gnostic Truth and Christian Heresy: A Study in the History of Gnosticism* (London: T&T Clark, 1996); A.H.B. Logan, *The Gnostics*, 21, 43, 45, 49; B.A. Pearson, *Ancient Gnosticism*, 252-255; A. Marjanen, “‘Gnosticism’,” 212; R. McL. Wilson, “Gnosticism,” 172, in *Religious Diversity in the Graeco-Roman World: A Survey of Recent Scholarship*, D. Cohn-Sherbok and J.M. Court, eds. (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press Ltd, 2001), 164-181; G. Lüdemann and M. Janssen, *Suppressed Prayers: Gnostic Spirituality in Early Christianity* (London: SCM Press, 1998); J.G. Harris, *Gnosticism: Beliefs and Practices* (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 1999), 74-75; M. Tardieu and J-D. Dubois, *Introduction à la littérature gnostique I: Collections retrouvées avant 1945* (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1986), 65-91; R. van den Broek, “Gnosticism II: Gnostic Literature,” 417-418, in *Dictionary of Gnosis and Western Esotericism*: Vol. 1, W.J. Hanegraaff et al., eds. (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 417-432; A. Mastrocinque, *From Jewish Magic to Gnosticism* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005); A.D. DeConick, “Apostles as Archons: The Fight for Authority and the Emergence of Gnosticism in the Tchacos Codex and Other Early Christian Literature,” 244, 284-288, in *The Codex Judas Papers: Proceedings of the International Congress on the Tchacos Codex held at Rice University, Houston, Texas, March 13-16, 2008*, A.D. DeConick, ed. (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 241-288; A.D. DeConick, *The Thirteenth Apostle: What the Gospel of Judas Really Says*, (2007; revised edition London: Continuum, 2009), 165.

it solely to describe a particular early Christian school of thought sharing a unique myth and set of ritual practices. The *Books of Jeu* and *Pistis Sophia* might be considered Gnostic by the former definition, but certainly not by the latter. The use and definition of the term are not the focus of this thesis. To avoid the confusion caused by this term and the different definitions proposed by various scholars, here it will be avoided as much as possible. The term “Sethian” will be preserved for the esoteric Christian group with the distinctive myth outlined by Brakke and others. Furthermore, it is generally accepted in modern scholarship that in the post-Christian adjectival sense of the term Gnostic, the texts or groups under consideration also represent different forms of early Christianity. Thus, here the phrase “non-mainstream esoteric Christianities” will be used, to avoid the stigma contained in the alternative phrasing of “heterodox” Christianities.

## 1.4 REVIEW OF SCHOLARSHIP

Although the *Books of Jeu* and the *Pistis Sophia* are largely uncharted territory in comparison to much remaining mainstream and non-mainstream Christian literature from the first few centuries, there have been a few presentations of their contents. The *Pistis Sophia* has received a small quantity of scholarly attention, but in cases where the *Books of Jeu* are treated at all, it is generally closely following or followed by discussion of the *Pistis Sophia*. Here the focus will be on authors that have treated both texts.

### 1.4.1 Translations and transcriptions

C.G. Woide was the first Western scholar to make copies of and study both the *Books of Jeu* and the *Pistis Sophia*. The biblical citations for both were given in his *Appendix ad editionem Novi Testamenti* in 1799.<sup>24</sup> M.G. Schwartz next began work on the texts in 1848, producing a transcription and Latin translation of the *Pistis Sophia*, which was edited and published after his death by J.H. Petermann.<sup>25</sup> A

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<sup>24</sup> C.G. Woide, *Appendix ad editionem Novi Testamenti Graeci e Codice MS. Alexandrino...cum Dissertatione de Versione Bibliorum Aegyptiaca quibus subjicitur Codicis Vaticani Collatio* (Oxford, 1799).

<sup>25</sup> M.G. Schwartz, *Pistis Sophia: Opus Gnosticum Valentino adjudicatum, e Codice Manuscripto Coptico Londinensi*, J.H. Petermann, ed. (Berlin, 1851).

transcription of the Bruce Codex was also cut short by his death. E. Amélineau produced the first translations of both texts into a modern language in 1891<sup>26</sup> and 1895,<sup>27</sup> respectively, although his organization and translation of the Bruce Codex was questionable—as G.R.S. Mead notes, “his text was based on Woide’s copy of the Codex made a century ago, and the French savant had no idea that he was dealing with two distinct MSS., whose leaves were jumbled up in inextricable confusion.”<sup>28</sup> C. Schmidt was the next to tackle these texts, working extensively to put the leaves of the Bruce Codex into a logical order from the jumble in which they had been bound. His German translation and commentary were published in 1892, and his ordering and translation have been generally accepted since.<sup>29</sup> His translation of the *Pistis Sophia* followed in 1905, and it, too, is still well-regarded.<sup>30</sup> G.R.S. Mead published an English translation of only the *Pistis Sophia* in 1896, but provided synopses and discussion at some length about both works in his book *Fragments of a Faith Forgotten*. Finally, V. MacDermot published English translations of both texts based on Schmidt’s work in 1978.<sup>31</sup> In this thesis, page numbers and translations in references to the source texts are taken from these latter editions, except for where it is noted that the present author has modified the translation.

## 1.4.2 Descriptions and interpretations

### 1.4.2.1 E. Amélineau

Amélineau provides introductions with his translations of both works. However, as previously mentioned, his translation of the Bruce Codex was based upon Woide’s transcription with little further editing, resulting in a largely nonsensical ordering of the text. He wrongly interprets a number of the cryptograms found in the text, failing to recognize the cosmological language favored by the author in light of his slant

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<sup>26</sup> E. Amélineau, *Notice sur le papyrus gnostique Bruce*.

<sup>27</sup> E. Amélineau, *Pistis Sophia: Ouvrage gnostique de Valentin*.

<sup>28</sup> G.R.S. Mead, *Fragments of a Faith Forgotten*, 455.

<sup>29</sup> C. Schmidt, *Gnostische Schriften in koptischer Sprache*.

<sup>30</sup> C. Schmidt, *Koptisch-gnostische Schriften*.

<sup>31</sup> C. Schmidt, ed., *The Books of Jeu and the Untitled Text in the Bruce Codex*, V. MacDermot, trans., (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1978), and *Pistis Sophia* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1978).

toward Valentinian or Basilidian terminology.<sup>32</sup> He presents a strong argument for a Greek original for the *Pistis Sophia*,<sup>33</sup> and his belief in Valentinian authorship causes him to date the Greek original of that text to the second century.<sup>34</sup> He also believes that a Valentinian origin for the texts of the Bruce Codex is possible, positing a possible mid-second century date for their original composition.<sup>35</sup> He suggests that the Greek original for the Coptic translation that we possess must stem from the second or third century.<sup>36</sup>

His discussion of the *Pistis Sophia* attached to his translation of the text is also quite bold. He refines his own previous opinion on the authorship of the texts, stating now that rather than simply being a work of pure Valentinianism from the Eastern school, it is a text penned by Valentinus himself—although the translation that we have is poor and from several centuries after the great “docteur gnostique.”<sup>37</sup> It is a stretch from the text itself and the descriptions of the Church Fathers to argue for a Valentinian authorship, let alone that it stems from Valentinus himself, but he sees no issue with such creative inferences. Thus for Amélineau, there is no problem with only 13 aeons or 24 emanations being discussed in the text—the numbers 30 or 32 are assumed to exist, to fit in with the heresiological descriptions of the Valentinian cosmology.<sup>38</sup> That the aeons, usually described as beings in descriptions of Valentinianism, here refer to places or regions, simply shows a case of *metonymy* on the part of the heresiologists—although he is at a loss as to how to explain the concepts of “male” and “female” worlds. The list goes on, but to him the *Pistis Sophia* is “à peu près identique à ce que nous connaissons par ailleurs, c’est-à-dire par les oeuvres des Pères de l’Église. On peut donc affirmer, sans crainte de se

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<sup>32</sup> See the interpretations of the cryptograms in the introduction of E. Amélineau, *Notice sur le papyrus gnostique Bruce*, 73-77. Particularly noteworthy is the confusion of the sign for “treasury” as meaning “aeon,” and the sign for “light” as meaning “treasury,” thus rendering the frequent pairing of the two the “aeon of the treasury” rather than the “treasury of the light.”

<sup>33</sup> E. Amélineau, *Pistis Sophia*, x-xi.

<sup>34</sup> Although he proposes that the copy extant today is from the 9<sup>th</sup> or 10<sup>th</sup> century (!), a date far later than any other scholar suggests (*Pistis Sophia*, ix-x).

<sup>35</sup> E. Amélineau, “Les traités gnostiques d’Oxford,” 212-213.

<sup>36</sup> E. Amélineau, *Notice sur le papyrus gnostique Bruce*, 72.

<sup>37</sup> E. Amélineau, *Pistis Sophia*, i, xi-xviii.

<sup>38</sup> In relation to the sixty treasuries of the Bruce Codex he does cite Hippolytus’ *Haer* VI.34, where a mathematical interpretation of Valentinus’ pleroma reflects Pythagorean divisions of a circle into 12, 30, or 60 parts (E. Amélineau, “Les traités gnostiques d’Oxford,” 200).

tromper, que l'ouvrage connu sous le nom de *Pistis Sophia* a Valentin pour auteur.”<sup>39</sup> The discovery of the Nag Hammadi codices, however, has put such opinions to rest.

Amélineau's work translating the texts into a modern language was landmark for bringing them to a wider audience. However, subsequent scholarship has superseded his theories.

#### 1.4.2.2 C. Schmidt

Schmidt's work on the texts vastly advanced their accessibility and understanding. He wrote extensively on the systems of the texts and the connections between them.<sup>40</sup> Moreover, he firmly believed that the treatises in the Bruce Codex were identical with the two “Books of Jeu” mentioned in the *Pistis Sophia*, and it is his work on the subject that has caused these texts to be referred to as such in modern scholarship. His arguments for the exact identification of the Bruce Codex treatise with the “Books of Jeu” are not entirely unquestionable—for example, the suggestion that the caption “The Book of the Great ΛΟΓΟΣ ΚΑΤΑ ΜΥΣΤΗΡΙΟΝ” is actually an abbreviation of the longer title “The Book of the Great ΛΟΓΟΣ ΚΑΤΑ ΜΥΣΤΗΡΙΟΝ of Jeu,” which the later author of the *Pistis Sophia* further shortened to the “two books of Jeu,” seems to require a stretch of the imagination.<sup>41</sup> Regardless of whether the texts are identical or simply based on a shared source document, his overall connection of the contents of these texts with the ideas presented in the *Pistis Sophia* is persuasive.

Furthermore, as previously discussed, his ordering of the leaves and division of the texts of the Bruce Codex have largely been accepted by later scholars, with a few exceptions which will be seen below. One of the more contentious issues regarding his ordering was the exclusion of certain leaves from the main works as fragments of other texts. His arguments for their exclusion are convincing, especially upon further investigation of both the texts and fragments in comparison

<sup>39</sup> E. Amélineau, *Pistis Sophia*, xv.

<sup>40</sup> C. Schmidt, *Gnostische Schriften in koptischer Sprache aus dem Codex Brucianus*; “Die in dem koptisch-gnostischen Codex Brucianus enthaltenen Beiden Bucher Jeu;” *Koptisch-gnostische Schriften*, Vol. 1, ix-xxiv; *Pistis Sophia: Ein gnostisches Originalwerk*, 7-77.

<sup>41</sup> C. Schmidt, *Gnostische Schriften in koptischer Sprache*, 27; C. Schmidt, ‘Die in dem koptisch-gnostischen Codex Brucianus enthaltenen “Beiden Bucher Jeu”’, 573-754. See also his discussion in *Pistis Sophia: Ein gnostisches Originalwerk*, 62-66.

to the *Pistis Sophia*. The *Books of Jeu* are in his view older than the *Pistis Sophia*. The fourth book of the *Pistis Sophia*<sup>42</sup> is further seen to be older than the rest of the texts in the Askew Codex, but younger than the *Books of Jeu*: among other things, it uses the older liturgical formula found in prayers in the *Books of Jeu*, but has further embellished it, and reflects a later tradition of Jeu's position in the cosmological hierarchy. He proposes a late third-century date for the Greek originals of *1-3PS*,<sup>43</sup> an early third-century date for *4PS*<sup>44</sup> and both *Books of Jeu*,<sup>45</sup> and although he originally posited a fifth-century date for the manuscripts, this is later revised to the fourth century.<sup>46</sup>

#### 1.4.2.3 G.R.S. Mead

Although the bulk of Mead's scholarship on this set of texts focuses on the *Pistis Sophia*, he does provide a description of the *Books of Jeu* in his book *Fragments of a Faith Forgotten*, along with some observations on the texts and their relationships and potential interpretations. He does not believe the texts of the Bruce Codex to be the "Books of Ieou" referenced in the *Pistis Sophia*, but rather that they are based on another document which reworked the said texts. Thus he calls the works by the titles found in the texts themselves, the *Book of the Great Logos According to the Mystery*. He is one of the most conservative of the early scholars as far as identifying the texts with a particular school or author: he believes the texts may have come from the "workshop" of Valentinus, seeing in them a "long life of labour" reformulating ancient gnosis in the light of the gnosis of the Living Master. He states, however, "that this can ever be proved beyond cavil I have no hope, for we know practically nothing of him and his writings; we only know of his great reputation, and of his attempted reformulation of the Gnosis. Indeed so-called Valentinianism helps us not at all in this speculation..."<sup>47</sup> In his discussions, he does

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<sup>42</sup> In this thesis the fourth book is divided and called *4PSa* and *4PSb* for reasons to be explored in Ch. 2, but as Schmidt and much other earlier scholarship did not recognize this divide, in this section it is referred to as *4PS*.

<sup>43</sup> C. Schmidt, *Koptische-gnostische Schriften*, xvii.

<sup>44</sup> C. Schmidt, *Koptische-gnostische Schriften*, xvii.

<sup>45</sup> C. Schmidt, *Koptische-gnostische Schriften*, xxvi.

<sup>46</sup> C. Schmidt, *Pistis Sophia: Ein gnostisches Originalwerk*, 14; this is regarding the *Pistis Sophia* in particular.

<sup>47</sup> G.R.S. Mead, *Fragments of a Faith Forgotten*, 570.

not make efforts to squeeze the texts at hand into what he thinks they should say to support Valentinian authorship or a relationship to a particular known group, nor does he write them off as inane ramblings because they do not obviously exhibit such features, as do several later scholars. He looks at them largely on their own terms.

As noted above, he sees all of these texts as stemming from the same school of thought, or “workshop” of reformulation of wider gnosis. He suggests an early date: while the compilers clearly had access to the same sayings-material as did those of the canonical gospels, the indifference used in citing the letters of Paul (3PS 293) argues for an earlier rather than a later date. Thus a second century date seems most satisfactory to him. He notes that the evolution of the universe is in a certain order, but that this order seems to change in involution: “the soteriology modifies the aeonology and cosmology.”<sup>48</sup> For this reason he sees *The Book of the Great Logos* and 4PS to contain an “older form” than the rest of the *Pistis Sophia*.

As for the summary of the texts themselves, he does occasionally fall prey to the temptation to read certain parallels or symbolism where such is unlikely to be found, but largely gives a straightforward presentation of the contents. He reverses the order of the *Books of Jeu* suggested by Schmidt, feeling that the description and tutelage of the lower regions would have come before that of the upper. His analyses of some of the diagrams do delve rather deeply into the realm of the imagination—the description of the diagram of the first moment of emanation as depicting a spermatozoon and ovum,<sup>49</sup> for example, seeming a bit anachronistic—but the fact that he gives them any analytical attention at all sets him apart from the bulk of scholars.

In sum, Mead treats the texts largely in relationship to themselves, allowing him a clearer view of their contents apart from trying to force them into preconceived religious or philosophical notions taken from the Church Fathers. Despite occasional debatable readings or analyses of the texts, he looks for a more holistic understanding, appreciating the theosophical and psychological concerns of the authors or compilers.

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<sup>48</sup> G.R.S. Mead, *Fragments of a Faith Forgotten*, 574.

<sup>49</sup> G.R.S. Mead, *Fragments of a Faith Forgotten*, 536.

## 1.4.2.4 F. Legge

In *Forerunners and Rivals of Christianity*, Legge devotes a chapter to “The system of the Pistis Sophia and related texts.”<sup>50</sup> As the title suggests, while the texts of the Bruce Codex are included, they are considered to be of minor interest in comparison to the *Pistis Sophia*. As far as the texts of the Askew Codex are concerned, he views the first two as the *Pistis Sophia* proper, an uncompleted but consistent unit. This unit presupposes “belief in a Gnostic system resembling at once those of the Ophites and of Valentinus.”<sup>51</sup> These two texts he believes to have been written by Valentinus himself, again with the present translation being undertaken long after the original was penned.<sup>52</sup> *4PS*, or part of the “Texts of the Savior,” he sees as being a later document, and *3PS* as an extract from the same texts and “placed out of its natural order to satisfy the pedantry of the scribes, the rule in such cases being that the longer document should always come first.”<sup>53</sup> He later is one of the only scholars to acknowledge the separation of *4PSa* and *4PSb*, and to note the similarities between *4PSb* and *3PS*.<sup>54</sup>

Legge believes the texts of the Bruce Codex assume knowledge found in the *Pistis Sophia*. Hence, he states that “it follows that none of the contents of the Papyrus can be considered as any part of the ‘Books of Jeû’ mentioned in the *Pistis Sophia*, which, therefore, remains the parent document on which all the others are based.”<sup>55</sup> He sees no issue in assuming that things mentioned but not explained in *4PS* or the texts of the Bruce Codex must display their later date and dependency on the texts called the *Pistis Sophia* proper, while also reading suppositions into the texts of the *Pistis Sophia* itself where something is not explained or could find further explanation in these “later” texts.<sup>56</sup> For the Greek originals from which the Bruce Codex texts were translated, he refrains from offering a date; he cites the

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<sup>50</sup> F. Legge, *Forerunners and Rivals of Christianity*, 134-202.

<sup>51</sup> F. Legge, *Forerunners and Rivals of Christianity*, 135.

<sup>52</sup> F. Legge, *Forerunners and Rivals of Christianity*, 177-180.

<sup>53</sup> F. Legge, *Forerunners and Rivals of Christianity*, 183.

<sup>54</sup> F. Legge, “Introduction,” xiv-xxviii.

<sup>55</sup> F. Legge, *Forerunners and Rivals of Christianity*, 194.

<sup>56</sup> For one of many examples, he comments that the author of *1/2PS* must have known about the myth of Jabraoth and Sabaoth, despite the fact that it is only alluded to in those texts and it receives fuller treatment in *4PSa* (*Forerunners and Rivals of Christianity*, 182n.2).

views of Amélineau and Schmidt as placing it between the second and third centuries.<sup>57</sup>

A great deal of his views on the inferiority or incomprehensibility of the texts of the Bruce Codex are based on his following of Amélineau's translation and page ordering. He acknowledges Schmidt's work, saying "[h]is arrangement of the papyrus leaves makes much better sense than that of Amélineau, but it is only arrived at by eliminating all passages which seem to be inconsequent and attributing them to separate works."<sup>58</sup> That fragments of other texts could be present in an already fragmentary shuffling of leaves thus seems unthinkable to him, despite the presence of fragments of indisputably separate works found in the Askew Codex. It is then little wonder he views at least parts of the codex as being "later in date than and the work of an author inferior to that of the *Pistis Sophia*."<sup>59</sup>

His conclusions about this Egyptian branch of Gnosticism are less than flattering:

The Pharonic Egyptian had always been fanatical, submissive like all Africans to priestly influence, and easily absorbed in concern for his own spiritual welfare. Given the passion for defining the undefinable and the love of useless detail which marked everything in the old faith, and in systems like those of the Coptic texts which form the subject of this chapter he had the religion to his mind...the appeal of Gnosticism to those who would escape hell to renounce all earthly cares fell upon good ground, and Egypt was soon full of ignorant ascetics withdrawn from the life of labour and spending their days in ecstasy or contemplation until roused to seditious or turbulent action at the bidding of their crafty and ambitious leaders. For these monks and hermits the Hellenistic civilization might as well not have existed; but they preserved their native superstitions without much modification, and the practices of magic, alchemy, and divination was rife among them.<sup>60</sup>

In his view, a relatively orthodox sect spiraled downward into decadent speculation and self-absorption, losing sight of any traces of philosophy or morality. The result of the existence of groups such as this, however, was forcing the Church to organize, and thus allowing it to "survive in unimpaired strength to the present day."<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> F. Legge, *Forerunners and Rivals of Christianity*, 194.

<sup>58</sup> F. Legge, *Forerunners and Rivals of Christianity*, 190n.1.

<sup>59</sup> F. Legge, *Forerunners and Rivals of Christianity*, 161n.2.

<sup>60</sup> F. Legge, *Forerunners and Rivals of Christianity*, 200-201.

<sup>61</sup> F. Legge, *Forerunners and Rivals of Christianity*, 202.

1.4.2.5 *E. de Faye*

In further French scholarship, de Faye provides some rather acerbic observations in his discussions of the texts. Again, the bulk of the discussion revolves around the *Pistis Sophia*, but a chapter is also devoted to the texts of the Bruce codex. He disagrees with the suppositions that the texts are Valentinian or Ophite, arguing that the sect from which they stem is unidentifiable from the reports of the heresiologists. He views any attempt to determine the location of their provenance as futile and pointless, but believes the dating of the texts to be clear-cut, placing them in the third century following the proposals of Harnack and Schmidt.<sup>62</sup> He does suggest agreement in a footnote with the idea that the Bruce Codex texts are likely the two “Books of Jeu” described in the *Pistis Sophia*, supposing that the baptismal rituals described in *2 Jeu* are the lesser mysteries mentioned therein.<sup>63</sup> He supports the notion that the *Books of Jeu* and *4PS* have chronological priority over the first three books of the *Pistis Sophia*. This is demonstrated in the more relaxed attitude of the disciples in the latter, due to their having already received the lower mysteries described in the former texts and thus being assured of having some degree of salvation. He sees additional evidence in the further development of the description of the transcendent world in the first three *Pistis Sophia* texts. He goes on, suggesting that *1 Jeu* may be prior to *2 Jeu*, in part due to the nature of the introduction of that text (as per Schmidt’s organization): he views it as having more focus on morality and thus a more elevated tone, as opposed to the later texts which have lost sight of their philosophical roots and become focused on pure ritual.<sup>64</sup>

His view of the set of texts is perhaps well summarized by his statement in the conclusion to the section, that “[r]econnaissons, en conclusion, qu’en tant qu’écrivains et philosophes, nos gnostiques coptes sont fort inférieurs. Leur pensée n’a aucune valeur. Elle n’a servi en rien au progrès des idées. Elle est fort au-dessous même de la pensée de temps.”<sup>65</sup> The only possible interest he sees in them is their obsession with salvation.

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<sup>62</sup> E. de Faye, *Gnostiques et Gnosticisme*, 275-276.

<sup>63</sup> E. de Faye, *Gnostiques et Gnosticisme*, 313n.1.

<sup>64</sup> E. de Faye, *Gnostiques et Gnosticisme*, 314; however, this introduction does not belong with either of the *Books of Jeu* (see Section 2.1.8).

<sup>65</sup> E. de Faye, *Gnostiques et Gnosticisme*, 332-333.

## 1.4.2.6 F.C. Burkitt

Burkitt wrote several articles discussing the *Pistis Sophia*, which also touched upon the *Books of Jeu*.<sup>66</sup> As with the majority of scholars discussed here, he does not think very highly of the texts, viewing “this dreary Egyptian book”<sup>67</sup> as a “curious farrago of half-understood Gnostic lore” whose development could only be attributed to “a backwater in a backward isolated community.”<sup>68</sup> Of the entirety of the two *Books of Jeu*, he says that “the ‘praise’ offered to the ultimate unapproachable God by the ‘God of truth,’ though it consisted only in the utterance of the syllables ie ie ie [1 Jeu 51], is the only thing that really happens in the Books of Ieu: the rest, like the paraphrases of Psalms uttered by Pistis Sophia, is nothing more than a measure of the poverty of imagination exhibited by Coptic-speaking Gnostics.”<sup>69</sup> Thus he seems oblivious to the creativity contained in their hymns, praises, cosmological speculation, theories of emanation, adjurations to ethical life, and detailed ritual accounts. As a full overview of the contents and cosmogony of even *I-3PS* would be “confusing and fatiguing, all the more as the main principles are everywhere the same”<sup>70</sup> (while still admonishing the reader not to expect consistency within the texts, as they are purely “the products of human fancy”<sup>71</sup>), he generally restrains himself to commenting on only a few specific points within the texts.

As for the manuscripts’ date and ordering, he essentially follows Schmidt. Thus he orders the texts from earliest to latest: the *Books of Jeu*, *4PS* (or the “Anonymous work”), and *I-3PS* (“The Rolls of the Saviour”), with the latter forming a basically continuous textual whole.<sup>72</sup> He posits a fifth-century date for the manuscript of the Askew codex, but comments little on a proposed date for the original contents, perhaps in part because of his views on its original language. He

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<sup>66</sup> F.C. Burkitt, “Pistis Sophia,” *Journal for Theological Studies* 23 (1922), 271-280; “Pistis Sophia Again,” *Journal of Theological Studies* 26 (1925), 391-399; “Pistis Sophia and the Coptic Language,” *Journal of Theological Studies* 27 (1926), 148-157; *Church and Gnosis*, 62-91.

<sup>67</sup> F.C. Burkitt, “Pistis Sophia Again,” 391.

<sup>68</sup> F.C. Burkitt, “Pistis Sophia and the Coptic Language,” 157.

<sup>69</sup> F.C. Burkitt, *Church and Gnosis*, 86.

<sup>70</sup> F.C. Burkitt, *Church and Gnosis*, 74.

<sup>71</sup> F.C. Burkitt, *Church and Gnosis*, 63.

<sup>72</sup> F.C. Burkitt, *Church and Gnosis*, 62.

steadfastly argues for the documents' original composition in Coptic rather than as a translation from Greek, and in this he engages in some debate with Schmidt.<sup>73</sup>

#### 1.4.2.7 J. Doresse

Doresse, in his preliminary volume on the Nag Hammadi library, also provides a chapter discussing these already-known codices (as well as the Berlin Codex).<sup>74</sup> It is a brief treatment of the texts, and in the first paragraph alone they are described as

...les plus compliqués, les plus incohérents sans doute que la Gnose ait jamais produits! Mis en face de la documentation que les hérésiologues nous ont fait connaître, ils font paraître celle-ci presque...élogieuse et bienveillante à l'égard de sects qu'ils ont bien complaisamment prises au sérieux en leur faisant l'honneur de les refuter.<sup>75</sup>

Once again they receive an unsympathetic analysis.

In ten pages, he gives a whirlwind description of all the texts of the *Pistis Sophia*, including debatable interpretations of the structure of the higher realms, and the composition of the human being. In his discussion of *4PS* in particular the description of the workings of the upper realms is sketchy, with occasionally quite misleading results.<sup>76</sup> Similar confusion is present in the four pages devoted to the *Books of Jeu*.<sup>77</sup> He does, however, recognize the connection between the texts, and agrees with the supposition that the Bruce Codex texts are identifiable as the two “Books of Jeu” of the *Pistis Sophia*.

He denies direct connection with any of the heretical groups known from the heresiologists, but does note ideas with potential connections to the Ophites<sup>78</sup> and the

<sup>73</sup> In addition to Burkitt's three above-mentioned articles in *JTS*, see also C. Schmidt, “Die Urschrift der Pistis Sophia.” Schmidt's argument is convincing.

<sup>74</sup> J. Doresse, *Les livres secrets des gnostiques d'Égypte*, 74-93.

<sup>75</sup> J. Doresse, *Les livres secrets des gnostiques d'Égypte*, 74.

<sup>76</sup> For one example, in describing the complex and detailed section which relates the capture of souls by the great archons and the cosmic events which bring about these souls' release, he simplifies the situation considerably by saying that the souls are liberated by Sabaoth the Good, without specifying to which of the two good Sabaoths he is referring (*Les livres secrets des gnostiques d'Égypte*, 82). Either way the statement is incomplete or inaccurate. The Little Sabaoth the Good (here representing Zeus or Jupiter) acts by moving into specific opposite signs of the Zodiac along with Aphrodite, not actively freeing the souls; and the Great Sabaoth the Good appears only once through the course of the five lengthy accounts.

<sup>77</sup> For example, referring to the wicked god Taricheas of *2 Jeu* as the “triple-power” of the Great Archon, rather than the *third* power of the great archon as the text states (ΤΜΕΖΓ ΝΔΥΝΑΜΙC ΜΙΤΝΟC ΝΑΡΧΩΝ). The triple-powers or *tridynamis* are distinct figures, the names, roles and natures of which have been the source of great confusion for the modern scholar.

<sup>78</sup> J. Doresse, *Les livres secrets des gnostiques d'Égypte*, 75.

Manichaeans.<sup>79</sup> For the manuscripts of both the *Pistis Sophia* and the *Books of Jeu* he posits a fifth century date.<sup>80</sup>

One can see from this survey that opinions varied widely as to the value of the *Books of Jeu* and the *Pistis Sophia*, as well as to their date and provenance. Little scholarship exists on these texts, even for the period of fifty years between their being brought to wider scholarly attention and the discovery of the Nag Hammadi library that largely overshadowed interest in them. This demonstrates the general view that the texts were so dense, confusing, and jumbled through issues of transmission, translation by ignorant scribes, and the wear of time, that efforts to work out their system in greater depth would be fruitless. There was a push to pigeonhole the texts into one of the systems known from the Church Fathers. A desire for more direct knowledge of these known “heresies” caused some scholars to make bold suppositions as to the Valentinian authorship or Ophitic origins of the *Pistis Sophia* at the very least.

Scholarship on the texts from the period after the discovery of the Nag Hammadi library is exceedingly limited, and discussions of them as a connected system or set of texts are particularly lacking. Even those few more recent authors who devote a few pages to them, such as B.A. Pearson,<sup>81</sup> C. Marksches,<sup>82</sup> M. Tardieu and J.-D. Dubois,<sup>83</sup> G. Lüdemann and M. Janssen,<sup>84</sup> E. Ferguson,<sup>85</sup> or J.G. Harris,<sup>86</sup> provide only a limited description or summary based on previous scholarship, and contribute little to a deeper understanding of these texts. That these texts do not fit in with one of the better-known non-mainstream esoteric Christian schools frequently causes them to be disregarded altogether. This thesis will fill this lacuna in scholarship. It will treat the cosmology, theology and ritual praxis found in these texts in their own right. It will provide a thorough overview of their contents and system, incorporating comparative analysis of information from certain other

<sup>79</sup> J. Doresse, *Les livres secrets des gnostiques d'Égypte*, 87.

<sup>80</sup> J. Doresse, *Les livres secrets des gnostiques d'Égypte*, 75; 84.

<sup>81</sup> *Ancient Gnosticism*, 252-255.

<sup>82</sup> *Gnosis*, 40-41.

<sup>83</sup> *Introduction à la littérature gnostique I*, 65-91.

<sup>84</sup> *Suppressed Prayers*, 26-27, 44-50, 52-56, 109-114.

<sup>85</sup> *Baptism in the Early Church*, 296-298.

<sup>86</sup> *Gnosticism: Beliefs and Practices*, 74-75.

religious groups and texts that have only become widely available to scholars in the past several decades. In so doing, it will both clarify the position of these much-overlooked texts and their users, and add to the larger picture of the religious climate in the early stages of Christianity's development.

## 1.5 DEFINITIONS OF KEY TERMS

These texts make references to beings and ideas that are present in a number of contemporary esoteric religious or philosophical works. However, they are frequently used in a different sense than their meanings in some of the more commonly studied texts of the period. Thus, before looking at the contents of the texts themselves, some definitions of terms are needed. This section will examine important terms within the texts themselves, as well as proposing the new term “Jeuian” for use in scholarship.

### 1.5.1 Emanation

Emanations (ΠΡΟΒΟΛΗ) are rife throughout the texts, particularly in *1 Jeu*. The description of their production or nature in the text is vague: the Father of Jesus, who is the unapproachable God, emanates Jeu, the true God; then, a multitude of emanations come forth from Jeu through the command of the Father (*1 Jeu* 47-48). Much of the text is dedicated to outlining and naming the ranks of emanations brought forth by each of the “heads” that Jeu emanates (*1 Jeu* 52-78). Each is given a “magical” name or *nomina barbarum*; however, no further information is given as to their appearance, role, or nature. These are the beings that fill the Treasury of Light in great numbers; it is knowledge of their names and placement that is considered important.

In the *Pistis Sophia*, the *process* of emanation becomes more important: lower beings, especially the archons, are required to “emanate” their purified light or power for collection by the receivers from the higher realms. The idea of emanations as beings also remains, especially as specific groups of beings (for example, the 24 emanations/invisible ones of the great invisible forefather are discussed as a complete unit in *2 Jeu* and *1/2PS*). Material emanations also make an appearance in these later texts, in addition to the spiritual emanations of the higher realms; these

material emanations usually act as servants of the archons, and the specific number or pattern of their emanation is not given.

Thus, within this discussion the term “emanation” refers to a being brought forth from within another being, or the production of purified light or power.

### 1.5.2 Aeon

The term aeon (ΑΙΩΝ) in the *Books of Jeu/Pistis Sophia* is used in the sense of a place or realm of existence, as opposed to a type of being as is found in certain other non-mainstream esoteric Christian traditions.<sup>87</sup> The *Books of Jeu/Pistis Sophia* present them closely tied to the zodiac/fate. In *2 Jeu*, the disciples are given the mystery of the twelve divine aeons that they might go to their places (*2 Jeu* 101)—and indeed, they proceed to travel through each aeon in that text. In one of the fragments of the Bruce Codex, the aeons are established by Jeu and made to serve as dwelling places of the archons (*1 Jeu* 79-82). The term retains largely the same locational or spatial sense throughout the *Pistis Sophia* texts. Thus, it will be used here in the sense of a plane or realm of existence, rather than as a being or entity as in some other texts of late antiquity.

### 1.5.3 Archon

The archons (ΑΡΧΩΝ), or “rulers,” in the present texts fill a similar role to that attributed to them in texts such as the *Apocryphon of John* (III 15,23, etc) and the *Hypostasis of the Archons* (87,24, etc), namely ignorant and/or jealous beings whose main role is to cause trouble for mankind. The misguided demiurgical head-archon does not appear in precisely the same sense in the *Books of Jeu/Pistis Sophia* as in the aforementioned texts, but the figure of Sabaoth the Adamas does fill the role of the wicked head of the archons.

Furthermore, in *4PSa* 359-366 and also in one of the fragments found in the *Books of Jeu* (*2 Jeu* 140-141), a description is given of certain great, powerful archons who move souls to sin and then carry them off by theft. However, certain

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<sup>87</sup> See, for example, Irenaeus, *AdvHaer* I.1-3; 8.5; 11.1-3; 12.3-4; 16.1-2; Hippolytus, *Haer* VI.31; Epiphanius, *Pan* 31; *GosTruth* 19,1 etc; *TriTrac* 62,23 etc; *ValExp* 27,38 etc; *InterpKnow* 12,31-36; 13,10; *TrimProt* 37,35 etc; *GosEg* III 41,5 (IV 50,17) etc.

astrological events and the actions of other divine figures such as Jeu cause their places to be destroyed and the souls they torment to be freed. In *3PS* we find the only references to the creation of humanity, and see that the archons do have a role in their creation—but this is not the story of the creation of the first humans, but rather an ongoing process, and representative of the archons’ continuing battle to rule over mankind (*3PS* 332-346). They are ever-present in the struggles of man, from conception until death, and in the torments that come afterward for one who does not receive the mysteries.

The role of the archons will be investigated at greater length later, but for purposes of definition they will be considered beings dwelling below the light-realm with generally negative intentions toward humanity. They have power over human beings, but are subject to the influence of Jeu, Jesus, and the various mysteries imparted to the disciples and the devout.

#### 1.5.4 Watcher

The term “watcher” (ΦΥΛΑΞ) is used in certain examples of apocalyptic literature (such as *1 Enoch* 1-36, “The Book of the Watchers”) as a type of angel of God. In the *Books of Jeu/Pistis Sophia*, however, the term is predominantly used in a way akin to the doorkeepers in the Egyptian *Book of the Dead* (see Section 6.1.1).

The watchers appear most prominently in *1 Jeu*, particularly in the context of the numbered Jeu diagrams. Each diagram names three watchers, and the text accompanying each diagram gives three different names of the watchers. In the description of the sixtieth Treasury of the Light, the text states that the treasury “has three gates at its exterior...and over them are nine watchers, three over each gate.” These watchers withdraw when one who has received the mysteries presents them with the appropriate seals, signs and ciphers (*1 Jeu* 87). This corresponds with the later statement of praise to the Father stating that he has “emanated an emanation, so that it should produce watchers corresponding to treasuries from the first to the last of them all” (*1 Jeu* 96). The other texts also make references to the “watchers of the Treasuries of the Light,”<sup>88</sup> both with and without the qualifier “nine” for the number

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<sup>88</sup> *2 Jeu* 99, 103, 118; *IPS* 3, 18, *2PS* 194 195, 217, 231, etc.

of the watchers. Thus, the term “watcher” refers to beings emanated for the purpose of guarding the gates of the various Treasuries of Light. The “nine watchers” further formed one of the mysteries needed along the path of ascent.

It should be noted that in *IPS* there are two references to watchers at the gates of the aeons (*IPS* 45, 48). These watchers show similar characteristics to the rest of the aeonic inhabitants, in that they hate Pistis Sophia for striving for the light of the higher kingdom. These references are within an allegorical, mythic context that does not exactly cohere with the overall cosmological system, but even here the watchers still function as guardians of the gates to a particular level or realm, as do their cousins in the Treasury of the Light.

### 1.5.5 Receivers

“Receivers” (ΠΑΡΑΛΗΜΠΤΗΣ or ΠΑΡΑΛΗΜΠΤΩΡ) are rare in the Nag Hammadi texts, although they do appear once in the short recension of the *Apocryphon of John* (III 33,18; BG 66,6),<sup>89</sup> once in *Zostrianos* (47,24), and twice in the *Gospel of the Egyptians* (III 64,22 and 66,5).<sup>90</sup> In these cases the receivers are involved in the reception of the saved soul.

In the *Books of Jeu/Pistis Sophia* receivers appear frequently, and have a variety of roles. They feature most heavily in the *Pistis Sophia*, although they are mentioned in *2 Jeu*: some are beings of the Treasury of the Light who bring the soul from the body and guide it to the Treasury of Light, erasing its sins (*2 Jeu* 99); and others are associated with the various regions below the Treasury (*2 Jeu* 101-102). In the *Pistis Sophia*, these beings fill a wide variety of roles. They are involved in transporting souls from place to place, releasing souls from their material bodies, or guarding certain realms. Melchisedek, a high being in the ranks of the upper realms, is frequently referred to as the “Receiver of the Light,” and he and his fellow receivers move light elements from the lower realms into the Treasuries. There are receivers in the outer darkness, and in the realms of the Midst; there are receivers of the Virgin of the Light, the sun, and the moon. A concise definition of the role or placement of the receivers is thus impossible. Suffice it to say that the term

<sup>89</sup> In the long recension, the Coptic equivalent term is found.

<sup>90</sup> The counterparts in IV have variant spellings.

generally refers to a servant figure in some capacity, carrying out one of many possible tasks depending on its master or placement in the larger cosmological hierarchy.

### 1.5.6 The “Jeuians”

Because the *Books of Jeu* and the *Pistis Sophia* do not match the systems described by any of the heresiologists, a new term is required to describe them, the system they share, and the people or group who used them. In this thesis, “Jeuian” is proposed as a convenient term to describe this system, which features the being Jeu as the cosmic demiurge. Although the term “Jeuian” is not found in the texts themselves, it is common in scholarship (and indeed, among the early heresiologists) to refer to a group by a name derived from a teacher or figure important to that group, regardless of the group’s self-designation.<sup>91</sup> For example, those groups now called “Sethian,” “Valentinian,” “Marcosian,” etc. certainly did not refer to themselves with these terms, but they are still used within modern scholarly parlance. Little is known about this group’s teachers or followers, but Jeu plays a strong, positive role in all of the texts. The Jeuians are described here primarily as a “religious group,” rather than with the terminology of a school or community. This is because while there is strong evidence that the texts were written and read by people with a shared belief and ritual system, and that they were used in group practice and teaching (see Section 2.2), it is less certain that they were united in the manner of these more specific sociological subcategories.

## 1.6 CONCLUSIONS

Despite the surge of interest in recent years in the so-called Gnostic schools of the early Christian era, and despite the relatively long period of time these texts have been available, the *Books of Jeu* of the Bruce Codex and the *Pistis Sophia* have remained largely overlooked by scholars. An examination of the little available scholarship reveals mixed opinions regarding their composition, origins, and value. In the face of this dearth of scholarship on these texts, this thesis aims to further

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<sup>91</sup> See F. Wisse, “Stalking those Elusive Sethians,” 563, in *The Rediscovery of Gnosticism: Proceedings of the International Conference on Gnosticism at Yale, New Haven, Connecticut, March 28-31, 1978*, Vol. 2, B. Layton, ed. (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1981), 563-576.

analyze them, their use and development. It will demonstrate that they are the product of a group or community of users, with a unique cosmology, theogony, and ritual praxis. These texts present, among other things, a detailed guide to heavenly ascension and baptismal or mystery rites unparalleled in any other surviving non-mainstream esoteric Christian text. They feature a largely consistent cast of divine figures and cosmological theory, and where deviations occur, explanations within a wider cultural context may be possible. A great deal remains to be gained from further study of them. The information that has been gleaned from more recent discoveries, such as the Nag Hammadi library and the Tchacos Codex, should help to throw more light on these fascinating texts (and vice versa), rather than almost completely overshadowing them.



## CHAPTER 2

### THE JEUIAN TEXTS AND THEIR USE

With texts such as the *Books of Jeu* and the *Pistis Sophia*, questions immediately arise concerning the context in which they were read or used. Were they the writings of a lone individual, taking what elements he saw fit from a variety of sources to form his own idealized religious system? Were they the product of a community, living and worshipping together? Did the readers view themselves as connected, being a part of a larger group, or did they read them solely for personal, individual knowledge and salvation?

These questions are difficult to answer, especially given the paucity of information remaining about these texts and their users. However, certain clues do remain that provide an outline of these texts and their socio-religious context. First, an introduction to the extant texts that belong to the proposed “Jeuian” group is necessary. This will be followed by an examination of the arguments for differing sides of the “group debate”—that is, whether the texts derive from individual thinkers, for individual use, or that they were written by and for use within a group context.<sup>1</sup> While arguments have been made against certain other non-mainstream esoteric Christian texts being written or used by a group or community,<sup>2</sup> it will be argued here that the *Books of Jeu* and the *Pistis Sophia* are a part of a connected system belonging to a particular religious group. This group maintained its core principles over time despite syncretic tendencies in its outer cosmological and mythological trappings.

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<sup>1</sup> These are questions that have arisen during papers I have given at a number of conferences: “A Jeuian School? Evidence for Another Developed Gnostic School,” at the SBL Annual Meeting, New Orleans, 2009; “Sabaoth in the Books of Jeu and the Pistis Sophia: Three Figures, One Name,” at Invention, Rewriting, Usurpation: Discursive Fights over Religious Traditions in Antiquity, Aarhus University, 2010; “Achieving Purity: Baptismal Rituals in the Second Book of Jeu,” at the SBL Annual Meeting, Atlanta, 2010.

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, F. Wisse, “Stalking those Elusive Sethians,” in *The Rediscovery of Gnosticism: Proceedings of the International Conference on Gnosticism at Yale, New Haven, Connecticut, March 28-31, 1978*, Vol. 2, B. Layton, ed. (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1981), 563-576; A.B. Scott, “Churches or Books? Sethian Social Organization,” in *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 3 (1995), 109-122.

## 2.1 THE JEUIAN TEXTS

The two codices from which these texts derive, the Bruce and Askew codices, both contain fragments apparently unrelated to the Jeuian system. Here the texts that belong to the Jeuian system will be introduced in the most likely order of their original composition, with a brief summary of their nature and contents. The texts and fragments that do not belong in this group will also be discussed, in order to explain why they do not fit in the Jeuian system. The possible implications of the texts having been bound together will also be considered.

These texts in all likelihood do not form a corpus in the sense of the New Testament, a set of texts held by a group as being definitively and exclusively sacred. The texts themselves show signs of being compiled from multiple sources dealing with similar topics—multiple versions of lists of mysteries, or of certain episodes. This suggests that many texts were written within the group on these themes. What remains today are only two manuscripts of what was possibly once a great number, and there is no way of knowing if any one version of a given story or text was embraced as authoritative. The inclusion of unrelated texts and fragments in the Bruce Codex in particular suggests that it may have been a miscellany in the vein of some of the Nag Hammadi codices rather than a sacred book to a particular group. However, the common threads running through the particular texts outlined below show an underlying current of ritual, cosmological and theological connection between themselves that is not shared with other known texts or groups from a similar period, such as the Valentinians or Sethians. These threads—such as the prominence of *Jeu*, certain notions about the divine realms and their structure, and the lists of specific mysteries including the five trees, the seven voices, the twin saviors, etc—are found only in the texts of the Bruce and Askew codices highlighted below. This, along with some more specific shared language and elements between certain fragments in the Bruce Codex, suggest that these texts are the result of a common thought tradition at the very least.

There has been some scholarly disagreement about the number and order of the texts in both codices; however, because the Schmidt/MacDermot editions are the best known of the scholarly editions, their text numbering system will be used here.

Where this discussion proposes a different division of the texts, it will be noted and justified below.

### 2.1.1 *The First Book of Jeu*

This is likely to be the earliest composed text of the extant tractates. As noted in Ch. 1, the title “The Books of Jeu” is not found in either of the two texts grouped under this nomenclature in modern scholarship. The appellation derives from two references to two Books of Jeu found in the *Pistis Sophia*, and C. Schmidt’s identification of these texts with them.<sup>3</sup> G.R.S. Mead feels the Bruce Codex tractates are not identical with those referenced in the *Pistis Sophia*, but are rather based on another document reworking those texts. He furthermore believes that what Schmidt terms the First Book belongs after his Second, based on the latter giving introductory rituals and discussing the lower aeons, while the former deals with higher realms.<sup>4</sup> E. de Faye holds the chronological priority of *1 Jeu* over *2 Jeu*, but bases this on the perceived superior morality seen in the twice-repeated opening or introduction of the former as placed by Schmidt.<sup>5</sup> However, this “introduction” is not a part of this tractate, for reasons that shall be discussed below. F. Legge believes the Bruce Codex texts are chronologically later than the *Pistis Sophia*,<sup>6</sup> but this view is not maintained by other scholars.

The book’s beginning is lost, and it currently starts with the description of the Father’s emanation of the true God, Jeu. The whole of this text focuses on the intricacies of the Treasuries of Light, which are the divine realms populated by emanations of Jeu through the command of the Father. The first part discusses the origins and population of these realms, with each of the 28 surviving descriptions of treasuries (out of 60 originally) being outlined with a map and a list of its head,

<sup>3</sup> See Section 1.4.2.2; C. Schmidt, “Die in dem koptisch-gnostischen Codex Brucianus enthaltenen ‘Beiden Bucher Jeu’, ” 573-574, in *Zeitschrift für wissenschaftliche Theologie* 37 (1894), 555-585; H.-M. Schenke, “Vorwort,” xxxii, in C. Schmidt, *Koptisch-gnostische Schriften*, Vol. 1: *Die Pistis Sophia. Die beiden Bücher des Jeû. Unbekanntes altgnostisches Werk 4., um das Vorwort erweiterte Auflage herausgegeben von Hans-Martin Schenke* (1905; revised 4<sup>th</sup> edition Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1981), xvi-xxxiv.

<sup>4</sup> G.R.S. Mead, *Fragments of a Faith Forgotten* (1905; reprint: New York: University Books, 1960), 520; 569-570.

<sup>5</sup> E. de Faye, *Gnostiques et Gnosticisme: Étude Critique des Documents du Gnosticisme Chrétien aux IIe et IIIe Siècles* (Paris: Librairie Orientaliste Paul Geuthner, 1925), 314.

<sup>6</sup> F. Legge, *Forerunners and Rivals of Christianity Being Studies in Religious History from 330 B.C. to 330 A.D.*, Vol. 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1915), 194.

twelve additional emanations of the level, and six watchers or gate guardians, three for the way in and three for the way out. After a lengthy lacuna, the text picks up near the end of a second section dealing with instructions for passage through each of the treasuries, with only the 54<sup>th</sup> through 60<sup>th</sup> treasuries remaining. These instructions do not concern themselves with the structure and contents of these realms, since that was covered in the preceding section; rather, each one is identified solely by its head, and the rest of the information given deals with the seals, ciphers, and mystery names needed for the ascender to pass safely through it. This is followed by a discussion of how and why all of these places came to be, by virtue of the Father. There is also a rather out of place interpolation regarding a single name and seal to allow access to all of the regions. The book concludes with a hymn featuring call and response between Jesus and the disciples, praising the unapproachable God, Jesus' Father, for all of his acts within himself and his role in creation, as presented in the preceding text.

The book thus acts as part of a handbook of ascension, explaining how the divine world was created, presenting a map of each of its realms, and finally giving instructions for how to navigate these realms safely. This text is the only one to give the number of treasuries as sixty, a highly unusual number for divine realms or heavens in the ancient world. Later texts present the Treasury as a singular, or sometimes dual, entity—although sub-ranks within the Treasury exist. However, there are certain shared characteristics that confirm the text conventionally called the *First Book of Jeu* belongs to the Jeuian text group, and is an early composition. In addition to the format of the ascension instructions, which is remarkably similar to that given for the aeons in *2 Jeu*, the prominence of Jeu in establishing the treasuries immediately sets it in connection with the rest of the texts. Furthermore, the ranks of the “five trees,” which appear in all of the later texts' lists of divine ranks and mysteries, make an appearance here as part of the cosmic establishment (*1 Jeu* 96).

### **2.1.2    *The Second Book of Jeu***

This text shifts the focus from the heights of the Treasury to the intermediate levels which must be traversed first, the twelve (or fourteen) aeons. Additionally, here are found four of the most detailed ritual descriptions from any early non-mainstream

esoteric Christian text, complete with depictions of the seals to be drawn on the recipients' foreheads and long lists of ingredients for each incense offering. The text is clearly a compilation from several sources, as no less than four different permutations of the list of ranks or mysteries are found at various points throughout. The group of disciples has been expanded to include the women disciples as well as the twelve, and the women remain important throughout the remainder of the texts. The format of the instructions for aeonic ascent is essentially similar to that found in the treasury ascent found in *I Jeu*.

The text evidently serves as a basic guide to the initiation rituals—the baptisms of water, fire, Holy Spirit, and a mystery to remove the evil of the archons—as well as providing a guide to the material, aeonic realms to be traversed prior to reaching the ranks of the Treasury. Once the baptismal rites are performed and their associated seals are received, attention turns to the information needed for aeonic ascension. The conception of the aeons is early, and sees much development in the later texts. Here there is an unusual subdivision of the twelve aeons, with the sixth being termed the “little Midst (**MECOC**);” furthermore, a fourteenth aeon is apparently an extension of the thirteenth, a division not found elsewhere. The inclusion of multiple versions of the lists of ranks or mysteries suggests that a great deal of speculation was occurring regarding the hierarchy of mysteries, here collected and presented in close succession. Whereas the beginning of *I Jeu* is missing, here it is the ending that is lacking, and what lies beyond the triple-powered gods who are outside the Treasury of Light remains uncertain. The mystery that Jesus emphasizes over all others many times, the mystery of the forgiveness of sins, remains a mystery.

### 2.1.3 *4 Pistis Sophia* (a)

The division of the *Pistis Sophia* texts is an unsettled issue. Titles in the manuscript divide it into at least four books, and H.C. Puech observes that “it is today almost unanimously agreed that the four sections of the manuscript must be divided into two distinct groups.”<sup>7</sup> That it consists of four sections or texts is thus not widely

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<sup>7</sup> H.C. Puech, “The Pistis Sophia,” 362; in *New Testament Apocrypha, Volume 1*, W. Schneemelcher, ed., R. McL. Wilson, trans. (Cambridge: James Clarke & Co. Ltd., 1991), 361-369.

questioned in scholarship; the two groups acknowledged are *1-3PS* and *4PS* in Schmidt. G.R.S. Mead, however, has posited as many as six books, although he embraces the fourfold division and views parts of *3* and *4PS* as subdivisions of their larger wholes.<sup>8</sup> F. Legge does acknowledge the divisions used here, although he regards them as being composed in reverse chronological order to the widely accepted view.<sup>9</sup> For the present argument, at least five texts are clearly distinguishable. Schmidt's fourth book has a lacuna of eight pages, and the contents, themes, and even assumed cosmologies differ dramatically before and after the gap, suggesting they are parts of separate works. Here they shall be termed *4PSa* and *4PSb*.

*4PSa*, which consists of chapters 136-143, deals primarily with cosmological and astrological speculation and ritual development. It opens with Jesus performing before an altar a ritual prayer that apparently allows him and the disciples to witness some of the lower cosmological regions, the roles of which Jesus explains. The bulk of the book presents a myth of the fallen archons of the aeons being imprisoned by Jeu within the zodiacal sphere; outlines the realms of the wicked Midst (**MHT€**) with descriptions of its rulers, along with the sins and punishments each ruler inflicts on humanity; and describes the positions of the planets when the sinners tormented by each ruler of the Midst (**MHT€**) will be released. The remainder of the text has Jesus interpret the elements of his incarnation and their role in the world, and administer the first baptism—the baptism of the first offering—which is quite similar to those described in *2 Jeu*. It is much simpler than the latter, but their common root is clear; indeed, the baptisms of fire, Holy Spirit, and the spiritual inunction from *2 Jeu* are named, but not presented (*4PSa* 372). It is possible they were recorded where the lacuna now exists; alternatively, at this point perhaps it was felt that only the lowest rite could be recorded, and the others required preparation through direct instruction. The text thus appears to serve as a guide to the punishment realms, here limited to the way of the Midst (**MHT€**), a treatise on speculative astrology in a Jeuian

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<sup>8</sup> G.R.S. Mead, *Pistis Sophia: The Gnostic Tradition of Mary Magdalene, Jesus, and His Disciples* (1921; reprint: Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 2005), xxiii-xxv.

<sup>9</sup> F. Legge, "Introduction," *Pistis Sophia*, G. Horner, ed. and trans. (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1924), vii-xlvi.

theological context, and an initiatory ritual guide—this time with simplified ritual instructions and presenting only the lowest of the baptisms.

#### 2.1.4 *4 Pistis Sophia* (b)<sup>10</sup>

After the lacuna, the text focuses solely on the punishments of sinners and the destiny of various types of souls. The cosmology here is different from *4PSa*: the underworld has been expanded, with several different regions of punishment rather than just one with several divisions. There are different timeframes for punishment—with some of the sins (for example, murder) covered in both *4PSa* and b, presenting different results based on the differing systems. The disciples ask what punishments await certain sinners, and Jesus explains the order in which those souls shall be subjected to torment. The types of sins worthy of punishment provide a glimpse of the group's ethical code: cursing, slander, murder, robbery and thievery, and pride and scorn are all worthy of punishment for specific periods. After this, the soul is reincarnated in a body worthy of the sins it had committed. Other sins such as blasphemy, pederasty, and participation in certain other cults' wicked rites all result in punishment followed by the dissolution of the soul in the outer darkness. In addition to this ethical code, a degree of astrological determination is also posited in transmigration: when the planets are in certain positions relative to the Virgin of Light (apparently representing the sun), all souls sent into the world will be either righteous or wicked. This shows an acceptance of the inevitability of fate that fades, and is in fact overturned, in the later texts. The text serves to highlight improper behavior and its punishments; to present a schema of underworld or punishment realms and their rulers; and to develop the concept of transmigration in relation to both sin and astrology.

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<sup>10</sup> Although most scholars have not distinguished this text from the preceding *4PSa*, G.R.S. Mead (*Pistis Sophia*, xxii, 315) recognizes the subject change and suggests it may be another “book,” although he maintains its inclusion within the “fourth division” of the manuscript and does not observe its close ties with *3PS*. F. Legge also places a division here and goes further in recognizing the similarities it shares with *3PS* (“Introduction,” xxviii). C. Schmidt gives a refutation of Legge's division, but his arguments are unconvincing (*Pistis Sophia: Ein gnostisches Originalwerk des dritten Jahrhunderts aus dem Koptischen übersetzt* [1925; reprint: Graz: Edition Geheimes Wissen, 2010], 69n.4).

### 2.1.5 3 *Pistis Sophia*

As noted above, 1-3*PS* are often viewed as a group; however, 3*PS* is not always considered a direct continuation of the first two.<sup>11</sup> Perhaps one of the most overt signs that 3*PS* is not continuous with 1/2*PS* is the difference between the two in their tone regarding the “Books of Jeu.” 3*PS* specifies that the mysteries in these books are necessary for all—even for “the righteous themselves who have never done evil, and have not committed sins at all” (3*PS* 349). 2*PS*, however, is more cautious; while admitting they contain the exceedingly numerous portions of light, it states that “you [the disciples] have no need for the remainder of the inferior mysteries, but you will find them in the two Books of Jeu” (2*PS* 247). Although 2*PS* still views the Books of Jeu as containing necessary information, 3*PS* gives no hint of any part of them being “inferior” or unnecessary.<sup>12</sup> Furthermore the two texts contain slightly different versions of the books’ history, with 3*PS* going into greater depth about their placement and history. Moreover, 3*PS* shares close ties with 4*PS*b that are not found in 1/2*PS* in terms of its cosmology, its concern with sins and their punishments, and the format of questions-and-answers between the disciples and Jesus used to present this information. 3*PS* deals extensively with the dissemination of the mysteries, repentance, and when it is or is not suitable to grant the mysteries to others. Furthermore, it discusses the formation of the human being, the components of which it consists, and how they are connected both in the body and after death.

After the introduction, which consists of a list of sins to be renounced followed by a list of virtues to strive for, the questions and answers begin. They primarily relate to transgressions by those who have received some of the mysteries,

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<sup>11</sup> G.R.S. Mead, *Pistis Sophia*, xxiv; F. Legge, *Forerunners and Rivals of Christianity*, 183; F. Legge, “Introduction,” xiv, xxii; J. Doresse, *Les livres secrets des gnostiques d’Égypte: Introduction aux écrits gnostiques coptes découverts à Khénoboskion* (Paris: Librairie Plon, 1958), 80-81. Legge recognizes the closeness of 3*PS* to 4*PS*b in particular; Mead simply observes that the change of subject between 2 and 3*PS* may indicate that it does not directly follow. One of the reasons for assuming a direct connection is the shared title of 2/3*PS* (“Extracts from the Books of the Savior”); however this is not a definite sign they were parts of the same work. The great differences in cosmology, views of the disciples’ souls, and the disparity of opinions on the usefulness of the Books of Jeu all speak to 3*PS* being separate from the preceding texts.

<sup>12</sup> C. Schmidt, believing the mysteries of the Books of Jeu refer to the baptisms, presents a proposal as to reconciling these passages (*Pistis Sophia: Ein gnostisches Originalwerk*, 62-63). In his view the baptisms are purification rites necessary for all and are outside of the ranks of “higher” or “lower” mysteries that merely dictate the level to which a soul goes after death. His proposal is not entirely in keeping with the description in the text, however.

and cases in which forgiveness is possible. The number and names of the punishment realms match those in *4PSb*, which are not found elsewhere.<sup>13</sup> This text gives greater allowance than any of the others for redemption, for even those who are banished to the outer darkness have a hope of freedom if they have the proper knowledge, or if a believer performs mysteries on their behalf. This forgiveness is further illustrated by an episode in which Jesus tests Peter’s mercifulness, commanding him to cut off a woman from the inheritance of the light because she had not acted worthily after receiving three baptisms. Peter pleads her case, suggesting that they give her the higher mysteries first, in case she should then repent, thus passing the test (*3PS* 310). Clearly the author felt it important to offer as many chances as possible for redemption. The complex relationships between the various parts of the human being also receive a great deal of attention, with no less than five elements from both the archons and the heights combined in a less than harmonious manner. The mysteries are necessary to be freed of the influence of the wicked “counterfeit spirit”<sup>14</sup> of the archons. Again we find the notion that the Virgin of Light casts souls back into the world in bodies worthy of the sins they have committed if they do not receive the mysteries in life (*3PS* 285-286); but for those that have received the proper mysteries, she gives them her seal and sends them on their way until they reach the place of the inheritance within or beyond the Treasury of Light. The somewhat more arbitrary allocation of souls in the world based on planetary positions is missing, however, in part due to the new wholly negative view of fate as opposed to considering it an all-pervasive force with both positive and negative potential.

The text thus deals with complicated issues of worthiness for the mysteries and protocol for their dispensation in what was becoming an increasingly proselytizing religion. The plight of humanity is explained somewhat in the outline of the components of the individual with their antagonistic relations to each other—interestingly, this deals with the average person, and does not seek to explain the origin of humanity or interpret the Genesis story. This is despite the fact that the

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<sup>13</sup> See Table 3.4.

<sup>14</sup> The phrase “**αντιμιμον μτηνα**” has been translated in a variety of ways; although V. MacDermot gives “spirit counterpart,” this thesis will use the translation “counterfeit spirit.” For more on this element, see Section 6.5.5.

Gospels are referred to with increasing frequency; Old Testament references remain noticeably absent from the texts. The necessity of the Books of Jeu for all people is specifically highlighted (3PS 349). The mode of salvation remains the mysteries, despite the fact that they are not listed or outlined as in some of the earlier texts. The functions of the text are different to those of an initiation or ascension handbook, so the associated knowledge is assumed rather than presented. The necessity of presenting the proper seals and defenses during the ascent from the body remains (3PS 289-293).

### 2.1.6 1 & 2 *Pistis Sophia*

These are the only two books out of the manuscript, and indeed out of the extant Jeuian texts as a whole, that are close enough to each other in content and structure to suppose an immediate connection and contemporary composition.<sup>15</sup> Their connection is essentially unanimously recognized in scholarship. These texts focus primarily on the myth of Pistis Sophia's fall from the thirteenth aeon and the interpretation of her repentances in light of particular Psalms and Odes of Solomon. The version of wisdom's fall presented here is dramatically different from those found in other non-mainstream esoteric Christian texts, although it has clearly been influenced by at least one outside version, likely Valentinian.<sup>16</sup> The outside notions adopted here are reinterpreted in accordance with the belief system of the author's group. Thus Pistis Sophia originally derives from the material aeons rather than the spiritual realm, the notion of her sin is awkwardly inserted, and Jesus' ascent is artificially made necessary for her redemption. The extensive use of the Psalms to "interpret" her lengthy prayers of repentance and praise suggest that the group was now seeking more direct Biblical scriptural justification, a trend that gradually creeps

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<sup>15</sup> There is some debate regarding the end of 2PS. Ch. 101 (253-255 in Schmidt; 233-234 in the MS) is separated from the preceding text by a title, "A Part of the Books of the Savior." It has been thought to be the ending of a lost work (G.R.S. Mead, *Pistis Sophia*, xxiii, 210); F. Legge is reluctant to say it is completely separate from the preceding documents and thus calls it simply an "interpolated fragment" (introduction to *Pistis Sophia*, xv), and H.C. Puech calls it an "independent fragment" ("The Pistis Sophia," 362). C. Schmidt, however, ultimately feels that the title was simply misplaced, and belongs at the end of Ch. 101 (234 in the MS), thus accepting the section as part of 2PS (*Pistis Sophia: Ein gnostisches Originalwerk*, 31, 252 n.1). For the present work, this latter interpretation is accepted.

<sup>16</sup> See Section 6.6.

into the texts and only here fully blossoms.<sup>17</sup> Here also the disciples besides John and Mary Magdalene, who dominated the disciples' part of the conversation with the Savior in *3PS*,<sup>18</sup> come forward to offer enlightened interpretations, making a bid for the group's apostolic authority from a wider pool.

Besides the Pistis Sophia myth, the other main concern of these texts is further expansion and speculation on the hierarchy of mysteries and the divine realms. The beginning of *IPS* gives a list of information Jesus had *not* given to the disciples yet after 11 years teaching them post-resurrection. These include the list of mysteries or ranks found also in *2 Jeu* (and directly or indirectly in the other Jeuian texts), and as previously, although they are here referenced they are not explained. This may suggest that these mysteries were higher and not written down, requiring oral instruction or direct experience. At this point certain earlier mysteries found in the "Books of Jeu" have been downgraded and are considered unnecessary (*2PS* 247) in the face of the mystery of the Ineffable. That mystery purports to know why all things are in existence, and further claims to be simple: "[E]veryone who will renounce the whole world and everything in it and will submit themselves to Godhood, that mystery is easier for them than all the mysteries of the Kingdom of the Light, and it is more successfully understood than them all, and it is lighter than them all" (*2PS* 219).

From an Egyptian origin that did not consider the world innately negative and that favored complex instructions for the postmortem journey, the cultural and religious environment of the group appears to have changed, leaning toward a rejection of the material world embraced by certain non-mainstream esoteric Christian sects. However, the "great mysteries" of the three portions of the kingdom are the "heads of the mysteries" which Jesus promises to give "in all their patterns

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<sup>17</sup> On the interpretive method used for these Psalms, see J. Carmignac, "Le genre littéraire du 'pëshèr' dans la Pistis-Sophia," in *Revue de Qumran* 16 (1963-64), 497-522; on the use of the Psalms and Odes of Solomon, see W.H. Worrell, "The Odes of Solomon and the Pistis Sophia," in *Journal for Theological Studies* 13 (1911), 29-46; H. Ludin Jansen, "Gnostic Interpretation in Pistis Sophia," in *Proceedings of the IXth International Congress for the History of Religions, Tokyo and Kyoto 1958* (Tokyo: Maruzen, 1960), 106-111; A. Kragerud, *Die Hymnen der Pistis Sophia* (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget Trykningsentral, 1967); G. Widengren, "Die Hymnen der Pistis Sophia und die gnostische Schriftauslegung," in *Liber Amicorum: Studies in honour of C.J. Bleeker*, (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1969), 269-281; C. Trautmann, "La citation du Psaume 85 (84, 11-12) et ses commentaires dans la Pistis Sophia," in *Revue d'histoire et de philosophie religieuses* 59 (1979), 551-557.

<sup>18</sup> It should be noted that *4PSb* also names several other disciples asking questions.

and all their types and their ciphers and the seals of the last space, which is the first space from without” (2PS 247). This certainly seems to be a reflection of the mysteries found in *I Jeu*, where the heads of the treasures are given names and their types, seals and ciphers are carefully outlined. Perhaps despite the new suggestion of rejecting materiality and the introduction of the mystery of the Ineffable, the accompanying abandonment of earlier mysteries is not as complete as might first be imagined. This is further highlighted by the ambiguous role of Jesus in Pistis Sophia’s salvation, which as noted above appears to be a secondary addition. The group was apparently attempting to fit in to a cultural environment that was increasingly turning to Jesus as a salvific figure and against worldly concerns. The rituals that held sway in the past are not entirely lost or forgotten, but are de-emphasized, at least for certain ranks of initiates.

### 2.1.7 Fragments

Both codices contain a number of fragments of different texts, but only two of these appear to be related to the Jeuian system. Both of these are found in the Bruce Codex. The fact that the codex at the time of purchase was a disordered collection of loose leaves means that their original placement is uncertain;<sup>19</sup> Schmidt places one of them in the lacuna between the two parts of *I Jeu*, and the other after the missing end of *2 Jeu*. These fragments both share significant terminological and cosmological connections with the *Pistis Sophia* texts; more so than with any of the other texts found in the Bruce Codex.

The first fragment (*I Jeu* 79-82) consists of four pages of a hymn sung to the First Mystery—the highest principle, in conjunction with the Ineffable, in *I/2PS*. The role of the First Mystery in controlling Jeu in the establishment of the aeons is celebrated. The structure of the aeons is also equivalent to that found in *I/2PS*, rather than that in *2 Jeu*: no special status is accorded to the sixth aeon, the invisible one and three (triple-powered) gods are found in the thirteenth aeon, and Jabraoth, the believing archon, is established in the space above the thirteenth. It also attributes to each aeon “archons and decans and ministers,” a combination of entities

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<sup>19</sup> V. MacDermot, “Introduction,” x, in *The Books of Jeu and the Untitled Text in the Bruce Codex*, C. Schmidt, ed. (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1978), ix-xxi.

also found scattered through the *Pistis Sophia* (*IPS* 2, 14, 77; *2PS* 215; *3PS* 343; *4PSa* 355). The hymn is in the first person, and is apparently written in the perspective of Jesus/the Savior: he calls for the salvation of all his members that have been scattered in each of the aeonic regions. This fragment is thus likely of a later date of original composition than *1* and *2 Jeu*.<sup>20</sup> The second fragment (*2 Jeu* 140-141) is just one page, and gives a shorter depiction of the great archons of the Midst (MHTE) as they are given in *4PSa*. The fact that the names are identical to those in *4PSa*, and that they are unique to these texts, suggests a shared connection between the two, be it one using the other or another shared source document.

That these two fragments are so closely tied to concepts found only in the *Pistis Sophia* bolsters the idea that texts from the two codices derive from a common group or community of thinkers.

### 2.1.8 The *Untitled Text*, *Book of the Gnosés of the Invisible God*, and Other Fragments—Jeuian or Not?

The *Untitled Text* of the Bruce Codex is not considered by scholars to be connected with the *Books of Jeu*.<sup>21</sup> In addition to being written by a different hand, it shares little in common with the latter in terms of its language, theology or cosmic structure. Rather, since the discovery of the Nag Hammadi library and its further insight into the Sethians, it is generally accepted as a part of the wider Sethian tradition.<sup>22</sup> This is largely due to the presence of a number of important Sethian names and themes, such as the Five Seals, a complex aeonic hierarchy, and the names of three of the “four

<sup>20</sup> C. Schmidt, *Pistis Sophia: Ein gnostisches Originalwerk*, 68.

<sup>21</sup> C. Schmidt, *Gnostische Schriften in koptischer Sprache aus dem Codex Brucianus* (Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung, 1892), 34-35; G.R.S. Mead, *Fragments of a Faith Forgotten*, 577-578; E. de Faye, *Gnostiques et Gnosticisme*, 319-320; J. Doresse, *Les livres secrets*, 87.

<sup>22</sup> B.A. Pearson, *Ancient Gnosticism: Traditions and Literature* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007), 94-95; H.-M. Schenke, “The Phenomenon and Significance of Sethian Gnosticism,” in *The Rediscovery of Gnosticism: Proceedings of the International Conference on Gnosticism at Yale, New Haven, Connecticut, March 28-31, 1978*, Vol. 2, B. Layton, ed. (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1980), 588-616; J.D. Turner, “Gnosticism and Platonism: The Platonizing Sethian Texts from Nag Hammadi in their Relation to Later Platonic Literature,” 425, in *Neoplatonism and Gnosticism*, R.T. Wallis, ed. (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992), 425-459; J.D. Turner, *Sethian Gnosticism and the Platonic Tradition* (Québec: University of Laval Press, 2001), 61. Even prior to the Nag Hammadi discovery, C. Schmidt also suggested possible Sethian ties for this tractate (*Gnostische Schriften in koptischer Sprache*, 645-648; *Pistis Sophia: Ein gnostisches Originalwerk*, 76). Note, however, that D. Brakke excludes this work from his set of “Gnostic” evidence (*The Gnostics: Myth, Ritual, and Diversity in Early Christianity* [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010], 50).

lights” Eleleth, Daveide, and Oroiael. The focus of the text is a detailed and complex description of the divine realms and the beings therein. The contents and structure of these realms, however, is completely different from that found in either of the *Books of Jeu*. In contrast with the clearly organized structure of the latter, the *Untitled Text* meanders from topic to topic, suddenly discussing new levels of beings within beings with little prelude, sometimes backtracking without explanation. There are numbered deeps and unnumbered deeps, fatherhoods and sonships as categories of being, crowns within crowns, hidden fathers, forefathers and self-fathers. Although overall it represents a broad and complex enumeration of the elements of the divine realm and their relationships within that heavenly hierarchy, the effect is confusing and chaotic in comparison with the clearly unfolded map of the treasuries of light and aeons presented in the *Books of Jeu*. It lacks any of the terminology or names that tie the rest of the texts together.

The two fragmentary copies of the introduction of the *Book of the Gnosés of the Invisible God*, on the other hand, have long been considered to be the introduction of the *Books of Jeu*. Schmidt first positions them as such, and those few scholars who discuss these texts do not question this attribution.<sup>23</sup> However, their terminology is different from that of the *Books of Jeu*, or indeed that of the *Pistis Sophia* or the *Untitled Text*. Nowhere else in the texts is Jesus referred to as “the living Jesus,” a title which appears repeatedly here; in these pages Jesus’ followers are the apostles (ΑΠΟCΤΟΛΟC), but elsewhere always disciples (ΜΑΘΗΤΗC); and from what can be gleaned from the fragments remaining, the concepts of sin and salvation also differ significantly from the Jeuian texts. The fact that two copies of this section remain in the codex, both of which break off in lacunae, already demonstrates that, at the very least, the latter half of one of the books to which the section belongs has been lost. It seems more plausible that they are both the

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<sup>23</sup> C. Schmidt, *Gnostische Schriften in koptischer Sprache*, 39-47; *Koptisch-gnostische Schriften*, Vol. 1: *Die Pistis Sophia. Die beiden Bücher des Jeû. Unbekanntes altgnostisches Werk* (Leipzig, 1905) 257-260; E. DeFaye, *Gnostiques et Gnosticisme*, 314; J. Doresse, *Les livres secrets*, 84; B.A. Pearson, *Ancient Gnosticism*, 254; H.C. Puech, “The two Books of Jeu,” in W. Schneemelcher, ed., R. McL. Wilson, trans., *New Testament Apocrypha*, Vol. 1, 370-371; G.R.S. Mead (*Fragments of a Faith Forgotten*, 518) also accepts this portion as the introduction to the *Books of Jeu*, but he places them before Schmidt’s 2 *Jeu*, as he believes that text comes first.

remnants of some separate text than to think that an entire copy of the body of the *Books of Jeu* is missing, especially given the disparity in their language and themes.<sup>24</sup>

The remaining fragments of both the Bruce Codex and the Askew Codex also show clear differences from the surrounding text in terms of their limited contents. The two in the Askew Codex are perhaps more curious, given the relative completeness of the manuscript. The first interpolation appears between *I* and *2PS* in the second column of the last page of the former text, interrupting an otherwise continuous flow of narrative and interpretation;<sup>25</sup> it involves certain mystery “names” and their interpretations, both of which consist of triplets of identical letters. The only context given—that they are from the “endless one,” and they make manifest the “sons of God”—do not fit with any part of the manuscript, let alone the immediately surrounding text. The second addition is on the recto of the final unpaginated leaf, beginning in what seems to be the middle of a sentence. It, too, consists of only a short paragraph, and while its theme of spreading the gospel is found elsewhere in the manuscript, it features terminology not otherwise used (“Christ” for Jesus or the Savior, “Kingdom of God” for Kingdom of Light, etc.) and highlights Israel in a way foreign to the rest of the texts. Both of these fragments appear in a different hand from the rest of the manuscript, and are likely later additions. The broken beginning of the latter fragment at the beginning of a page, along with the gap left between it and the end of the text on the previous page, suggests it was part of a separate tractate. The reason for the inclusion of these partial writings is a mystery.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> In conversation with E. Crégheur at the SBL Annual Meeting, 2010, who at the time of writing this is working on a new critical edition of the *Books of Jeu*, he expressed a similar sentiment.

<sup>25</sup> MS p.114, column 2; *IPS* 126.

<sup>26</sup> G.R.S. Mead suggests that they are scribal notes or postscripts; this is possible, but seems unlikely, given their fragmentary natures and their dramatic differences from the rest of the text (*Pistis Sophia*, 105, 325). E. Amélineau proposes they are the notes of a reader (*Pistis Sophia: Ouvrage gnostique de Valentin* [1895; reprint: Milan: Archè, 1975], 65n.2, 204n.1). Along similar lines, P.D. Scott-Moncrieff believes the middle fragment is the fancy of a later scribe, although he does not comment on the later fragment (*Paganism and Christianity in Egypt* [Cambridge, 1913], 161). F. Legge proposes that the second fragment was from another work that someone wished to preserve, but this was the only parchment available (introduction to *Pistis Sophia*, xxviii). C. Schmidt believes that this latter fragment was part of a larger text copied onto now-missing blank protective sheets, and that a later owner found this additional text offensive, removing them and erasing the title of this remaining fragment (*Pistis Sophia: Ein gnostisches Originalwerk*, 42-43). J. Doresse also suggests the latter is part of a separate, lost work (*Les livres secrets*, 88). B.A. Pearson implicitly accepts the latter

### 2.1.9 Summary of the Texts

The Jeuian texts remaining today thus consist, in order of likely chronological content, of *1* and *2 Jeu*, followed by *4PSa*, *4PSb*, *3PS*, and finally *1/2PS*. Two of the fragments from the Bruce Codex (the hymn to the First Mystery and the outline of the rulers of the Midst [MHT€]) appear in close proximity of tradition to *1/2PS* and *4PSa*. The reasons for this ordering will be explored in greater depth in the following chapters. The texts are variously concerned with ascent, liturgy, ritual, cosmology, mythology, anthropogony, theology, and soteriology, thus showing a full range of concerns that might occupy a given religious group without any one text needing to cover all aspects. The disorder and apparent chronological range of the texts may be attributed to their compilation well after the texts themselves were new, allowing the compilers to access a variety at once. That non-related texts are also included (particularly in the Bruce Codex, which features a variety of texts and fragments) may suggest that the compilers were not members of the group in question, and that they did not fully understand their contents. The fact that so many texts exist—and that those remaining today themselves appear to be compilations of others—with the particular thematic similarities that bind them, despite the gradual changes of certain ideas, implies that these texts were being produced by a particular sect or community of believers.

## 2.2 NON-COMMUNAL LITERARY WORKS, OR SECTARIAN THEOLOGICAL AND RITUAL HANDBOOKS?

The above assumes that a coherent undercurrent can be found running through these texts, suggesting that they are the product of a group of believers written over time and showing the results of cultural development and outside religious influence. However, as stated in the introduction to this chapter, the question of the nature and origin of these texts is not firm and fixed. It could be argued that the similarities between texts are the result of individual authors taking a text and adding their own innovations. The differences between the texts might suggest that they have

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fragment as the natural conclusion of the text without comment (*Ancient Gnosticism*, 253). Frequently these segments are not mentioned at all in discussions of the texts.

disparate origins. The rituals described might be idealized literary creations not intended for reproduction. Perhaps even if they are the product of like-minded people sharing ideas, it does not necessarily follow that they acted on these ideas. These arguments shall be analyzed below, and evidence that they are in fact representative of a functioning religious group will be presented.

### 2.2.1 Do Differences Signify Disparity?

One important argument for the position that these texts are not a part of a larger system is that there are dramatic differences in certain themes and the roles of certain figures between the different texts. The cosmological ordering is different between certain texts; Jesus' incarnation shifts from solely playing a minor teaching role to overthrowing parts of cosmic order; here astrology is a force to be reckoned with and can have positive or negative results, there it is a force of evil that Jesus works to overthrow. The list of variations is extensive. It is possible that the texts were combined in their present volumes out of convenience, or because the shared names suggested a connection to the compiler that did not in actuality go any deeper. The fact that some of the tractates and fragments preserved in the manuscripts do not appear to belong to the Jeuian tradition might further suggest that the texts were simply collected in the present volumes without rhyme or reason.

A close reading of the texts, however, shows that when read in the order proposed in this thesis, the variations are gradual and traceable between the body of texts as a whole. They can be explained if the texts are compiled from works written over a period of time—perhaps a hundred years or more. The multiple lists of mysteries with slight variations found within *2 Jeu* and *1/2PS*, and the several versions of Jesus' ascent and conflict with the archons of the aeons in *IPS*, serve as evidence that the texts themselves are compiled from a number of earlier documents. This suggests that a large body of texts written with essentially similar theology was available to these authors. The inclusion of unrelated fragments may be due to convenience, the texts being compiled outside of the group or after its prime, or the ignorance of the compiler in copying what texts were available to hand. These less closely related documents certainly serve to demonstrate that a variety of religious

ideas and traditions were present in the region where the texts were composed or collected, helping to account for some of the syncretism present in the Jeuian system.

### 2.2.2 Idealized, Literary Ritual and Ascent?

Another possible argument for a literary rather than practical origin and use of the texts is that detailed descriptions of rituals and ascent are not necessarily a sign that they were used in practice. Some scholars have argued that certain Jewish and Christian apocalyptic literature and the Hekhalot literature present idealized rituals of and ascents to the divine realms not intended for reproduction.<sup>27</sup> They may be literary creations, not meant as instructions to be emulated by the reader. The reader may obtain the results achieved by the figure in the text simply by reciting the passages.<sup>28</sup> M. Himmelfarb especially argues against these Jewish and Christian texts being viewed as the products of “small pious groups engaged in ascetic practices related to their visions.”<sup>29</sup> She reasons that in these texts the presence or absence of groups associated with the central mystic is largely dictated by literary concerns, and little can be discerned regarding the author’s situation.<sup>30</sup>

With these concerns it must be observed that the Jeuian texts, and particularly *1* and *2 Jeu*, which have the greatest focus on ritual and ascent, have little in common with these Jewish and Christian works beyond the fact that both involve ascent—a motif that was common in the religious atmosphere of the Greco-Roman period. The main concerns of the ascent, as well as the characteristics of the descriptions of the divine realms and their inhabitants, are strikingly different. The Jewish/Christian texts considered by Himmelfarb and others concern themselves with elaborate descriptions of the heavenly host and temples, along with the natural phenomena that serve to testify to the power of their creator. The *Books of Jeu* give minimal

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<sup>27</sup> See, for example, P. Schäfer, “The Aim and Purpose of Early Jewish Mysticism,” 293-294, in *Hekhalot-Studien* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1988), 277-295; D. Halperin, “A New Edition of the Hekhalot Literature,” 549-551, in *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 104 (1984), 543-552; M. Himmelfarb, *Ascent to Heaven in Jewish and Christian Apocalypses* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 95-114.

<sup>28</sup> D. Halperin, “A New Edition of the Hekhalot Literature,” 550.

<sup>29</sup> M. Himmelfarb, *Ascent to Heaven*, 106. The texts she includes considers under the rubric of 2<sup>nd</sup> century Jewish and Christian ascent apocalypses include: the *Book of the Watchers*, the *Testament of Levi*, *2 Enoch*, the *Similitudes of Enoch*, the *Apocalypse of Zephaniah*, the *Apocalypse of Abraham*, the *Ascension of Isaiah*, and *3 Baruch*.

<sup>30</sup> M. Himmelfarb, *Ascent to Heaven*, 105.

description of the regions through which one must pass, focusing solely on the information one requires to advance. Although a description of the original emanations from the Father and Jeu is present, it is given in highly abstract terms. No frightful or glorious visions are presented to the travelers or the reader. The entities met along the way have only names. Descriptions of sensory images, emotions, and personal experiences are all lacking. The theme of individual transformation into an angelic form during the ascent, prominent in the apocalypses such as the *Ascension of Isaiah* (7:25, 9:30) or *1 Enoch* (39:14), is absent. While angelic hymns are a major focus of Jewish-Christian ascent stories, representing heavenly ideals to be emulated, the hymn found in *1 Jeu* is presented as a call and response between Jesus and the disciples: no being from the treasuries or aeons ever speaks. The *Books of Jeu* present the reader with a straightforward handbook of ritual, ascent, and liturgy.

Furthermore, while the Jewish-Christian texts are portrayed as the retelling of past events in the lives of particular individuals, generally as having a particular purpose or result—seeing the divine throne, speaking with the Prince of the Presence, gaining control over certain angels to accomplish things on earth—the *Books of Jeu* present the ascent as a future event, a post-mortem rise through the heavenly realms. Although the tour of the treasuries in *1 Jeu* does feature Jesus taking the disciples to each level, he presents the information of how to pass through them as *instructions*: rather than Jesus simply reciting the appropriate names and showing the seal, in each instance he says to his companions, “Hear now the placing of this treasury. *When you come to this place* (ΕΤΕΤΝΩΑΝΕΙ ΕΒΟΛ ΕΠΕΙΤΟΠΟC), seal yourselves with this seal...This is its name...Say it only once while this cipher [...] is in your hand, and say this name three times...” (emphasis mine). If it were meant purely as a literary tale of ascent, the seal and names would simply have been given, without the instructional frame. The ascent in *2 Jeu* is even more distanced from the event: it does not portray Jesus or the disciples making the journey, but rather is described as an event to come: “When you come forth from the body (ΕΤΕΤΝΩΑΝΕΙ ΕΒΟΛ ΖΜ-ΠCΩΜΑ) and you reach the first aeon, and the archons of that aeon come before you, seal yourselves with this seal...” (*2 Jeu* 127)

Whether it is meant purely as a post-mortem ascent or it can also be experienced as an ecstatic journey while living is unclear. What *is* clear, however, is that it is meant to be experienced by the initiated reader at some point. Furthermore, if these books were intended purely to be read or recited, the inclusion of drawn seals would be highly mysterious.

### 2.2.3 Pseudepigraphy to Confer Authority: Necessity of Dissemination

While the attribution of these words to Jesus and his accompaniment by the disciples is doubtless pseudepigraphal, in an attempt to give the texts greater authority, it cannot be assumed that they are the pure literary devices of individual authors and no group is to be associated with the use of the texts. Attributing certain words or actions to a respected historical figure was common in antiquity in community texts as well as in more individual writings. For example, see the disputed Pauline epistles, whose authorship remains the subject of debate to this day, or the many known Jewish and Christian pseudepigrapha.<sup>31</sup> The Manichaeans were also known to have attributed writings to certain antediluvian patriarchs.<sup>32</sup> The authority of the figures to which these writings are attributed is needed to highlight the importance of their contents, and in some cases to encourage readers to act on them.

It must not be overlooked that in both the *Books of Jeu* and the *Pistis Sophia* Jesus specifically instructs the disciples that they must perform certain mysteries to enter the Treasury of Light, and extends this to *anyone* who would enter them. He tells them not to give the mysteries to anyone “except he [who] is worthy of them” (2 *Jeu* 100) or “except him who will do everything which I have said to you in my injunctions” (4*PSa* 372)—thus they *are* to give them to those who prove themselves worthy and faithful. The disciples are given a list of sins which one to whom the disciples will give the mysteries must not commit (2 *Jeu* 102), again suggesting that they are to be repeated for others. The instructions that these mysteries, including the baptisms, are to be performed for others is even more explicit elsewhere in 4*PSa*: “I will give to you the mystery of the Kingdom of Heaven so that you yourselves

<sup>31</sup> See, for example, J.H. Charlesworth, ed., *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, Vols. I & II (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1983).

<sup>32</sup> J.C. Reeves, *Heralds of That Good Realm: Syro-Mesopotamian Gnosis and Jewish Traditions* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1996).

perform them (the mysteries) for men” (4PSa 369); after Jesus baptizes the disciples: “This is the manner and this is the mystery which you shall perform for men who will believe in you...” (4PSa 372); and also in 3PS: “As I have now said to you: give to them [those who have renounced the All] the mysteries of the Kingdom of the Light, and do not conceal them from them at all” (3PS 261); “to all men who come before you and believe in you and hear your words and do what is worthy of the mysteries of the light, give to them the mysteries of the light and do not conceal them from them” (3PS 280). The rituals are all performed in a human group context, present, as opposed to an individual human receiving investiture at the hands of angels or divine beings (as in *Testament of Levi* 8; *2 Enoch* 22; *3 Enoch* 12). This speaks of purification or initiation rituals to be physically performed on earth, to be made worthy for the later mysteries and ascent.

#### 2.2.4 Precedents of Ritual Practice

The most detailed rituals appear in *2 Jeu*, in the form of three baptisms and one mystery to remove the evil of the archons.<sup>33</sup> Each includes a list of ingredients for the offering, as well as plants to be worn as a crown, held in the hands, and placed in the mouth. All of the ingredients listed, save two, are known and recognized elements in a Greco-Egyptian ritual context. That two out of over twenty elements are presently unidentified is not problematic in proposing an actual ritual performance rather than an idealized literary description of one. Many of them would have been expensive, but expense to be initiated into a religious group was not unexpected—the mystery religions of the period also had a hefty expense associated with their initiations. For example, Apuleius in *Metamorphoses* makes note of the difficulty the main character has in coming up with the resources to undergo the second initiation in the Isis mysteries, while for the third he had become successful enough that it was not an issue (*Meta* 11.28-30); also the archaeological evidence remaining from the Mithraic mysteries shows that a great deal of money would have

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<sup>33</sup> It should be noted that although these rituals are called “baptisms” (ΒΑΠΤΙΣΜΑ), they do not involve any sort of immersion in water (or any water at all, with the exception of the sign in the wine of the first ritual). It is apparent that the author knew the names of the set of these three rituals from Matthew 3:11, and recognized the word “baptism” as a technical term for a rite of purification or initiation, but the description of the rituals themselves have little in common with baptisms from other contemporary Christian groups. See also Section 6.7.

been required not only in setting up the mithraeums, but also in providing the materials for the ritual meals and sacrifices.<sup>34</sup> This monetary provision was likely a part of the demonstration of worthiness discussed above. Although there is the command that one who receives the mysteries must not love gold or silver (*2 Jeu* 102), it is not specified that they must give up all of their worldly possessions as a prerequisite for receiving them. These rites are a requirement to receive any further mystical knowledge, which occupies the main focus of the group. It might also be noted that the description in *4PSa* does not include the list of expensive ingredients; it is possible that as the group became more concerned with gaining converts, the rituals became cheaper and simpler to facilitate a wider base of initiates.

Furthermore, the concept of a series of rituals for initiation was also well-known from the mystery religions. As noted above, the mysteries of Isis apparently could involve at least three stages. The Mithraic mysteries had seven ranks.<sup>35</sup> The Eleusinian mysteries had Greater and Lesser mysteries.<sup>36</sup> Clement of Alexandria says of the Greek mysteries in general that after purifications come “the lesser mysteries which have the function of teaching, and preparation for what is to come; and then the greater mysteries which concern everything, where there is no longer learning, but contemplation and consideration of nature and of realities” (*Stromata* 5.70.7-71.1).<sup>37</sup> This may be parallel to the idea of greater and lesser mysteries found in *2PS*. While the initial stages of some of these rites in the mystery religions are open for description, involving fasting, purification or bathing, etc, the final stage is always left out. It is kept secret, meant to be experienced by the initiates. The series of baptisms described in *2 Jeu* may be meant to portray stages of initiation as well, with the final sign at the end of each rite left out deliberately.

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<sup>34</sup> H. Bowden, *Mystery Cults in the Ancient World* (London: Thames & Hudson Ltd, 2010), 196.

<sup>35</sup> See for example R. Beck, *Beck on Mithraism: Collected Works with New Essays* (Ashgate Publishing, Ltd., 2004), 15; G. Lease, “Mithraism and Christianity: Borrowings and Transformations,” 1325, in *Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen Welt* Vol. 2.23.2, W. Haase, ed. (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1980), 1306-1332.

<sup>36</sup> H. Bowden, *Mystery Cults*, 32.

<sup>37</sup> A. Roberts, J. Donaldson and A.C. Coxe, trans., *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. 2 (Buffalo: The Christian Literature Company, 1885).

### 2.2.5 An Earthly Ritual Context

Although a specific location for their performance is not given, the first baptismal ritual requires the disciples to go to Galilee to obtain one component of the ritual offering (2 *Jeu* 105). The baptismal description is shorter and less detailed in 4*PSa*, but there it states that Jesus and the disciples remained on the mountain of Galilee for the ritual (4*PSa* 369). This is taking place in a specific, earthly environment, not an imagined divine court or otherworldly realm. It is true that the provenance of these texts is most likely Egyptian, and it is improbable that the group using them would have journeyed to Galilee to perform the rituals themselves. It is possible this location was selected because the authors knew that Jesus was meant to have spent significant time there, and it was intended to give the description additional historical believability. It is clear, at any rate, that a physical setting is imagined for the rituals, and the fact that the disciples are specifically instructed to perform the mysteries for others who show themselves to be worthy suggests that regardless of specific location they were actions to be performed in this life. That it is presented as a group ritual, rather than an individual receiving private instruction as in the *Corpus Hermeticum*<sup>38</sup> or in other Jewish or Christian apocalyptic ascent treatises, also supports a view that it was intended for use by a group with shared beliefs worshipping together.

The actions described in the rituals are also known from other ritual contexts: standing in a circle, facing the four corners of the world, offering incense, wearing linen garments, and consuming a ritual meal of bread and wine. These were common in both religious and “magical” ritual practice, and the fact that they are explicitly performed on earth, prior to any idea of ascent,<sup>39</sup> further suggests that actual, physical performance of them was intended.

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<sup>38</sup> See B.P. Copenhaver, *Hermetica: The Greek Corpus Hermeticum and the Latin Asclepius in a New English Translation with Notes and Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

<sup>39</sup> Although 4*PSa* does have Jesus perform a ritual prayer to take the disciples to see parts of the cosmos before the baptismal ritual, when the time of the ritual comes Jesus commands the powers back to their places, and he and the disciples remain on the mountain of Galilee.

### 2.2.6 Liturgical Evidence

Further evidence that the texts were meant for use by a group rather than individual contemplation is found in the hymn at the end of *I Jeu*, which features a “call and response” format between the leader and fellow worshippers (*I Jeu* 93-98). The twelve surround Jesus, and he sings glory to the unapproachable God, with the disciples giving a refrain of three amens and “O unapproachable God” after each verse. The hymn takes the form of extended praise for the gradual unfolding and production of the world, basically covering all of the details that the preceding text has outlined. It is thus the reiteration of the group’s theology and cosmology in hymnic form. The fact that it requires both a main speaker and the response of additional participants makes it likely that it was meant for performance in a group setting, reinforcing their belief system in an act of praise.

### 2.2.7 Group Identity and Persecution

There is also the fact that the texts make polemical comments about another specific group—that which ritually consumes semen and menses (*2 Jeu* 100, *4PSb* 381; see also Epiphanius, *Pan* 26.4.5-8)—thus establishing themselves as representing a separate, true tradition in opposition to the others’ false beliefs and practices. Further details of this opposing group are given in *4PSb*: their adherents claim belief in “Esau and Jacob.” This is not a vague allegation of false teaching and sin, but rather a specific accusation against the rites and beliefs of another, opposing group. There is also reference to the group’s persecution for the sake of Jesus’ name (*3PS* 277), but it is unclear whether this is reference to persecution of the group’s specific beliefs or because of association with some version of Christianity. *2PS* includes a suggestion of persecution as well: the disciples will be elevated because they will be afflicted in the world above all men until their preaching is complete (*2PS* 232). This is perhaps due to the unorthodox nature of the preaching this group espouses, which here claims apostolic authority. The necessity of traveling and preaching is also discussed, with mysteries to be performed such that people in a place will believe in their teachings (*3PS* 278-281). With increased (likely non-mainstream) Christian influence, the group appears to become more mission-oriented: while initially secrecy and injunctions only to give mysteries to those who are worthy are

highlighted, in the later *3PS* instructions to spread the word and the mysteries are more prominent. Its opening has Jesus say, “When I have gone to the light, preach to the whole world” (*3PS* 256; see also *3PS* 314). *2PS* also reflects a proselytizing tendency, when Jesus instructs the disciples to “preach to the whole race of mankind” (*2PS* 250-251). Although there were undoubtedly different levels of initiation or instruction,<sup>40</sup> the command to spread the word is still present. These are not the words of lone authors writing for private readership and reflection. It might also be noted that besides *1 Jeu*, which specifies the disciples as “the twelve,” elsewhere female disciples are also included, and a fixed number is not given. This permits the inclusion of both males and females among the initiated. In the ritual descriptions, the amount of bread is simply stated as being “according to the number of disciples,” allowing for variation based on the number of people participating at a given time.

### 2.2.8 Mysterious Mysteries

If these texts had been intended for private reading and contemplation, written by individual authors with no shared rituals or theological views, the inclusion of lists of ranks or mysteries that are promised but never elucidated—with some variation, but including the five trees, the seven voices, the three amens, the twin saviors and the nine watchers—would be, indeed, mysterious. These mystery elements appear several times throughout the Jeuian texts, particularly in *2 Jeu* and *1* and *2PS*, and are unique to this body of tractates. Their inclusion in both the earliest and latest of the Jeuian texts suggests a consistent kernel despite the variability seen in some of the imagery. It is the mysteries that are always said to be the key to salvation—even at the stage in which Jesus’ actions in the world have come to play a greater role. In *2 Jeu* it states that

when those who have received these mysteries and the mystery of the forgiveness of sins come forth from the body, all the aeons draw back (one) after another, and they flee to the west and the left...until they (the souls) reach the gates of the Treasury of the Light, and the watchers of the gates open to them.” (*2 Jeu* 104)

This leads the soul down a complex path leading ultimately to the innermost of the inner, the final place of rest. This is at a stage when the world is not considered

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<sup>40</sup> For example, *3PS* 264-272, 310-313, 327, *2PS* 191-196, 203-208, 234-237, 245-247, 254.

inherently negative; thus, the mysteries serve primarily as knowledge allowing passage. Without them, this postmortem rest is impossible. *2PS*, apparently written significantly later, has Jesus say:

...concerning the race of mankind, because it is material I have troubled myself, I have brought all the mysteries of light to them, so that I should purify them...Otherwise no soul of the whole race of mankind would be saved; nor would they be able to inherit the Kingdom of the Light unless I had brought to them the mysteries of purification. (*2PS* 250)

Jesus' role as bringer of the mysteries and the negativity of materiality are highlighted, but still it is the mysteries themselves that are required for a human being to achieve salvation and enter the Kingdom of Light. In all of these cases, however, the mysteries themselves are never elucidated. In those texts scholars have argued are individual literary products,<sup>41</sup> all that befalls the hero is explained in detail, hymns are given in full, and the picture is made basically complete, if convoluted at times. They present stories that might be appreciated on their own. In the Jeuian texts, while certain mystery-rituals and the ascent passwords are clearly presented, the nature and contents of these other necessary elements are tantalizingly mentioned but never discussed. This supports the suggestion that they represent texts of a group, which presented basic information necessary for initiation in texts for study, but for deeper teachings direct oral instruction was required.

There is remarkably little detailed written information remaining on initiation practices and other rites of early non-mainstream esoteric Christian groups, or the mystery religions of the period. This likely stems from a combination of active destruction and passive deterioration of evidence over time, combined with a sense of secrecy that forbade the transmission of such secrets in writing. However, A.D. DeConick has recently presented a highly convincing argument regarding the Ophite diagram discussed in Origen's *Contra Celsum*, suggesting that the diagram combined a cosmic outline with the seals and prayers to be presented in the course of the soul's ascent—essentially, the diagram outlines the specifics of the initiation ritual into its users' community.<sup>42</sup> Thus, texts containing detailed records of an esoteric group's

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<sup>41</sup> See above, n.29 .

<sup>42</sup> A.D. DeConick, "The Road for Souls Is Through the Planets: The Mysteries of the Ophites Mapped," in *Practicing Gnosis: Ritual, Magic, Theurgy and Liturgy in Nag Hammadi, Manichaean and Other Late Antique Literature. Essays in Honor of Birger A. Pearson*, A.D. DeConick, G. Shaw, and J.D. Turner, eds. (Leiden: Brill, forthcoming). Received in private communication.

knowledge and ritual practices are unusual, but not unprecedented. The *Books of Jeu* in particular strike one as an initiatory handbook, with its formulaic layouts of information to be memorized accompanied by the explanation of the initiatory baptisms. As noted above, with the exception of the first, most basic baptism, the ritual descriptions do not include the miraculous signs said to occur at the end of each.<sup>43</sup> This is remarkable given the attention to detail given to the rest of the ceremonies. This suggests that these signs were meant to be experienced by the initiates firsthand, not recorded.

### 2.3 CONCLUSIONS

The texts of the Bruce and Askew Codices—specifically *1 Jeu*, *2 Jeu*, *4PSa*, *4PSb*, *3PS*, *1* and *2PS*, and a number of fragments—are all representative of the same religious group. The evidence presented by the texts points strongly toward use in a group or community context, as opposed to authorship by isolated thinkers with the intention of individual reading and contemplation. The rituals they contain are set in an earthly, group context, and are explicitly intended for repetition for other believers. Other mysteries necessary for salvation are alluded to, but never explained, suggesting that direct, oral teaching was required for deeper knowledge. At least one hymn preserved directly requires call and response between a main speaker and a congregation, providing evidence for liturgical practices. The group describes itself in opposition to others that engage in practices it finds reprehensible, as well as alluding to persecution in the name of Jesus—whether at the hands of anti-Christians or Christians who disapproved of their theological outlook is unclear. A missionary inclination becomes increasingly apparent over time, perhaps as a result of increased influence from various Christian groups in their teaching. Although there is little clue as to where this group might have met or the nature of their usual worship, the textual remnants leave little doubt that they were a religious group with immense syncretistic adaptability. The strong soteriological core in the form of the mysteries remains their primary identifying feature.

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<sup>43</sup> The same is true of the description in *4PSa* 371, which appears to represent the first baptism of the sequence in that text.



## CHAPTER 3

# COSMIC STRUCTURE AND HIERARCHY OF THE JEUIAN WORLD

Some of the main concerns of many non-mainstream esoteric Christian groups, as represented by both heresiological representations and the Nag Hammadi texts, are the genesis of the highest realms from an original being or beings and the creation and development of the lower regions of the cosmos. This fixation on universal ordering is shared by the group that produced the *Books of Jeu* and the *Pistis Sophia*. Within these texts a great deal of time and effort are expended outlining all areas of the cosmos, from those of the highest god and the land of light down to the lowest realms of darkness and punishment. It is clear from the sheer bulk of text discussing these realms that an understanding of their order, nature, and inhabitants was considered of the utmost importance to the believers of this group. In addition to receiving purification rituals on earth, knowledge of the names and details of the beings along the ascension path could mean the difference between remaining in torment and proceeding to salvation. Thus, in order to gain an understanding of the system of the group producing these texts, an analysis of their cosmology is essential.

The issue of the cosmology of these texts is a complicated one. As the texts were written over a period of time, certain ideas changed, and realms could be added, removed, or their purposes altered. Each text presents a different piece of the overall structure, and that structure changes as the ideology of the group changes. G.R.S. Mead states that in these texts, the “evolution of the universe is according to a certain order, but its involution seems to change that order; the soteriology modifies the aeonology and cosmology.”<sup>1</sup> By examining the roles of each cosmological realm over the course of the texts’ development, a picture emerges of how ideas of the material cosmos, the immaterial light realms, and individual salvation interacted with each other over time. Furthermore, piecing together the full cosmological picture in each individual text is necessary for an understanding of the stages of development in the group’s view of the soteriological process.

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<sup>1</sup> G.R.S. Mead, *Fragments of a Faith Forgotten* (1905; reprint: New York: University Books, 1960), 574.

A few scholars have attempted to present a coherent outline for the cosmology of the first three books of the *Pistis Sophia* at the very least, with or without input from *4PSa*, *4PSb* or the *Books of Jeu*. Perhaps the clearest are those by C. Schmidt<sup>2</sup> and G.R.S. Mead.<sup>3</sup> Before embarking on a new discussion, a brief look at two of these outlines will prove helpful.

**Table 3.1: Outline of the Cosmology in the *Pistis Sophia***

<b>C. Schmidt, <i>Gnostische Schriften in koptischer Sprache</i>, 347-348</b>	<b>G.R.S. Mead, <i>Fragments of a Faith Forgotten</i>, 574-575</b>
<p>I. The Highest Light-world or the Kingdom of Light</p> <p>a. The χωρηματα of the Ineffable</p> <p>b. The two χωρηματα of the First Mystery</p> <p>II. The Higher Light-world</p> <p>a. The Treasury of Light</p> <p>i. The προβολαι of the Light</p> <p>ii. The Taxeis of the Taxeis</p> <p>b. The Place of the Right</p> <p>c. The Place of the Midst</p> <p>III. The Lower Light- or Aeon-world</p> <p>a. The Place of the Left</p> <p>i. The 13 aeons</p> <p>ii. The εἰμαρμενη</p> <p>iii. The σφαιρα</p> <p>iv. The Archons of the Midst</p> <p>v. The στερεωμα</p> <p>b. The Cosmos, esp. humanity</p> <p>c. The Underworld</p> <p>i. Amenti</p> <p>ii. Chaos</p> <p>iii. Outer Darkness</p>	<p>The Ineffable</p> <p>The limbs of the Ineffable</p> <p>I. The Highest Light-world, or the Kingdom of Light</p> <p>a. The First Space of the Ineffable</p> <p>b. The Second Space of the Ineffable, or the First Space of the First Mystery</p> <p>c. The Second Space of the First Mystery</p> <p>II. The Higher (or Middle) Light-world</p> <p>a. The Treasury of Light</p> <p>b. The Place of the Right</p> <p>c. The Place of the Midst</p> <p>III. The Lower Light- or Aeon-world (The Mixture of Light and Matter)</p> <p>a. The Place of the Left</p> <p>i. The Thirteenth Aeon</p> <p>ii. The Twelve Aeons</p> <p>iii. The Fate</p> <p>iv. The Sphere</p> <p>v. The Rulers of the Ways of the Midst</p> <p>vi. The Lower Firmament</p> <p>b. The World of Men</p> <p>c. The Under-world</p> <p>i. Amenti</p> <p>ii. Chaos</p> <p>iii. Outer Darkness</p>

<sup>2</sup> *Gnostische Schriften in koptischer Sprache aus dem Codex Brucianus* (Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung, 1892), 347-348.

<sup>3</sup> *Fragments of a Faith Forgotten*, 574-575.

Terminology aside, these two outlines are very similar, with a few minor differences: Mead separates the Ineffable and his limbs out into a level beyond the rest of the outline, while Schmidt includes them in the Highest Light-world; Mead gives more divisions to the upper spaces, while Schmidt gives more divisions to the Treasury of Light; and Mead separates the 13<sup>th</sup> aeon from the 12 aeons, while Schmidt keeps them as a unit. That the outlines are so similar is unsurprising, given Mead's stated agreement with Schmidt's corrections and revisions of K.R. Köstlin's earlier analysis of the scheme of the *Pistis Sophia*.<sup>4</sup>

Mead does stipulate that this outline “represents only one configuration of the cosmic mystery, at a certain moment in time, or in a certain phase of consciousness.”<sup>5</sup> However, by taking each level of the cosmology in turn, the development of each throughout the texts—and as such, the development of the cosmology of the group as a whole—shall be better clarified. Some overlap will be present, as certain subdivisions occasionally shift between larger regions. The highest (and indeed, lowest) levels of several versions of the order are different, so this analysis shall begin with the highest posited out of all the texts, and work down to the lowest of the low.

### 3.1 THE SPACES OF THE INEFFABLE AND THE FIRST MYSTERY

These are the highest regions in *3PS* and *1/2PS*, at the point in the textual tradition where the Ineffable and the First Mystery become the terms used to refer to the highest powers of the universe—previously the highest principle was referred to as either the “unapproachable” god or Jesus' Father, the father of all fatherhoods. These regions and their associated mysteries are also closely tied to the places of the inheritances (*2PS* 207-208; see also discussion of the Treasury of Light below).

They first appear as cryptic references to the mysteries of the first space without, and the mysteries of the second space of the First Mystery (*3PS* 266-267). Later the text describes a soul that “has not listened to the counterfeit spirit in all his works, and becomes good and receives the mysteries of the light which are in the

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<sup>4</sup> G.R.S. Mead, *Fragments of a Faith Forgotten*, 574. For Köstlin's original analysis, see “Das gnostische System des Buches Pistis Sophia” in *Theologisches Jahrbücher* 13, von Baur and Zeller, eds. (Bielefeld-Leipzig, 1854) 1-104, 137-196.

<sup>5</sup> G.R.S. Mead, *Fragments of a Faith Forgotten*, 574.

second space, or those which are in the third space which are within” (3PS 286). Shortly thereafter there is some discussion of a soul that has received mysteries in the “first space without” (3PS 287). In this instance, these spaces are not directly connected with the Ineffable or the First Mystery. However, in both instances the soul travels to the place of its inheritance (3PS 289), or “to the place of its kingdom, as far as which it has received mysteries” (3PS 287). The inheritances are not a single location; one’s final destination is dependent upon which mysteries one received in life.

Later, Maria (likely Mary Magdalene) inquires about “the mysteries of these three spaces and the mysteries of this First Mystery and the mysteries of the Ineffable” (3PS 301-302). The mysteries of the three spaces have the power to forgive all the sins a soul has committed to that point and afterward “up to the time as far as which each one of the mysteries will be powerful” (ΖΕΩΣ ΨΑ ΠΕΟΥΘΕΙΩ ΕΤΕΡΕ ΠΟΥΑ ΠΟΥΑ ΝΜΜΥΣΤΗΡΙΟΝ ΝΑΑΜΑΖΤΕ ΨΑΡΟϢ). However, those of the Ineffable and First Mystery can forgive all the sins the soul commits, and further assure that no sin is reckoned to that soul until eternity. This demonstrates that mysteries have different levels of efficacy, with those of the two higher entities surpassing all others. It is unsurprising that within the context of the spaces themselves there would be mysteries lower than those of the First Mystery, as later at 2PS 205, ranks are posited below the level of the first ordinance in the first space from without—the first ordinance being the lowest mystery of the First Mystery. Indeed, the mysteries of the First Mystery are less powerful than those of the Ineffable—despite the frequent connection of the two in discourse (3PS 269, 272, 277, 312), it is only the mystery of the Ineffable that can save the truly damned transgressor (3PS 275, 304).

These spaces receive much greater elaboration in 1/2PS. In 1PS the spaces immediately make their appearance. On the very first page it discusses the extent of the mysteries which the disciples had received by the eleventh year of being taught by the risen Jesus: he had taught them

only as far as the places of the first ordinance and as far as the places of the First Mystery which is within the veil which is within the first ordinance, which is the 24<sup>th</sup> mystery outside and below, these which are in the second space of the First Mystery which is before all mysteries. (1PS 1)

The few references early in the first book are almost exclusively in connection with the 24<sup>th</sup> mystery from within outward, and these 24 mysteries' location in the second space of the First Mystery (*IPS* 1, 5, 9, 10). The remaining reference is at *IPS* 18, where one of Jesus' garments is attributed with "the whole glory of the name of all the mysteries and all the emanations which are in the ranks of the two spaces of the First Mystery." This passage goes on to make it clear that the spaces of the First Mystery also contain all of the lower regions of the universe, from the firmaments upward—excluding only the ranks and emanations of the spaces of the Ineffable, which are superior.

In *2PS* these spaces are explored more thoroughly. The first of the important references states that Jesus will take his disciples to "the three spaces of the First Mystery, with the exception only of the places of the space of the Ineffable" (*2PS* 187). This suggests that the First Mystery has three spaces, but one of these spaces is or contains the space of the Ineffable. Furthermore, within these spaces are multiple places. Immediately after this statement Jesus begins to outline the places he will take them, which begin with the Heimarmene, then the aeons, the Midst (**MECOC**), the place of the right, the Treasury of the Light, and the inheritances. It appears that all of these regions are associated with the spaces of the First Mystery, which is in accordance with the passage at *IPS* 18.

Confusion begins to be apparent in *2PS* 205-208. Here a complicated explanation of the hierarchy of the spaces appears in a discussion of exactly how far a soul is allowed to travel based on the level of mysteries it has received. The lowest level that is given is that of the first ordinance, the mysteries of which gives the soul authority to go to all the ranks below it, those of the third space below the mysteries of the First Mystery—or all of the material realms, and likely as far as the Midst (**MECOC**) or the Treasury. This is followed by the 24<sup>th</sup> mystery from without of the First Mystery, which is the head of the first space on the outside. Then come the remaining mysteries of the ranks of the 24 mysteries, as well as the mysteries of the other ranks and spaces.

The nature and distribution of the 24 mysteries of the First Mystery, and indeed the positioning of the three spaces in relation to the various levels, have been

the source of a great deal of discussion and debate. Schmidt struggles with these issues in his discussion of Köstlin's analysis, and in his own attempt at reconciling this passage with another, later problematic passage and references from *IPS*.<sup>6</sup> He first says that it is impossible for the ranks of the third space to be located below the first ordinance, as it itself belongs to the ranks of the third space. Indeed he believes that the text is mistaken on this point, attributing it to a corruption of the text or confusion of the author. Furthermore, he becomes bogged down in attempting to reconcile the distribution of the 24 mysteries of the First Mystery, with their apparent appearance in the third space here and the second space at the beginning of *IPS*. His conclusions are understandably tentative, because of the confusing nature of the texts and their relations to each other.

The interpretation to be proposed here, while provisional, has the advantage of removing the assumption that the author has made a mistake in describing his own cosmology. First, it is important to note the flexibility of the numbering of these three spaces. There is a general assumption that there is one space of the Ineffable, and two spaces of the First Mystery—although there is some overlap, with occasional mention of a third space of the First Mystery which is generally associated with the space of the Ineffable (*2PS* 187, 207).<sup>7</sup> These spaces can be numbered from within outwards, or from without inwards. Thus, the third space from within is also the first space from without. Furthermore, the same principle applies to the two spaces of the First Mystery: the first space of the First Mystery is in fact the second space from within or without, while the second space of the First Mystery can also be the first space from without.<sup>8</sup> In this case, the 24 mysteries of the First Mystery are located in the first space from without, also called the third space (from within), and further known as the second space of the First Mystery—in all cases, the lowest level of these three highest levels or spaces. Depending on context, this space can be referred to as the first, second, *or* third space.

Moreover, the statement at *IPS* 1 that Schmidt finds problematic is also explained: there, the places of the First Mystery are within the first ordinance, and

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<sup>6</sup> C. Schmidt, *Gnostische Schriften in koptischer Sprache*, 356-359.

<sup>7</sup> *2PS* 206 also suggests that all of the ranks above the one who rules the 24 mysteries of the First Mystery are the “ranks of the space of the Ineffable.”

<sup>8</sup> This changing terminology appears from time to time, but is most clearly explained in *2PS* 245-246.

the first ordinance is the 24<sup>th</sup> mystery outside and below. At *2PS* 205, possessing the mysteries of the first ordinance gives one the power to visit the ranks of the third space below it—but it is the lowest rank mentioned, the other ranks being considered insignificant. Its double duty as “first ordinance” and the last or 24<sup>th</sup> mystery from within can be maintained, and as higher ranks are always “within” the lower ones, it makes sense that the rest of the places of the First Mystery be located within it. The head of the first space on the outside (or the third space) is the 24<sup>th</sup> mystery *from without*, thus making it the first from within, or the highest of the 24 mysteries. The ones who receive the “mysteries in the ranks of the 24 mysteries” and the “mysteries of the ranks of the First Mystery in the third space” simply fall along the scale between the first ordinance/24<sup>th</sup> mystery from within and the highest/24<sup>th</sup> mystery from without, all of which combine to form the 24 mysteries of the First Mystery.

As noted above, Schmidt asserts that the statement about the first ordinance giving access to all the ranks of the third space must be attributed to “eine Ungenauigkeit des Verfassers oder Verberbnis des Textes.”<sup>9</sup> However, the text itself later states that the “mysteries of these three portions of the light [connected here with the three spaces] are exceedingly numerous” (*2PS* 246), and in fact that not all of them are necessary—a result of the development of cosmology and soteriology, and the streamlining of the earlier mysteries discussed elsewhere in this volume. Above it has been established that all of the lower regions of the universe were included in the space of the First Mystery. Thus, it would be perfectly reasonable to believe that the lowest of the 24 mysteries of the First Mystery—the first ordinance—would give its recipient access to all the lower ranks and regions of its space, and indeed that these ranks are numerous.

There is some further discussion of the spaces and their associated mysteries; perhaps the most important information is related to the types of the mysteries of each space and what is to be expected to travel through them: the first space from without has secret signs, answers and defenses needed, but the remaining two do not (*2PS* 242-244, 245-246, 247, 254-255). This will be discussed further below.

The exception to this general outline of the spaces and their contents, and perhaps the most problematic of the passages on the “highest light-world,” is found

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<sup>9</sup> C. Schmidt, *Gnostische Schriften in koptischer Sprache*, 357.

in *2PS* 220-226. Here the knowledge of the mystery of the Ineffable is outlined (Table 3.2). It posits the emanation of most of these higher beings or ranks to the “fatherless ones,” and presents a far more complex line of development than elsewhere. This passage is the only time the fatherless ones are mentioned in the whole of the *Pistis Sophia*. It is odd that beings with such a prominent role in the development of the highest realms of existence would receive such little attention. The placement and division of the three triple-spirited ones and the first ordinance are also at odds with the rest of the text. Suffice it to say that its contents clash with and are unparalleled in the rest of the book. It appears to be an awkward insertion of ideas from another source, and if there is a section that should be attributed to confusion on the part of the author/compiler, it seems that this is a likely candidate.

**Table 3.2: Knowledge of the Mystery of the Ineffable (*2PS* 220-226)**

5 helpers	24 myriad singers of praise
Great Light of Lights	24 mysteries/spaces of the first triple-spirited one
First ordinance (divided into seven mysteries)	24 mysteries of the second triple-spirited one
Great light of the incisions	24 mysteries/spaces of the third triple-spirited one
First Mystery (24 <sup>th</sup> mystery from without)	5 trees of the first triple-spirited one
12 motionless ones	5 trees of the second triple-spirited one
Unshakeable ones	5 trees of the third triple-spirited one
Unthinkable ones	ΠΡΟΑΧΩΡΗΤΟC (pl) of the first triple-spirited one
12 unmarked ones	ΠΡΟΑΧΩΡΗΤΟC (pl) of the second triple-spirited one
Undisclosed ones	ΠΡΟΑΧΩΡΗΤΟC (pl) of the third triple-spirited one
Fathomless ones	First triple-spirited one from below
12 ranks of the unutterable ones	Second triple-spirited one
Imperishable ones	First triple-spirited one from above
Endless ones	12 <sup>th</sup> pre-triple-spirited one
12 incomprehensible ones	

In summary, the three spaces appear, in fact, to be different terminology for the whole of existence, from the material realms to the pinnacle in the spaces of the Ineffable. Speculation using these terms was a relatively late development, only really beginning in *3PS* and flowering in *1/2PS*. However, the introduction of these terms does not imply as dramatic a change in the cosmological speculation of the authors as might appear on the surface, or indeed as has been assumed by scholars to this point. They provide the highest mysteries and access to the various ranks of the inheritance; closer analysis, however, shall demonstrate just how closely these

concepts and their structure are tied to language surrounding the Treasury of the Light in all of the older texts.

### 3.2 THE TREASURY OF LIGHT

Prior to the spaces of the Ineffable and the primacy of the inheritances of the light, the Treasury or Treasuries of Light were the pinnacle of the cosmological hierarchy. They are the earliest region or regions to be discussed in the texts. They dominate *1 Jeu*, which strives to outline all 60 treasuries that make up this early iteration, and remain a powerful force in the background of all the remaining texts.

*1 Jeu* has sometimes been criticized for being repetitive, unimaginative, and dull, but in fact it preserves one of the most detailed ascension handbooks to survive late antiquity. The first section outlines the structures of the first 28 levels of the treasuries, beginning with the highest or innermost level and working outwards. The second section jumps in at the 55<sup>th</sup> treasury, detailing the seals and defenses needed by the initiate to pass through each level. Schmidt suggests that the treasuries are divided into two classes of thirty treasuries each, to account for the differences in the style or structure in which the two types are presented. He believes this explains the reference in *2 Jeu* to two Treasuries of Light.<sup>10</sup> Mead disagrees, holding that there were likely originally sixty Jeu-diagrams.<sup>11</sup> The lengthy lacuna in the middle prevents a definitive resolution of this conflict, but Mead's conclusion on this point is the more probable: at the end of the description of the 60<sup>th</sup> treasury, Jesus reiterates that he has now presented the disciples with the placing of all the treasuries, from **ΙΟΔΙΕΩΘΩΥΙΧΩΛΜΙΟ** to **ΩΑΖΑΗΖΩ**—the former being the name of the true god or the first Jeu in the first part, and the latter being the name of the father of the sixtieth treasury just presented.

The different formats of the two sections appear to be a result of the different aims of each section: the first part endeavors to present a full list of the inhabitants of each level and a map of their layout and contents, while the second part strives to give the initiate the information he or she needs to ascend through them, focusing on names, seals, and ciphers for accessing each level. It is unfortunate that a fuller

<sup>10</sup> C. Schmidt, *Gnostische Schriften in koptischer Sprache*, 371.

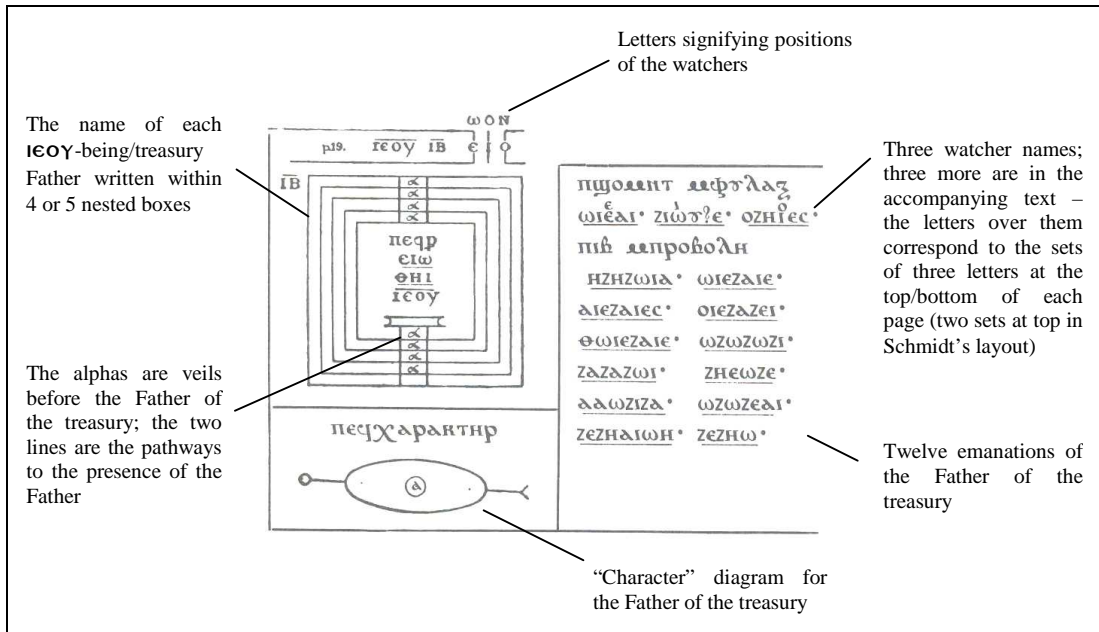
<sup>11</sup> G.R.S. Mead, *Fragments of a Faith Forgotten*, 540.

account does not exist to allow for comparison. One imagines that some interesting deductions could have been made if corresponding outline- and defense-sections had been preserved. However, there are still key observations to be made in what remains of the text.

In *I Jeu* the Treasuries of Light are the highest realms attainable by the believer. Their heads are emanated by Jeu, the true God—a title used repeatedly for Jeu in this book and nowhere else—who himself is emanated and made to emanate by Jesus’ Father, the unapproachable God. There is some variation between the contents or structure of different diagrams in this first section, much of which can likely be attributed to scribal confusion or error. The character diagrams will receive further treatment in Ch. 5. For now it is sufficient to note that the basic structures or inhabitants expected in each level are:

- 1) The Father of the treasury: a being possessing a mystery name with “ΙΕΟΥ” as its final element
- 2) Four/five boxes surrounding the ΙΕΟΥ-being
- 3) A series of alphas leading into and out of these boxes, held between two lines which divide these boxes
- 4) Twelve emanations/heads
- 5) Three/six watchers
- 6) The “character” of the Father of the treasury

**Figure 3.1: “Jeu” Diagram Outline (Jeu 12)**



These elements, as mentioned above, present something of a map of each level—a map which is opaque on its own, but which receives further illumination in the second part of the text, in the explanation of the sixtieth treasury.

There the text says of the two lines holding the series of alphas, “they are the pathways when you will go to the presence of the Father, to his place and his interior. These alphas are also veils which are drawn before him” (*1 Jeu* 86). Thus, the father of each level rests at its center, behind a series of veils.<sup>12</sup>

The positioning of the watchers must be extrapolated, as the example of the sixtieth and outermost treasury is apparently unique: while there is only one gate within the treasury, “it has three gates at its exterior which is outside of it. And over them are nine watchers, three over each gate, and the name of each of them is different” (*1 Jeu* 87).<sup>13</sup> The nine watchers over the three gates at the outermost point of the treasuries take on a life of their own in the later texts, as will be discussed shortly, but the information is still useful in explaining the *Jeu* diagrams. We know from this that the watchers remain at the gates of each treasury. In the examples that remain in the first section, there are three watcher names given within each diagram, alongside the names of the twelve emanations. There are a further three watcher names given in the text accompanying each level. All six of these names have individual letters over them.

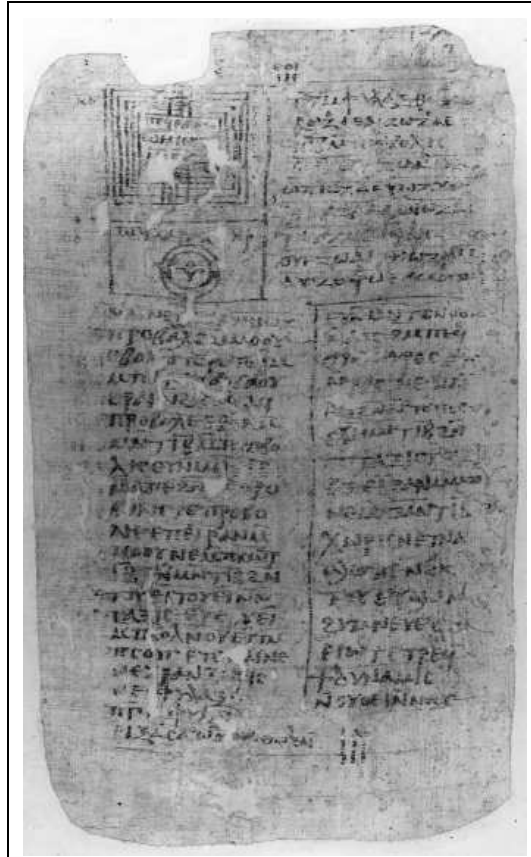
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<sup>12</sup> It may be worth noting that the symbol found in the boxes along with the name of the treasury Father bear some resemblance to the Egyptian hieroglyph which means “road” but can also have the sense of “ascend” (A. Gardiner, *Egyptian Grammar: Being an Introduction to the Study of Hieroglyphs* [1927; reprint: London: Oxford University Press, 1957], sign N31). However, it may be closer to “canal” (N36). For other possible hieroglyphic antecedents in the text, as well as caution on positing hieroglyphic origin, see Section 5.2.3.2.

<sup>13</sup> This and the preceding quote give further evidence supporting the 60 treasuries of one type theory over Schmidt’s theory of division: in the actual presentation of the 60<sup>th</sup> treasury as given here, there are no pathway lines, alphas, or watchers shown or given, whereas all of these elements are clearly identifiable in the diagrams of the first section.

Schmidt's layouts of the diagrams, with their placement of two sets of three letters at the top of each, are highly stylized, in part due to his lack of understanding of their meaning. In actuality there is one set of three at the top of each page, and another at the bottom, after the accompanying text. Those letters at the top correspond with those over the watcher names within the diagram, and those at the bottom with the letters tied to the watchers in the additional text. In Schmidt's version, the upper set of letters consists of those from the bottom of the previous page. It would appear there are two gates for each level, one going in and one leading out, with three watchers over each gate. The diagrams present the names and positions of each of these watchers.

**Figure 3.2: Sample Page from *1 Jeu***



Jeu 24: Note lines with sets of three letters at top and bottom, not two on top (source: the Bruce Codex)

It should be noted that Mead applies the discussion of the watchers of the sixtieth treasury to *all* of the treasuries: “within each treasure is a Door or Gate, and without three Gates; each of the outer Gates has three Guardians, but the inner gate has but one, presumably the father of the treasure himself.”<sup>14</sup> Nowhere does the text suggest that the structure of the sixtieth treasury should apply to all of the rest, and indeed all indications suggest that the sixtieth was viewed as special or different, as it was the beginning of the journey inward. The fact that the nine watchers of the three gates became so iconic as the first stage of the set of ranks or mysteries associated with the treasuries is further evidence that it is not something to be applied to the rest of the stages. Furthermore, there is no indication of any gates with only a single

<sup>14</sup> G.R.S. Mead, *Fragments of a Faith Forgotten*, 541.

watcher, nor that the father of the treasury serves as a watcher of his own gate.<sup>15</sup> Indeed, in each of the cases in the second section, wherein the process of gaining access and moving through each treasury is given, presentation of the appropriate name, cipher and seal causes “the watchers and the ranks and the veils [to be] drawn back, until you go to the place of their Father” (*I Jeu* 83-86). The father does present a name and a seal, after which the initiate moves through a gate, but this appears to be part of the process of ascension rather than the Father of the treasury acting as a guardian or watcher. The watchers, as guardians, only act to bar the passage of those who do not possess the necessary knowledge, and move aside upon presentation of that knowledge; they do not give information themselves. Mead does not appear to have realized the correspondence between the names of the watchers and the letters at the top of each diagram, and thus fails to recognize that the diagrams themselves demonstrate the general structure of each treasury.

The treasuries themselves are divided into five “ranks” (ΤΑΞΙC): “There are two ranks of Fatherhood within, and one in the middle, and two outside” (ΕΡΕ-  
CΝΤΕ ΝΤΑΞΙC ΜΜΝΤΕΙΩΤ ΖΙΖΟΥΝ ΑΥΩ ΟΥΕΙ ΖΝ-ΤΜΗΤΕ. ΑΥΩ CΝΤΕ  
ΖΙΒΟΛ; *I Jeu* 83). It seems that the sixty treasuries are divided into five sections. It is possible that the treasuries were viewed as being arranged in concentric circular or spherical ranks.<sup>16</sup> Thus, in the 55<sup>th</sup> treasury, Jesus explains that they are in the “second rank of the treasury of those without,” or the “two ranks of those outside” (*I Jeu* 83). This uses terminology similar to that utilized in the discussion of the spaces of the Ineffable or the First Mystery—thus, this “second rank of those without” would be the outermost circle or ranking, as there are only two ranks on the outside. The 55<sup>th</sup> treasury would be located in this outermost rank, or the second rank of those without, as reckoned from the innermost. Furthermore there are “five ranks of fatherhood in the middle/Midst (ΜΗΤΕ)” (*I Jeu* 83), suggesting the five non-

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<sup>15</sup> The necessity of three watchers per gate derives from the text’s Egyptian antecedents, as will be discussed in Section 6.1.

<sup>16</sup> See also below, Figure 3.3.

luminary planets in the path of the ecliptic.<sup>17</sup> The most likely interpretation of the treasuries, their maps and ranks in *1 Jeu* is as a star map. As the oldest of the texts, it has the strongest ties to star worship and the Egyptian notion of the dead finding final rest among the stars. This will be discussed in greater detail in Ch. 6.

Such was the conception of the treasuries in *1 Jeu*. *2 Jeu* also begins with a discussion of the Treasury of Light, but it is now referred to as the singular “Treasury of Light,” as a specific, properly named region, rather than as the series of individual treasuries.<sup>18</sup> There are no fewer than four lists of ranks or mysteries associated with the Treasury of Light in *2 Jeu*, no two of which are identical (see Table 3.3). Clearly a great deal of speculation was occurring about these regions, their contents, and what was to be expected, and this author has apparently compiled a number of different versions of these speculations. However, despite the variations, the basic components of the list are generally the same. Both in *2 Jeu* and in versions of the list found in *1/2PS*, the watchers, child of the child (or twin saviors), 3 amens, 5 trees, and 7 voices appear in some order in almost every account. Although the bulk of *2 Jeu* is devoted to discussing the baptismal rituals and the information needed to traverse the lower aeonic regions, the number of lists and passing references to the Treasury demonstrates that the attainment of this pinnacle of existence was obviously still high in the minds of those in the initial stages of preparation for the journey. In addition, the fact that the main elements remain the same in the earliest and latest texts further demonstrates the unity of system between these early and late texts. Despite differences in surface theme and language, the core mysteries remain essentially the same.

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<sup>17</sup> See discussion of the **MHT€** below, and Section 6.2. The use of the term **MHT€** here as a region, despite its frequent appearance in the *Pistis Sophia*, goes without remark from previous translators. MacDermot translates it as “middle” without a capital letter, missing the connection.

<sup>18</sup> However, it is occasionally referred to in the plural; see *2 Jeu* 117, 125, 126, 135, 136. *2 Jeu* 123 also specifically mentions a “second Treasury of Light.”

**Table 3.3: Ranks of the Treasury of Light**

<i>2 Jeu 99-100</i>	<i>2 Jeu 103</i>	<i>2 Jeu 104-105</i>	<i>2 Jeu 119-125</i>	<i>IPS 2-3</i>	<i>IPS 18</i>	<i>2PS 194</i>	<i>2PS 197</i>	<i>2PS 217</i>
Watchers	9 Watchers of 3 Gates of ToL	Watchers of Gates of ToL	9 Watchers of ToL	Watchers of (doors) of ToL	9 Watchers of 3 Gates of ToL	Saviors	9 Watchers	Emanations of Light
3 Amens	Child of the Child	Ranks of the Treasury	3 Amens	Twin Savior = Child of Child	Twin Savior = Child of Child	9 Watchers of ToL	Twin Saviors	12 Saviors
The Twins	3 Amens	5 Trees	Child of the Child	3 Amens	3 Amens	Twin Saviors	3 Amens (+ 12 Saviors?)	9 Watchers & 3 Gates of ToL
The Triple-powered one	5 Trees of ToL	7 Voices	Great Sabaoth (of ToL)	5 Trees	5 Trees	3 Amens	5 Trees	Twin Saviors
Ranks of the 5 Trees	7 voices & Will of the 49 Powers	Fatherless Ones	Great Jao the Good (of ToL)	7 Amens = 7 Voices	7 Voices	5 Trees	7 Voices	3 Amens
7 voices	Name of all Names/Great Light surrounding ToL	Triple Spirits	7 Amens	5 Helpers	7 Amens			5 Trees
Incomprehensible Ones of ToL		Place of Jeu (Treasury of the Outermost Ones)	5 Trees/ Unmoved Trees	(Extension of Great Light)	Saviors of ToL			7 Amens
		Treasury of the Innermost Ones (Silence and Quietness)	7 Voices	5 Incisions	Ranks of emanations of ToL			
			(continued – see Appendix)	First Ordinance	5 Leaders = 5 Helpers			
					Great Light/Messenger of Ineffable			
					5 Incisions			
					First Ordinance = Mystery of the Informer			

The books of the *Pistis Sophia* present considerably less explicit information on the Treasury of Light. In part this is due to the different focus these later texts have, with their reduced coverage of ascension in general and their greater interest in punishments for sinful souls, anthropogony and mythology. However, although its importance is further partly obscured by the introduction of terminology of the spaces of the First Mystery and the Ineffable, it continues to play a key role, as shall be seen below.

In *4PSa* the Treasury of Light is still the highest realm of existence, although this fact is never explicitly mentioned. The (mystery) name of the Father of the Treasury of Light is said to be a word of power in the prayers near the beginning of the text (*4PSa* 354), and plays a key role in the baptismal rite detailed later on (*4PSa* 370). Furthermore, Jesus gives a list of places for which he will give the disciples the mysteries to travel through them, beginning with the twelve aeons; the Treasury of Light is at the pinnacle of this list. Immediately after his statement that he will give them the mystery of the Treasury of Light, Jesus states, “I will give to you all mysteries and all knowledge, so that you may be called: ‘Sons of the pleroma, complete in all knowledge and all mysteries’” (*4PSa* 359). Thus, the Treasury is the height of all mysteries and the ultimate destination of the believer.

There is some other discussion of the Treasury in *4PSa* in the context of production and purification: the archons and gods and powers are said to have come into existence through the *matter* of the light of the Treasury (ΘΥΛΗ ΜΠΟΥΘΕΙΝ ΜΠΕΘΗΚΑΥΡΟΣ), and light purified in the archons is retrieved and brought back into the Treasury (*4PSa* 360-361).<sup>19</sup> Then, in describing what he brought into the world, Jesus says that he brought water and fire from the Treasury (*4PSa* 368). Finally, in *4PSb*, which is largely a delineation of what happens to sinful souls, it is said that one who in the end receives the mysteries of the light will inherit the Treasury of Light, even if they committed all sorts of iniquities before performing these mysteries (*4PSb* 383).

All of this demonstrates that despite not being the focal point of these texts, the Treasury of Light is still the pinnacle of the cosmological structure, with Jesus’

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<sup>19</sup> Note that matter as dregs appears to be a natural product of the light realm, and not the result of a divine fall as per certain other non-mainstream esoteric Christian myths.

Father being its source. That Father, the same Father who receives the baptismal prayers in the *Books of Jeu*, has the name of power that gives prayers greater potency. Jeu works primarily in the cosmos that he organizes and orders; however, he resides in the place of the right, which is here still a part of or another name for the regions of the Treasury.

The Treasury plays an even less prominent role in *3PS*. The lack of attention given to it is a factor of both: 1) the text's greater concern with punishments for sinful souls, the functionality of baptisms, and discussion of the formation of the human being; and, 2) the introduction of the new language of inheritances/spaces of the First Mystery and the Ineffable. The Treasury here plays a role as the resting place for souls that have completed their cycles in the world, having been rescued from the dragon of the outer darkness. These souls are not allowed back into the world and have not received the mysteries of the light or the sign of the Ineffable, but their examiner—the Virgin of the Light or Jeu—has mercy on them, giving them the baptism of the seven virgins, purifying them, and setting them in the last rank of the Treasury, saving them from punishment (*3PS* 325, 330-331). Its other appearance is as the final pausing place before entry into the place of the inheritance for the soul that has received the mysteries to free it from the counterfeit spirit and destiny (*3PS* 291). It now appears as the final place of sealing prior to accessing the place of the inheritance.

In *1/2PS* the Treasury is bound closely with the place of the inheritances or the spaces of the First Mystery/Ineffable. What lies beyond the Treasury of Light is the place of the inheritances (*IPS* 90; *2PS* 189, 191). The first ordinance, in addition to being the outermost of the 24 mysteries of the First Mystery (*IPS* 1), is also the outermost barrier to the inheritances of the light (*2PS* 198). Thus, the places of the three spaces within the first ordinance must refer to the place of the inheritances. The soul that enters the first ordinance proceeds “to go to the inheritance of the light as far as the place of their mystery” (*2PS* 198); so it would seem that the various mysteries of the First Mystery correspond to places within these spaces. Later there is discussion of the mysteries of the Ineffable:

[I]t possesses one mystery, but that mystery makes three mysteries to be one mystery, but the type of each of them is different. And furthermore it makes five mysteries to be one also, but the type of each one is different, so that these five mysteries are equal with

one another in the mystery of the kingdom in the inheritances of the light...And their kingdom is superior and more elevated than the whole kingdom of the twelve mysteries of the First Mystery together... (2PS 238)<sup>20</sup>

The hierarchy is further established at 2PS 245: those who receive the twelfth mystery of the First Mystery are inferior to those who receive the five mysteries of the Ineffable, and those are inferior to those who receive the three mysteries of the Ineffable, and all are inferior to those who receive the one mystery of the Ineffable (12<5<3<1). All of these mysteries appear to refer to the same general structure, but with different outlines and divisions, with the more all-encompassing knowledge being superior to the more numerous but lower interpretations.

Furthermore, the three spaces are also referred to as the Kingdom of the Light, which has three portions that are exceedingly numerous (2PS 245-246).<sup>21</sup> This is also the point where the *Books of Jeu* are mentioned, which contain the “inferior mysteries” as well as the great mysteries.<sup>22</sup> It has been established that the outermost space contains all of the aeons and lower realms, accounting for the presence of inferior mysteries among its portions; indeed, 2 *Jeu* presents the mysteries of the aeons. Jesus describes the great mysteries as

the heads of the mysteries which I will give you and will say to you in all their patterns and all their types and their ciphers and the seals of the last space, which is the first space from without. And I will say to you the answers and the defences and the secret signs of that space. On the other hand, the second space within possesses no answers, or defences, or secret signs, or ciphers, or seals, but it possesses only types and patterns. (2PS 247)

This certainly seems to point to the contents of 1 *Jeu*, with its detailed outlines of types, ciphers, seals, and names/defences, and with each treasury possessing a number of “heads.” Due to the corruption of the text, we only know that the outermost treasuries possessed ciphers, seals, and defences; for the innermost ones,

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<sup>20</sup> See also 2PS 242.

<sup>21</sup> 2 *Jeu* also states that the baptisms each make one to be numbered “within the inheritance of the Kingdom of the Light” (2 *Jeu* 108, 112, 114). This language is slightly altered in the 4PSa baptism account, where it causes the disciples to be numbered “within the Kingdom of my Father, the Father of the Treasury of the Light” (4PSa 371).

<sup>22</sup> H.-M. Schenke suggests the passage stating that the Books of Jeu also contain the portions of the Kingdom of Light should be deleted (“Vorwort,” xxxii, in C. Schmidt, *Koptisch-gnostische Schriften*, Vol. 1: *Die Pistis Sophia. Die beiden Bücher des Jeû. Unbekanntes altgnostisches Werk 4., um das Vorwort erweiterte Auflage herausgegeben von Hans-Martin Schenke* (1905; revised 4<sup>th</sup> edition Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1981), xvi-xxxiv); however, this passage is in keeping with the scheme of the text.

all that remains for certain are their patterns and characters. It is possible that the ascension information for the inner treasures was different.

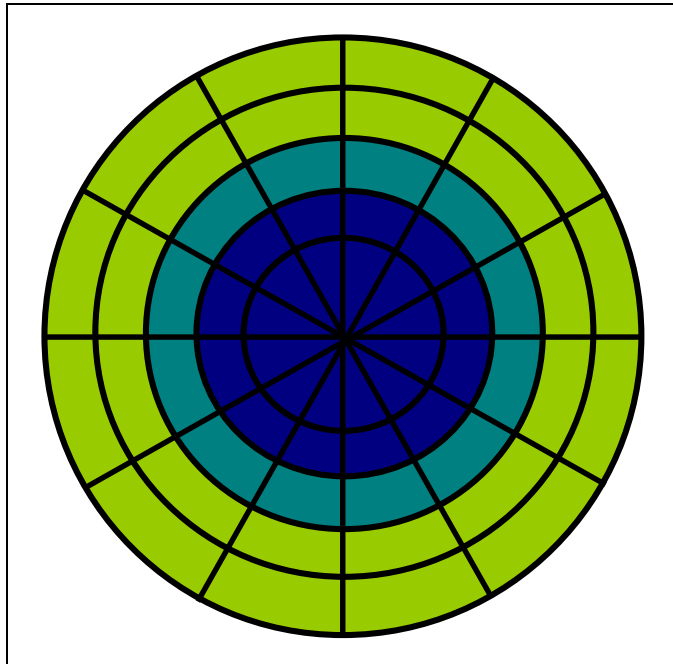
Moreover, the complex division of the mysteries/spaces is also reflected in *I Jeu*. The sixty treasures are divided into five “ranks” (ΤΑΞΙΣ): as quoted above, “There are two ranks of Fatherhood within, and one in the middle, and two outside” (*I Jeu* 83). Thus, these five ranks are also viewed as three sets of outside, inside, and middle. *2PS* 191 notes that the twelve saviors of the Treasury each have twelve ranks; *I Jeu* also states that each treasury has twelve ranks. It appears that the general structure of these regions and their inhabitants remains similar. Both *IPS* and *I Jeu* suppose that Jesus takes twelve powers from the Treasury, and that these powers come to be part of the disciples (*IPS* 11, 14; *I Jeu* 53, 89). Also, *IPS* suggests that the inheritances are located *within* the Treasury of Light (ΠΤΟΠΟΣ ΝΤΕΚΛΗΡΟΝΟΜΙΑ ΕΤΖΜ ΠΕΘΗCΑΥΡΟΣ ΜΠΟΥΘΕΙΝ, *IPS* 80; see also *IPS* 33, 90). *2PS* posits that only the emanations of the Treasury are inferior—the twelve saviors of the Treasury and all those who have received mysteries will be at their appropriate places within the place of the inheritances when the perfect number is completed and the All is raised up (*2PS* 191, 195-196). The place of the inheritances is only open to those who receive the “mystery of the light of the Treasury of the Light” (ΠΜΥCΤΗΡΙΟΝ ΜΠΟΥΘΙΝ ΜΠΕΘΗCΑΥΡΟΣ ΜΠΟΥΘΕΙΝ, *2PS* 191). Finally, and perhaps most tellingly, *I Jeu* also says of the sixtieth (or outermost) treasury, “they make a head to rule over them, which is called the *first ordinance and the first mystery*” (*I Jeu* 87, emphasis mine).<sup>23</sup> The outermost treasury is referred to with the same terms used to describe the outermost mystery of the spaces of the First Mystery/inheritances in *I/2PS*. It is thus proposed that the places of the inheritance and the greater mysteries of the Kingdom of the Light are, in fact, the sixty treasures of the light and their associated mysteries as outlined in *I Jeu*.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Note that in *3PS* Jeu himself, the head of all the treasures in *I Jeu*, is called the “Messenger of the First Ordinance (ΠΕΠΡΕCΒΥΤΗC ΜΠΩΘΡΠ ΝΤΩΩ)” (*3PS* 319, 330).

<sup>24</sup> It is worth noting that in *2 Jeu* both the first and second Treasuries are also said to be within the interior of the ranks of the first ordinance and the inheritance (*2 Jeu* 122-123). They may, then, represent broader subdivisions (equivalent to the “spaces”) of the many treasures found in *I Jeu*, further supporting the notion that the general structure of the highest divine world remains essentially similar throughout the texts.

The sixty treasures are divided into five ranks, with twelve treasures in each rank. By combining these as *I Jeu* suggests, two on the outside, one in the middle, and two on the inside, one arrives at the three spaces. The outermost space contains twenty-four places. The twelve divisions represented by wedges in Figure 3.3 possibly represent the twelve mysteries of the First Mystery

**Figure 3.3: Possible Representation of the Spaces of the First Mystery/Ineffable/Inheritances**



suggested at *2PS* 238, 242, 245; the five concentric circles are those of the five ranks or mysteries of the Ineffable, and the three groupings of those ranks are the three mysteries of the Ineffable. The one mystery of the Ineffable contains knowledge of the whole—“the twelve mysteries of the First Mystery together” (*2PS* 207), which contains knowledge of the whole universe and all it contains (*2PS* 208-217). Although the terminology of the Treasury itself has been confused and apparently downgraded, and despite the new language of the spaces, its true importance still shines through. The Saviors of the Treasury are fellow-rulers with Jesus, the First Mystery; they rule in the Treasury until the end of the eon; and entrance to the place of the inheritances is allowed only with the mystery of the light of the Treasury. Even the structure of the treasures found in *I Jeu* is preserved as the epitome of existence, disguised with the lofty language of the Ineffable.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>25</sup> It should also be noted that in the lengthy story of the fall and redemption of Pistis Sophia, there is a reference to the Treasury having a gate that opens directly onto the thirteenth aeon, in the place of the left (*2PS* 169); this seems to bypass the interim layers of the places of the right and the Midst (**MECOC**) which appear in all of the other cosmological layerings of this text (see *IPS* 18-19, *2PS* 188-189; 216-217). This is likely the result of the myth representing an allegorical interpretation of the fallen soul, and is not directly connected with the present cosmology of the group, as will be discussed further below. In any case, it is the only example of the Treasury having any direct connection with the lower realm of the aeons.

In sum, the Treasury (or Treasuries) of Light represent the highest realm one can attain in these texts. The names, mysteries, and rituals associated with it were of the utmost importance to the group using these texts; *1 Jeu* presents in full the mysteries that are only alluded to through a veil in *1/2PS*. Despite the later language of the spaces of the First Mystery and the Ineffable, the role which the Treasury fills remains the same, and even in the later texts the beings associated with the Treasury are Jesus' companions and those of the highest rank. That the region appears little in the latest texts is possibly a result of these texts being more focused on exegesis of myth, scripture, and incorporation of elements from various Christian groups which may have been playing an increased role in the group's cultural milieu. The fact that its mysteries are shrouded in vagueness may be because they are directed toward newer initiates, with promise of mysteries to come, but without revealing too much too soon. It was, after all, the mysteries that were still the most important element for the initiate or follower of this group, combined with a good moral/ethical life.

### 3.3 THE PLACE OF THE RIGHT

The place of the right has traditionally been placed immediately below the Treasury of Light, as seen in the two outlines given by previous scholars. However, its origin appears to have actually been as a term for the Treasury itself. Through the course of its development it becomes detached and devalued, its purpose obscured in the introduction of new levels and language regarding the higher realms.

Its first appearance in *2 Jeu* is in a list of places for which Jesus promises to give the disciples their mysteries. The order here is:

- 1) The twelve divine aeons,
- 2) The (place of the) invisible God,
- 3) The Midst (**MECOC**), and
- 4) The place of the right. (*2 Jeu* 101-102)

The mysteries of the twelve aeons are duly given later in the text. After this, the thirteenth aeon is described as housing the great invisible God. There is following this a "fourteenth aeon," which is otherwise unknown in other texts, but that appears to be a clumsy addition of the author that should actually be part of the thirteenth aeon. Beyond this is an unnamed space that, based on the nature of its inhabitants, it

is fairly clear that it is in fact the *Midst* (**MECOC**), as will be demonstrated more clearly in Section 3.4. The important detail to be taken from this latter space in relation to the place of the right, however, is that the three beings in that region are described as being “outside the Treasuries of the Light” (2 *Jeu* 135).<sup>26</sup> Although the text cuts off before progressing beyond this place, it certainly appears that these good beings who are held back only by their lack of the mystery of the forgiveness of sins are stationed immediately before the Treasury; they are waiting for when “[Jesus] will give the mystery of the forgiveness of sins to these three archons of the light which are the last of all the aeons, because they have believed in the mystery of the Kingdom of the Light” (2 *Jeu* 137). The mystery of the forgiveness of sins is the ultimate requirement for entry into the Treasury; although descriptions of the circumstances for its administration are varied (2 *Jeu* 104, 117-118, 124-125, 137), it inevitably gives access past the watchers to the Treasury and indeed to the presence of the true God, located in its heart. These beings in the *Midst* are “superior to all the gods which are in all the aeons” (2 *Jeu* 136)—they are beyond the lower aeons that form the “place of the left” in later texts—and wait here immediately outside the Treasury until they receive the ultimate mystery through Jesus’ grace.

Establishing that the place of the right is in fact the Treasury at this early stage helps to explain some of the statements in the later texts. In *4PSa*, Jesus describes the right as “our place” (*4PSa* 358)—a description that makes much more sense if the place of the right is associated directly with the Treasury that the rest of the document focuses on as the ultimate destination of purified light and souls. This description comes in a list of regions almost identical to that presented above from 2 *Jeu*. In each instance, he promises them the mystery of the region and the manner of calling upon the beings of each of them. Here, the Treasury of Light does follow the place of the right—however, it does *not* stipulate they are separate regions. Rather, after the *Midst*, Jesus uses a different phrase, saying that he will give the disciples the *baptism* of those of the right, “our place,” before returning to the language of giving them the mystery of the Treasury. This further suggests that the place of the right is so closely associated with the Treasury as to be a part of it. The baptism of those of

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<sup>26</sup> Usually in 2 *Jeu* the Treasury of Light is singular, and MacDermot also translates it so; however, the text reads plural in this instance. See n.18.

the right is simply a requirement before entry to the Treasury—“those of the right” being those who dwell there.

Jeu is also said to come from the right (*4PSa* 355, 361), and is described as being on equal level with Zorokothora Melchisedek, whose activities culminate in the Treasury. They act together when the time of their rank comes: they go down to remove the purified light of the archons, and when they cease this, together they “withdraw to the places of the Treasury of the Light” (*4PSa* 360). Zorokothora Melchisedek “bears the lights and takes them into the gate of those of the Midst (**MECOC**), and takes them to the Treasury of the Light”—effectively suggesting that there is no intervening place between the two, while Jeu withdraws to the places of those of the right (*4PSa* 360-361). Based on previous descriptions of the Treasury, it is certainly likely there are multiple regions of the Treasury, and the two figures here each simply return to their own posts within. Furthermore, the Great Sabaoth, the Good, looks forth from the height out of those of the right in the process of freeing souls from the realm of one of the evil archons (*4PSa* 361).<sup>27</sup> This would still situate him in a region of the Treasury, consistent with his placement in *2 Jeu* 119.

There are only two references to the place of the right in *3PS*, both times in close proximity to the rare mentions of the Treasury of Light. The first comes in the description of the path of a soul that has received the mystery to release the seals of the counterfeit spirit. After a lengthy account of performing the mystery and moving upwards, it eventually reaches the Great Sabaoth, the Good, who is “above the gate of life in the place of the right.” The soul gives him praise, and receives his seals. It then gives its knowledge of the whole place of those of the right, receiving their seals, before the receivers of Melchisedek—who is also specified as being in the place of those of the right—take it to the Treasury of Light (*3PS* 291). Here there is still no definite separation between the Treasury and the place of (those of) the right. The beings that have heretofore been associated with the place of the right, identified

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<sup>27</sup> In this I disagree with MacDermot’s translation of “**ΛΥΩ ΩΛΥΘΩΩΩΤ ΕΒΟΛ ΖΜ ΠΧΙΘΕ ΖΝ ΝΑΟΥΝΑΜ**” that he “looks forth from the height *upon* those of the right,” (emphasis mine). Mead’s version from the Latin transcription, that he “looketh from the height out of those of the Right,” seems more accurate. (G.R.S. Mead, *Pistis Sophia: The Gnostic Tradition of Mary Magdalene, Jesus, and his Disciples* [1921; reprint: Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 2005], 303.)

as the Treasury, have remained tied to it, and Melchisedek in particular continues to act within the realm of the Treasury as a being of the place of those of the right.

The second reference is in an explanation of the fate of the soul of an unrepentant sinner for whom a believer on earth prays. After being rescued from its punishments, it is either sent back to earth in a righteous body, or if it has completed its cycles on earth, it is baptized and placed in “the last rank of the light until the ascension of all the perfect souls. And when they prepare to draw the veils of the place of those of the right, they cleanse that soul once more and purify it, and place it in the ranks of the first savior who is in the Treasury of the Light” (3PS 325). It is perhaps similar to the notion in 4PSa, where the “baptism of those of the right” is the last hurdle to cross before entering the Treasury proper. It is likely that it is along the same lines as the earlier texts, with the Treasury as a whole comprising the place of “those of the right.”

The lack of attention given to the place of (those of) the right parallels the same phenomenon in this book with the Treasury, showing the author’s lack of interest in these higher realms in comparison to those of punishment and other anthropomical concerns. Although it is not entirely clear whether at this point the place of the right was considered as a separate entity from the Treasury, or still as a region of or another name for it, indications in the text suggest that the latter is more likely.

Only in 1/2PS are there clear signs of separation between the place of the right and the Treasury. There are only a few references to the place of the right in IPS, two of which relate Sabaoth the Good to it (IPS 14, 28). The remaining instance is in a list of the contents of Jesus’ second garment of glory: it begins at the top with the spaces of the First Mystery, working its way down through the ranks of the Treasury of Light. After the three gates of the Treasury of Light, which have already been shown to be the outer limit of the regions of the Treasury, it goes on to say that it has “the whole glory of the name <of all those> who are on the right, and all those who are in the Midst” (IPS 18-19). Those of the right are now clearly on the outside of the gates of the Treasury.

Sabaoth the Good is still associated with the place of the right, but its position outside of the Treasury may carry new implications for his placement there. He

provides the “power” which dwells in Jesus’ earthly form in place of a soul from the archons. This “power,” we see later, is intertwined with the material body from the Barbelo, and the spirit from the First Mystery.<sup>28</sup> His position in a middle realm below the spaces of the First Mystery/Treasury of Light but above the aeons of the left produces a power that lies between the base material and the pure spirit of the higher realms. The tripartite division of material, soul and spirit is certainly a familiar one in certain non-mainstream esoteric Christianities, and will receive further discussion in Ch. 6. For now it is sufficient to note that the Savior’s receipt of a soul from a “divine” figure below that of the highest God, a soul that is higher or more powerful than that of the typical human being, here comes from a being in the place of the right.

The place of those of the right receives more attention in *2PS*, as more focus is given to unfolding the supracosmic realms. The separation of the place of the right from the Treasury is even more pronounced here, as Jesus states,

when I take you to the Land of the Light, which is the Treasury of the Light, and you see the glory in which they are, the place of those of the right will count before you like the light at the time of midday in the world of mankind, but without the sun. And when you look upon the place of those of the right, it will become the size of a speck of dust before you as a result of the great distance by which the Treasury of the Light is very distant from it. (*2PS* 189)

This comes in the midst of a list of the realms through which the disciples will travel. In all the realms of the left, each level when viewed from the following level appears as the “darkness of darknesses.” The Midst (**MECOC**), when viewed from the following realm of the place of those of the right, appears merely as “night in the world of mankind” (*2PS* 188). And the Treasury of Light, when viewed from the perspective of the inheritances, appears as bright as the light of the sun in the world. Thus we see that there is a distinct separation between the Treasury and the place of those of the right, but that each possesses at least some luminosity, in contrast to the places of the left.

All of those who come forth from the five trees are said to be set in the place of those of the right—including Jeu and Melchisedek, who were also previously associated with the Treasury, as was Sabaoth the Good. Their role is still to organize the gathering of light from the archons of the aeons and from the world—but their

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<sup>28</sup> See the several interpretations of Ps. 85, *IPS* 121-125; *2PS* 127-129.

base of operations seems to have been reduced from within the Treasury, where they were to return the light upon gathering, to a location outside of it. However, these leaders are also promised future positions as “fellow-kings with the first <savior> of the first voice of the Treasury of the Light” (2PS 194-195), one of the destinations for those who receive certain of the mysteries of the First Mystery. This still demotes them to the level of the saved human souls, and they must remain at their duties outside the Treasury until the dissolution of the All. In fact, the saved human souls will surpass them: “In a word, the souls of mankind who will receive the mysteries of the light will precede all the archons who have repented. And they will precede all those of the place of the Midst, and those of the whole place of those of the right” (2PS 198). As the Treasury at this stage is inferior to the inheritances, the place of those of the right is inferior to the Treasury. The place of those of the right is clearly an important, but lesser, realm. Later references confirm its position relative to the Treasury and the superiority of the human soul that has received the mysteries to its inhabitants.<sup>29</sup>

Schmidt regards both the place of the right and the Midst as almost level with the Treasury of Light.<sup>30</sup> This view makes sense from his position of considering 1-3PS as chronologically contemporary and connected, and the contents of these with 4PS and 2 *Jeu* as slotting together to form a reasonably consistent cosmology. However, the view is flawed in that it does not take into account the changes in the cosmology and the roles of the various beings between each of these texts. Thus, the place of the right would necessarily seem to be almost equal to the Treasury in the early books, wherein the place of the right *is* in fact the Treasury itself; in the later texts this equivalence evaporates as the regions are separated, and the place of the right “become[s] the size of a speck of dust before you as a result of the great distance by which the Treasury of the Light is very distant from it.”<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> 2PS 199, 217, 248, 249. Interestingly, the last of these also states that human beings—the disciples themselves—are made up of the *dregs* of the Treasury, the place of those of the right, the Midst, and the invisible ones and the archons. Despite their origins as the dregs of all these, humanity strives until it becomes pure light, superior to all of these things.

<sup>30</sup> C. Schmidt, *Gnostische Schriften in koptischer Sprache*, 371.

<sup>31</sup> 2PS 189; see above.

### 3.4 THE PLACE OF THE MIDST (MECOC)

The last realm of the so-called Higher or Middle Light-World, the **MECOC**, again undergoes a number of changes of both role and inhabitants. It begins as the midpoint of the universe between the realms of the left and right, before later being caught in the shuffle of increasingly stratified levels. The Greek μέσος is used for this realm as opposed to the lower realm inhabited by evil archons, the Coptic **MHTC**, both of which are unhelpfully translated as the “Midst” or “Middle.”<sup>32</sup> As these are two very distinct realms, the appropriate term from the text will be used to distinguish the two.

As with the place of the right, the **MECOC** receives only one reference in the *Books of Jeu*, in the same list as the former (*2 Jeu* 101-102). Its position in the list is between the thirteenth aeon (or as described in the text, the place of the invisible god and his receivers) and the Treasury of Light (or the place of the right). Based on the outline of the aeons that follows in the text, this would appear to be connected with the “fourteenth aeon” immediately following the thirteenth aeon. However, there are actually *two* areas described after the thirteenth aeon and before the Treasury: the fourteenth aeon, inhabited by the “second great invisible God” (*2 Jeu* 135); and a space beyond it that holds the three “archons of the light” (*2 Jeu* 135) or “triple-powered gods which are outside the Treasury of the Light” (*2 Jeu* 136). There are two seals given: the first one causes the powers of the second invisible God to withdraw and allows passage to the next place with the triple-powered ones, where the next seal is used.

This possibly reflects an alternative division of the realms found in the fragment at *1 Jeu* 82: there the 24 invisible emanations are listed as a part of the thirteenth aeon, but also receive their own stanza apart from the praises about the thirteenth aeon itself. *2 Jeu* may thus reflect a confused interpretation of the need to address the 24 invisible emanations of the thirteenth aeon *and* the higher entities of the aeon itself.<sup>33</sup> This would explain the fourteenth aeon’s nondescript “second

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<sup>32</sup> The evil **MHTC** region is generally referred to as the “way of the Midst,” but this still does not give the reader a clear idea of the distinction between the two levels.

<sup>33</sup> On the entities of the thirteenth aeon, see below.

invisible God,” which appears nowhere else in the texts. The address in the thirteenth aeon only covers the 24 emanations; the invisible god still needs to be dealt with, but the author assumed that there is only one seal per aeon, and thus added a “fourteenth aeon” to cover the remaining part of the known ascent ritual or prayer. The fact that in the list of realms given at *2 Jeu* 101-102 the order appears to go from the thirteenth aeon to the **MECOC** suggests that the fourteenth aeon is a clumsy addition, and not a part of the main system. The unnamed place housing the three light-archons or triple-powered gods is the “**MECOC**,” the natural step beyond the thirteen aeons.

Jesus says that he “will give the mystery of the forgiveness of sins to these three archons of the light which are the last of all the aeons, because they have believed in the mystery of the Kingdom of the Light” (*2 Jeu* 137). These are the only archontic beings to whom this promise is made in this text—the other repentant archons from the sixth aeon are simply referred to as those of the “little **MECOC**” (*2 Jeu* 129-130), and although they have a little goodness in them, there is no immediate indication that they will be given the higher mysteries in the end. From these two versions of the **MECOC**, it is apparent that the term is being used to refer to a location for repentant beings who have not been fully inducted or purified with the highest mysteries—in particular the mystery of the forgiveness of sins, that highest of mysteries which is required for access into the Treasury. The **MECOC** itself is located between the thirteen/fourteen aeons (or the place of the left, as they are later called) and the Treasury of Light (or the place of the right, as it is called at this point)—a true intermediate point between these two realms, the middle ground between the unrepentant and the blessed mystery recipients.

In *4PSa*, the three triple-powered gods are no longer the inhabitants of the **MECOC**, but have been moved to the thirteenth aeon, where they remain throughout the rest of the texts. The archons of the six aeons of Jabraoth have taken their place as the repentant archons that believed in the mysteries of the light. They are rewarded by being moved from their place in the aeons to “a purified air in the presence of the light of the sun, between the places of those of the **MECOC** and

between the places of the Invisible God” (*4PSa* 355-356).<sup>34</sup> The **MECOC** here is again the next major realm after the thirteenth aeon, and is related to beings that have believed in the mysteries. Jabraoth’s placement *between* the **MECOC** and the thirteenth aeon suggests that the **MECOC** itself was moving away from a purgatorial or waiting-realm before entry to the higher realms into its more accepted role from the later texts as a place of judgment—the place of the Virgin of the Light, the judge of souls. The Virgin of the Light is not explicitly stated to be located in the **MECOC** in this text, but in *4PSb* it states that a soul that has committed no sins but has not received the mysteries is taken “to the Virgin of the Light, and she judges it and places it in the presence of the Little Sabaoth, the Good, he of the **MECOC**” (*4PSb* 382). This suggests that the Little Sabaoth is in the same realm or on the same cosmological level as her. Furthermore, she is associated with the sun in its “true form” in later passages, after planetary and physical heavenly bodies cease to play a positive role.<sup>35</sup> The “light of the sun” in the **MECOC** thus further suggests her presence, and fits with the overall role and nature of the realm as described.<sup>36</sup>

The main aspect or figure associated with the **MECOC** in both parts of *4PS*, however, is the Little Sabaoth, the Good, whose location there has already been noted. Six out of the eleven references to the **MECOC** are tied to the Little Sabaoth in some way, usually in specifying where he is from, i.e. “he of the Midst.” The role of the Little Sabaoth, the Good will be discussed in Ch. 4; for now it is sufficient to say that as a figure of the **MECOC**, his power is considered superior to those of all the beings of the 13<sup>th</sup> aeon. Although four of the five planets operate with powers from

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<sup>34</sup> It should be noted that the archons of Jabraoth are also said to be placed “in a place of pure air” in one of the fragments of the Bruce Codex (*I Jeu* 82). This fragment shows close ties with certain aspects of the *Pistis Sophia*, as will be discussed below.

<sup>35</sup> See *2PS* 186: “For the light of the sun in its true form is not in this place because its light passes through a multitude of veils and places. But the light of the sun in its true form, which is in the place of the Virgin of the Light, is lighted ten thousand times more than the 24 invisible ones and the great invisible one and also the great triple-powered God...”

<sup>36</sup> The association of the **MECOC** with the ecliptic, or path of the sun, will be discussed in Ch. 6. The **MHTE** is another term for the same concept, and also originally carried this role; see below.

the 13<sup>th</sup> aeon, Zeus/Jupiter with the Little Sabaoth's power rules them all with goodness.<sup>37</sup>

There are two other main references. The first is to the “mystery of the baptism of those of the **MECOC**” (4PSa 358) in a list of the mysteries that the disciples will receive, following those of the twelve aeons of the archons and the thirteenth aeon and before that of the Treasury. It is the first mention of a baptism—the aeons have only nondescript mysteries. This suggests that receipt of this baptism/mystery is the first step out of the evil of the aeons, to be followed by the baptism of those of the right, which gives entry into the Treasury. The other occurrence is as an intermediate realm through which Zorokothora Melchisedek bears the purified light of the archons on his way from the aeons to the Treasury (4PSa 360).

Thus we see that in 4PSa and b, the **MECOC** functions as a buffer between the evil aeons/place of the left and the good Treasury/place of the right. Being just above the waiting place for those archons that have believed in the mysteries of the light, it likely houses the judge of souls, the Virgin of the Light, as well as the Little Sabaoth the Good who plays a role in the freeing of souls from punishments and aids them to be reborn in good bodies. In some ways it seems to have been upgraded from its previous role in 2 *Jeu*, where its main function was as a waiting place before entry to the Treasury.

In 3PS, there is only one reference to the **MECOC**. The context is a discussion of the fate of souls rescued from the dragon of the outer darkness by virtue of a believer performing the mystery of the Ineffable on his or her behalf. The receivers of Melchisedek “will snatch [that soul] up from all the places in which it is. And they will take it to the place of the **MECOC** to the presence of the Virgin of the Light” (3PS 325). Here is confirmation that the Virgin of the Light is certainly located in the **MECOC** at this point, determining the fate of souls.

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<sup>37</sup> 4PSa 356-357: “And furthermore [Jeu] noticed that they needed a rudder in order to guide the world with the aeons of the sphere so that it (the world) might not be destroyed by their wickedness. He went into the **MECOC**, he drew a power out of the Little Sabaoth, the Good, he of the **MECOC**, he bound it to Zeus because he is good, so that he should guide them with his goodness.”

In *IPS*, the **MECOC** is most important as the source of the heavenly powers that dwell in the bodies of the disciples and John the Baptist in place of archontic souls (*IPS* 12, 14). These powers originate from the Little Jao, the Good<sup>38</sup> (for John the Baptist) and the twelve saviors of the Treasury of Light, which Jesus takes from the twelve “servers (**ΔΙΑΚΟΝΟC**) which are in the **MECOC**.” Furthermore, in *2PS* these twelve servers are further qualified as the servers of the Great Jao (*2PS* 196), thus making all of the powers of the key human figures to be filtered through a Jao-figure in the **MECOC** in one way or another.

By having the powers from the twelve saviors come through the **MECOC** despite the saviors’ association with the Treasury, Jesus’ own superiority in every aspect even in the flesh is maintained, as his own “power” derives from the Great Sabaoth in the higher place of those of the right. It seems as if a tradition of twelve saviors of the Treasury was being made to fit with a tradition of the superior nature of the twelve disciples (despite the fact that here the women disciples are often shown to be equal or superior to the twelve) in comparison to the rest of humanity, without impinging on Jesus’ ultimate superiority to them all. These concepts are absent from the earlier texts, wherein the disciples are as equally bound to the evil of the archons as anyone else, and thus require the same mysteries and purifications as the rest of humanity.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> An otherwise unknown figure. The Great Jao (the Good) appears twice elsewhere in this volume, both times connected with the **MECOC**, and once in *2 Jeu* as a resident of the regions of the Treasury—possessing a positive role in each instance. H. Odeberg (*3 Enoch or the Hebrew Book of Enoch* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1928], Appendix II, 188-192) and P. Alexander (“3 [Hebrew Apocalypse of] Enoch: A New Translation and Introduction,” 238, in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, Vol. 1: *Apocalyptic Literature and Testaments*, J.H. Charlesworth, ed. [London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1983], 223-315) believe these titles may correspond to the “greater YHWH” and “lesser YHWH” found in certain Merkabah texts. If this is their origin, it is certainly indirect, as their positions here are far removed from these Merkabah counterparts. F. Legge believes that the title “the Little Jao the Good” is a clerical error, and conflates this figure with the Great Jao (the Good). (See F. Legge, *Forerunners and Rivals of Christianity Being Studies in Religious History from 330 B.C. to 330 A.D.*, Vol. 2 [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1915], 149 and n.3). Whether or not the Great and Little Jao are intended to be the same figure is not important for the present discussion, as both are said to originate from the **MECOC** and play positive roles.

<sup>39</sup> See *3PS* 337-339, where Jesus and Mary (Magdalene) explain the true meaning of Jesus’ words, “He who does not leave father and mother and come and follow me is not worthy of me.” This refers not to the earthly father and mother, but to the archontic “parents” that provided the sinful soul or counterfeit spirit—to the disciples as well as the rest of humanity. However, note *1 Jeu* 53 and 89, where powers of the Treasury also become part of the disciples.

The rest of the references to the **MECOC** in *1/2PS* are in lists of cosmological levels, simply reinforcing its position between the thirteenth aeon and the place of those of the right.<sup>40</sup> The superiority of the human being who receives the mysteries is also emphasized in a number of these passages. In these two texts, then, the main importance of the **MECOC** seems to be its role as a provider and filter for the good “powers” that replaced the counterfeit spirit of the archons in the disciples and John the Baptist. The Virgin of Light still appears in it with the Great Jao, but the focus on the region as a place of judgment is gone. Rather, its position within the hierarchy of cosmological regions is emphasized, with little detail given as to what happens within it.

In conclusion, the **MECOC** begins quite logically as the interim space between the places of evil (the aeons) and the places of good (the place of those of the right, i.e. the Treasury of Light). It was a holding place for beings or souls that had believed and received the mysteries, but had not yet received the mystery of the forgiveness of sins. In *4PSa-3PS*, it serves primarily as a place of judgment for souls—a logical progression from a waiting place for the end of time to a judgment place where the soul is immediately dealt with. It remains the sole, neutral stepping stone between the evil archons and realms of good. By *1/2PS* the **MECOC** is largely a relic of systems past, as it has lost its key purgatorial and judgmental functions. It still acts as a filter between good and evil regions, but with the division of the place of those of the right from the Treasury, and the addition of higher realms *over* the Treasury, the term of the “Midst” no longer carries quite the same sense of being the neutral zone between the heights of good and evil. Yes, it still remains between the two extremes, but the cosmology as a whole becomes padded and its former purposes obfuscated. Its importance becomes tied to interpretations of the nature of certain Biblical figures such as the disciples and John the Baptist, as Christian scriptural motifs are increasingly added in conjunction with explanations in fitting with the group’s cosmology and mythology.

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<sup>40</sup> *1PS* 19; *2PS* 188, 197, 198, 216, 231, 248, 249, 252.

### 3.5 THE THIRTEENTH AEON

The thirteenth aeon begins the descent into materiality. Although it borders the twelve aeons in each case, the thirteenth aeon is generally treated separately in the texts. It immediately follows the **MECOC**, and as such is the highest realm of the place of the left. As with the other regions, however, its nature and the roles of its inhabitants vary over the course of the texts; although generally described as jealous or wicked, there are exceptions. We again begin with its brief discussion in *2 Jeu*.

It appears first in the same list in which appear the places of the **MECOC** and the right (*2 Jeu* 101-102). Although it is not explicitly called the “thirteenth aeon” here, it is identifiable by its position between the twelve aeons and the **MECOC**, as well as its inhabitant—the invisible god, which is always associated with the thirteenth aeon. In the description of it in the list of aeons and their defenses, greater detail is presented about its residents: in addition to the great invisible god, the great virgin spirit and the 24 emanations of the invisible god also dwell within. These 24 emanations play a greater role in later texts, when Pistis Sophia becomes included in their number, but here they are simply named with mystery names. They “will come before [the disciples], wishing to take hold of you, as they envy you because of these mysteries which you have received” (*2 Jeu* 134). These beings, like the believing triple-powered gods in the **MECOC** and the believing archons in the sixth aeon, are jealous of the disciples and the mysteries they have received; however, unlike these other envious beings, they are neither promised eventual salvation nor rejoice for the disciples when the proper mysteries are presented.

The thirteenth aeon is also present in one of the fragments of the Bruce Codex, which Schmidt appended to *1 Jeu*.<sup>41</sup> Here the 24 invisible emanations are listed separately from the invisible god, but both are said to be set up in the thirteenth aeon. In addition, the “three gods” (presumably the three triple-powered gods, which later always appear in association with the thirteenth aeon) also appear within its bounds. These factors reflect the system found in *1/2PS*, as does the language of the fragment as a whole. Here all of the aeons, including the thirteenth, contain

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<sup>41</sup> *1 Jeu* 82.

“members” of Jesus which have been scattered and which must be gathered and restored to the light-realms. This is interesting as it shows a negative interpretation of all of the aeons, the thirteenth included, as a realm from which trapped light entities must be saved, a notion which is found in the later *Pistis Sophia* texts but not elsewhere in the Bruce Codex. However, the lumping together of all thirteen aeons (and indeed, the intermediary realm where the believing archons are placed), while found in *2 Jeu*, is nowhere in the *Pistis Sophia*. The fragment thus displays a unique blend of traditions, and perhaps represents a stepping stone along the group’s speculative cosmological path.

At any rate, within the Bruce Codex the thirteenth aeon is introduced as a negative stop along the believer’s path of ascension. In *2 Jeu* it is the home of jealous beings who desire to hold back the enlightened disciples, and in the later fragment these beings hold the scattered members of the Savior or Jesus, which must be saved, gathered, and brought back up into the light.

In *4PSa* the thirteenth aeon is rarely referenced directly, but its inhabitants appear with some frequency. The invisible god, the Barbelo, and the triple-powered gods all play some role over the course of the text. Most notable is the association of powers from this realm with the planets—while Zeus rules them with the power of the Little Sabaoth of the Midst, the remainder have powers from the “great invisible one” (Cronos/Saturn); the triple-powered god, ἸΨΑΝΤΑΧΟΥΝΧΑΪΝΧΟΥΧΕΩΧ (Ares/Mars); another of the triple-powered gods, ΧΑΙΝΧΩΩΩΧ (or βαινχωωωχ, a name known from Greek magic; Hermes/Mercury); and the Pistis Sophia, daughter of the Barbelo (Aphrodite/Venus) (*4PSa* 356).

It is interesting to note that the planet that works in conjunction with Zeus to bring about positive results for human souls, Aphrodite, is associated with the Pistis Sophia, the later heroine in the myth dominating *1/2PS*. None of the other 23 invisible ones/emanations of the great invisible god/forefather are mentioned, and indeed the Pistis Sophia is not associated with this larger number here. There is one triple-powered god tied to Hermes, the only neutral planet, and the god associated with wisdom. The remaining two beings here named are connected with the planets bound to evil happenings. From this, the only being with actively positive

associations in the thirteenth aeon appears to be the Pistis Sophia, an idea supported by her tale in the later texts. One of the triple-powered gods has a neutral status, and another has a negative status,<sup>42</sup> along with the invisible god. Furthermore, Jesus in his incarnation receives wine and blood from the place of the Barbelo (*4PSa* 368), which are necessary elements to purify the sins of humanity and signify the body of mankind through him. However, when the “name which is within all names” and which is superior to all mysteries is said to “the paralemptai of the wicked judgments and their powers, and all their powers and the Barbelo also, and the invisible god and the three triple-powered gods...they will all fall upon one another and be dissolved and destroyed” (*4PSa* 373). The whole range of beings in the thirteenth aeon, neutral, evil, or involved in Jesus’ incarnation, are destroyed through the highest mysteries.

The only direct reference to the realm of the thirteenth aeon itself comes in a list of realms for which the disciples will receive mysteries (*4PSa* 358). It is located before the **MECOC**, where the first of the baptisms takes place; thus it is outside the places where even the lowest of true initiates would remain. While it serves a purpose, it is a place destined for ultimate destruction.

*4PSb* belongs to a separate strand of tradition that did not include the thirteenth aeon, despite the inclusion of one of the triple-powered ones. Βαινχωωωχ, the triple-powered god associated with the neutral Hermes in *4PSa*, is here referred to in a positive sense: his receivers “with joy and gladness” take the soul of the sinless man who has not received the mysteries, teach it of the creation of the world, show it the places of correction without revenge being taken on it, and finally bring it before the Virgin of the Light, the judge, such that it is recast into a righteous body (*4PSb* 381-382). This same tradition of a single positive triple-powered god is also found in *3PS*, where he fulfills the same type of role (*3PS* 262-263). The connection of these two texts is much closer than that between *4PSa* and *b*, as is seen further by their shared outline of the underworld, which is not matched in any of the other texts.<sup>43</sup> *3PS* clearly does not include the thirteenth aeon in its cosmological layout,

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<sup>42</sup> It can be extrapolated that the remaining triple-powered god is Authades, whose unique rebellion in the thirteenth aeon will be discussed shortly.

<sup>43</sup> See Sections 3.7-3.10; Table 3.4 below.

as will be discussed shortly. As such, despite the fragmentary nature of *4PSb*, it is reasonable to conclude that its cosmology does *not* include the thirteenth aeon.

In *3PS*, there are references to neither the thirteenth aeon itself nor its inhabitants. The lone possible exception to this is the discussion of one of the “great triple powers” who rescues righteous souls and brings them into the presence of the Virgin of the Light (*3PS* 262), as mentioned above. The dwelling place of this being is not mentioned, but as has been shown, actively positive beings are not associated with the thirteenth aeon (with the single exception of the Pistis Sophia) and are not permitted to move above and beyond their realm. This tradition seems closer to that of *2 Jeu*, wherein the triple-powered gods are inhabitants of the **MECOC**, here modified for the new role of the realm as a place of judgment and potential salvation. That the invisible god, the Barbelo, and all of the invisible emanations elsewhere associated with the thirteenth aeon are missing raises further suspicion. One might argue that the nature of the text focuses on other aspects and does not require mention of this region; however, the Heimarmene and its archons are discussed with frequency, and the “place of the kingdom of Adamas” (the twelve aeons or Heimarmene) is said to be “in the presence of the Virgin of the Light” (the **MECOC**), with no intervening area (*3PS* 333). It would seem that in this tradition, the thirteenth aeon is absent. Because in the theology of this text and *4PSb* there is no concept of Jesus’ body being derived in part from it (as is the case in *4PSa* and *IPS*), Adamas is the head of evil, rather than the triple-power Authades (as in *1/2PS*), and the role of punishment realms below the Heimarmene/aeons takes the fore, the thirteenth aeon has no purpose for this author.

This absence is dramatically contrasted with *1/2PS*, where the thirteenth aeon takes center stage in the mythic drama that occupies the bulk of these texts. This importance stems largely from its role as the dwelling-place of both the good but misguided Pistis Sophia and the evil and jealous Authades. Within the context of the myth it is considered a place in the height (*IPS* 42, 110, *2PS* 166), and as the “place of righteousness” (*IPS* 51, 94, 106);<sup>44</sup> however, at the same time it is the home to

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<sup>44</sup> Note that the term here translated as righteousness, ΔΙΚΑΙΟΚΥΝΗ, can also mean “justice.” A.D. DeConick presents it as “correction” (“Apostles as Archons: The Fight for Apostolic Authority and

evil and arrogant beings who wrongfully hoard their light-powers and happily charge into Chaos to torment Pistis Sophia on account of her imprudent spiritual striving. It is the place Pistis Sophia wished to leave for the superior realms, and human beings who receive the mysteries will surpass it.

Outside of the context of the Pistis Sophia myth, which appears to operate under a different cosmology from the surrounding text, the thirteenth aeon does appear—but in a fairly limited manner. More often than not, it is not mentioned by name, but is intimated by its inhabitants (i.e. the invisible ones, invisible forefather, and/or triple powered ones) in lists, usually tied closely with the other aeons in the hierarchical position before the **MECOC** (*IPS* 2, 24; *2PS* 186, 230, 248, 249, 252). It would appear that generally speaking, the entities that make up its population are more important in the author's mind than the region itself.

In the instances in which it is named, it is counted amongst the glories and mysteries of Jesus' second garment, along with the those of the twelve aeons, the **MECOC**, those of the right, the various ranks of the Treasury of the Light, and all the ranks and emanations of the first two spaces of the First Mystery (*IPS* 18-19). The glory of this garment, in fact, appears to encompass all that is below the highest spaces of the Ineffable and above the Chaos.<sup>45</sup> The glory of the First Mystery thus incorporates the decidedly negative beings found in these lower aeons, in addition to the more neutral beings found elsewhere. This inclusion of both good and evil in the greater intention of the Ineffable One is made more explicit later, in a lengthy section

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the Emergence of Gnosticism in the Tchacos Codex and Other Early Christian Literature,” 285, in *The Codex Judas Papers: Proceedings of the International Conference on the Tchacos Codex at Rice University, Houston, Texas, March 13-16, 2008*, A.D. DeConick, ed. [Leiden: Brill, 2009], 241-288; *The Thirteenth Apostle: What the Gospel of Judas Really Says* [2007; revised edition London: Continuum, 2009], 166); but this does not seem fully in fitting with the role of the realm. It is not a place of punishment, even in the sense in which Sabaoth the Adamas is imprisoned in the Heimarmene as punishment in *4PSa*. Rather, it has more of a sense of a place where the beings—the invisible forefather, two of the three triple-powered gods, and 24 invisible ones, except for Pistis Sophia—follow their assigned roles unquestioningly, according to the will of the First Mystery. Those beings that do not act within these strict bounds are punished, but outside of the thirteenth aeon itself—first Pistis Sophia for striving beyond herself, although her actions were in accordance with the ordinance of the First Mystery; then Authades and his minions, who are forbidden to return to the thirteenth aeon after they go to Chaos out of jealousy and lust for power.

<sup>45</sup> It is likely that none of the underworld realms besides the Chaos are a part of the overarching cosmology of *1/2PS* at all. The Chaos itself remains primarily within the Pistis Sophia myth as equivalent to the material world; see below.

of contrasts the mystery of the Ineffable will explain (2PS 208-217).<sup>46</sup> In line with this inclusion of good and evil, material and immaterial in the greater universal plan, not all of what derives from this material realm is negative. The material body supplied by the Barbelo (who dwells in the thirteenth aeon) for Jesus is apparently regarded as positive, for the necessary role that he plays in the salvation of humanity (IPS 13, 122, 128, 129).<sup>47</sup>

It should furthermore be noted that in ascending and recovering his garments, although Jesus confuses and drains the powers of the sphere, the Heimarmene, and the aeons—reducing the efficacy of the astrologers and magicians—a loophole is provided to these purveyors of knowledge learned from the transgressing angels:

They will borrow from those who know the mysteries of the magic of the thirteenth aeon. And when they call upon the mysteries of the magic of those who are in the thirteenth aeon, they will fulfill them well and certainly because I (Jesus) have not taken power from that place, according to the command of the First Mystery. (IPS 29)

Magic and astrology are generally accepted by the author as evil, as evidenced by the ideas that they derive from “transgressing angels” (IPS 25, 27, 29), and that the realms from which they originate are described as rebellious, as well as the fact that Jesus actively goes to destroy their power in the world of men. However, the existence of effective magic is not only not denied, but is rather actively affirmed by Jesus, if only when derived from the thirteenth aeon. Clearly the thirteenth aeon is in a league of its own, maintaining power and effectiveness in the human world with its evil intentions even when the rest of fate has become confused and reduced in power. As van der Vliet observes, the thirteenth aeon “borders on the world of light but it is at the same time the scene of ongoing war over the fallen light or, in different terms, over the human soul.”<sup>48</sup> The deceptive aeonic powers struggle to maintain control over human beings in the face of the saving mysteries Jesus presents.

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<sup>46</sup> The list is extensive and wide-ranging; for just a few examples, it purports to explain the reasons for sin, purity, strength, weakness, poverty, wealth, mercilessness, mercy, the existence of cattle, reptiles, birds, stone, plants, dryness, water, etc.

<sup>47</sup> Also, Mary, the mother of Jesus, is said to have received “form which is in the Barbelo according to the matter (ΤΑΪ ΕΝΤΑΞΧΙ-ΜΟΡΦΗ ΕΤΖΝ ΤΒΑΡΒΗΛΩ ΚΑΤΑ ΘΥΛΗ)” (IPS 116) in an apparently positive sense.

<sup>48</sup> J. van der Vliet, “Fate, Magic and Astrology in *Pistis Sophia*, Chaps 15-21,” 527, in *The Wisdom of Ancient Egypt: Jewish, Early Christian and Gnostic Essays in Honor of Gerard P. Luttikhuisen*, A. Hilhorst and G.H. van Kooten, eds. (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 519-536. It should be noted that although one of the gates of the Treasury of Light is said to open to the thirteenth aeon (2PS 169), suggesting an immediately shared border between them, this is the only place in all of the texts where such

Returning to the role of the thirteenth aeon in relation to the Pistis Sophia fall and redemption myth, as already stated, it is the original dwelling-place of this most important of the 24 invisible ones emanated by the “great invisible forefather with the two great triple-powered ones” (*IPS* 43). The designation of *two* great triple-powered ones here serves to highlight the evil nature of the third, disobedient one, Authades. However, it must also be noted that none of these beings is granted greater spiritual enlightenment, except for Pistis Sophia herself. Authades’ sin—besides wishing to lord over the whole of the thirteenth aeon—is that he does not give over his purified light or power to those beings who collect it and bring it to the higher realms. The beings of the thirteenth aeon are to be perpetually kept in this lower realm, forced to give up their light as soon as it is purified within them, and by wrongfully keeping his light Authades strives to rule the aeon. He persecutes Pistis Sophia even when she is still in her rightful place in the thirteenth aeon in order to trick her into looking below (*IPS* 45); the archons in that aeon hate her; and even her own partner amongst the 24 invisible ones takes no action to save her when she falls, out of fear of her persecutors (*IPS* 87). These beings are unable to recognize Jesus when he eventually arrives with their fallen sister, and they shake with agitation at his presence, as do the archons of the twelve aeons as he passes through them. Pistis Sophia herself sings his praises to her siblings, so that they might know the wonders that he did for her (*2PS* 178-181). Despite being a place of “righteousness” and Pistis Sophia’s rightful home, even within the context of the myth it is a place of fear and ignorance, and is not a desirable place to be.

The thirteenth aeon is by all accounts a neutral place at best, a source of matter, magic, and a variety of beings ranging from good-natured to actively evil. From the beginning it is a home of jealousy, a provider of power to evil stars, and a haven of ignorance. Despite the fact that in the myth where it plays its greatest role it is thrice called the “place of righteousness,” even there it is far from being a place

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proximity is intimated. Otherwise, there is always the assumption of the buffer zone of the **MECOC**, if not the place of those of the right as well. This passage occurs within the Pistis Sophia fall and redemption myth, where the Heimarmene and the sphere, which feature heavily elsewhere in *1/2PS*, are also conspicuously missing. As noted elsewhere, this is likely due to the myth’s allegorical nature, and does not bear on the more general cosmology of the group at this stage. H. Leisegang (*Die Gnosis* [Leipzig: Alfred Kröner Verlag, 1924], 354, 362), concerned primarily with the Pistis Sophia myth, goes so far as to suggest that the thirteenth aeon *is* the Midst, outside of the place of the left, to afford Pistis Sophia a place outside of the material realm, but this is in no way supported by the text.

of the light. Although arguments have been made for an overall positive view of this realm and its inhabitants,<sup>49</sup> evidence for such is extremely limited, as has here been demonstrated. It is more in fitting with the negative thirteenth realm found in certain other non-mainstream esoteric Christian texts, such as the *Gospel of Judas* (55,10-11),<sup>50</sup> the *Gospel of the Egyptians* (III 63,17-18; 64,3-4; IV 75,5-6; 18-19), the *Apocalypse of Adam* (82,10-19), or *Zostrianos* (4,25-28). While the emanations of this realm are purified by necessity, according to the will of the Ineffable, humanity will surpass them all and inherit the Kingdom of the Light (2PS 249-250).

### 3.6 THE TWELVE AEONS/HEIMARMENE/SPHERE

Although these three are separate in the outlines given by the previous scholars above, they are closely connected throughout all of the texts, to the point where a discussion of one requires reference to the others. By means of association with the Heimarmene (“fate”), from the beginning the twelve aeons appear to be connected with the zodiac, the band of stars thought to be so heavily involved in determining man’s fate. Interestingly, in their initial appearance in *2 Jeu*, they are once referred to as the “divine” aeons, or those “of the gods” (ΤΙΒ ΝΝΑΙΩΝ ΝΝΟΥ(ΤΕ); *2 Jeu* 101). This may reflect an early position of this astrally-focused religion that would have viewed them as positive, divine regions, which here begins their descent to what becomes the seat of evil in the world. While overall they are depicted as regions to be avoided or passed through, even within *2 Jeu* the nature of the twelve aeons is ambiguous: some of them are depicted as home to evil entities that flee in the face of truth, while others rejoice for the disciples and their display of divine knowledge. In any case, there are still strong ties to the astral ascension theme found in *1 Jeu*, with the presentation of names, seals and ciphers to progress through the guarded realms—here sometimes tied with more hostile entities, but the parallels are clear nonetheless.

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<sup>49</sup> For example M. Meyer, “The Thirteenth Daimon: Judas & Sophia in the *Gospel of Judas*,” Chapman University, [http://www.chapman.edu/images/userImages/mattmill/Page\\_11769/13th\\_daimon\\_FINAL-11408.pdf](http://www.chapman.edu/images/userImages/mattmill/Page_11769/13th_daimon_FINAL-11408.pdf). Accessed 31 August, 2011. For a refutation of his interpretation, see A.D. DeConick, *The Thirteenth Apostle*, 165-168.

<sup>50</sup> See also A.D. DeConick, *The Thirteenth Apostle*, 163-164.

The system in *2 Jeu* has the twelve aeons divided. The first five are described in language that suggests a wicked nature: upon being presented with the appropriate name, seal and cipher, the archons within flee to the west and the left, directions associated with evil (*2 Jeu* 127-129). Also, in the third and fourth aeons, the names of Jaldabaoth and Samaelo, two names associated with evil particularly in the Sethian system, have been included among the names of the archons.<sup>51</sup> These first five aeons, then, apparently represent a lower stratum with a negative nature. The sixth aeon, on the other hand, is called “the little **MECOC**,” and its archons have a little goodness in them because they believed (*2 Jeu* 129). When they are presented with the appropriate information, they rejoice for the disciples and let them pass. The archons in the remaining aeons are described with neutral language; they do not flee to the west, but simply withdraw and allow the disciples to proceed.

The rulership of the twelve aeons in this text is not clear. Schmidt, believing that the aeons, their nature and inhabitants remain largely the same throughout these and the *Pistis Sophia* texts, argues that Sabaoth, the Adamas, must rule the aeons.<sup>52</sup> He takes the reference to the myriad of gods in the twelfth aeon “who in the Treasury of the Light are called archons; they are the great archons who rule over all the aeons” (*2 Jeu* 133) as a reference to Sabaoth and his evil minions. Furthermore, he acknowledges that the author of this text has no knowledge of the places of punishment found in the later texts—the way of the Midst, the Chaos, Amente, or the outer darkness—but suggests that instead, the whole of the twelve aeons themselves are viewed as the places of punishment.<sup>53</sup> It is true that this text shows no knowledge of the above-mentioned punishment realms; and given that Sabaoth, the Adamas is connected with the “great archon” earlier in the text (*2 Jeu* 100), and that his is the epitome of the evil one must have removed to ascend to the heights (*2 Jeu* 115), one might be tempted to agree.

However, there is significant evidence to suggest that such a leadership role within the twelve aeons was not primary in this text. First and foremost, while Sabaoth the Adamas is inevitably described as purely evil, the twelfth aeon that is

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<sup>51</sup> See discussion in Section 6.5.4.

<sup>52</sup> Schmidt, *Gnostische Schriften in koptischer Sprache*, 395.

<sup>53</sup> Schmidt, *Gnostische Schriften in koptischer Sprache*, 394-395.

elsewhere his abode is here described with neutral language—and overall, only the first five aeons are depicted in negative terms. Second, the twelfth aeon is here said to be the inhabitance of the invisible god, the Barbelo, and the unbegotten god, and the “great archons” are said to serve them. This is the only place where the unbegotten one appears as a unique figure in the texts, but the first two of this triad appear frequently and do not have an overtly negative nature.<sup>54</sup> The neutral character of both the twelfth aeon and its heads here would seem to discount to possibility of Sabaoth as the leader of twelve evil aeons at this stage. Although the inclusion of the Sethian triad here is likely a secondary addition to an original outline, the fact that Sabaoth the Adamas is not mentioned in connection with the twelve aeons in any way here seems to be deliberate. Only when the triad is transferred to their permanent home in the thirteenth aeon in later texts does Sabaoth take his place as head of the twelve evil aeons.

Schmidt also notes the myth in *4PSa* of the two brothers Sabaoth the sinner and Jabraoth the repentant, who each ruled the archons of six of the aeons, but acknowledges that the myth as it appears in that text cannot account for the division between the upper and lower aeons here.<sup>55</sup> Although Jabraoth’s name does appear in the Bruce Codex, it is in the fragment discussed above,<sup>56</sup> which shares terminology, soteriology and cosmology most closely with *1/2PS* and is not a part of either of the *Books of Jeu*.<sup>57</sup> Schmidt accepts that this fragment is not a part of the *Books of Jeu*, and that it is in fact later than those texts; however his other conclusions on this *2 Jeu* passage are not convincing. He reconciles the difference in the numbers of good and evil archons and the positioning of the good “little Midst” with an awkward proposal of the inability to have a true middle aeon out of twelve, thus placing six on one side of it and five on the other.<sup>58</sup>

It is true that the split nature of the twelve aeons in *2 Jeu* is unique. Although the myth of two brothers each ruling the archons of six of the aeons, one sinning and

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<sup>54</sup> *4PSa* does present the invisible god as the provider of power for one of the malefic planets, but overall in the texts he does very little and is simply ignorant—in opposition to actively evil figures such as Sabaoth the Adamas or Authades.

<sup>55</sup> C. Schmidt, *Gnostische Schriften in koptischer Sprache*, 392.

<sup>56</sup> Section 3.5, pp.82-83.

<sup>57</sup> *1 Jeu* 82.

<sup>58</sup> C. Schmidt, *Gnostische Schriften in koptischer Sprache*, 392-393.

one repentant, is found in the other texts, a few points stand out: first, the myth is not explicitly present here; second, the number of good versus evil aeons is wrong (instead of six and six, here it is five and seven); and finally, in those texts where the myth does appear, the repentant archons are lifted forth from the aeonic realm and the sinning archons are either imprisoned within or rule alone over the whole of the twelve aeons. There is no evidence in any of the other texts of a sustained split in the nature of the aeons as one must pass through them. The uniqueness of the five/seven aeon split in *2 Jeu* speaks of the group's changing beliefs: in this early phase, the division of the aeons into five evil and seven neutral realms suggests the concept of five sublunar chaotic or abyss realms and seven planetary heavens shown in certain other non-mainstream esoteric Christian texts, these in turn being associated with the twelve sections of the zodiac.<sup>59</sup> As these realms were the very beginning of one's ascension, having the starting point from earth of the sublunar realms and working one's way up through the planets to the starry realm would be logical.<sup>60</sup>

In *4PSa* these elements are separated in a much clearer manner: the twelve aeons exist independently, while the five evil sublunar realms are represented in the five regions of the archons of the **MHTЄ**,<sup>61</sup> and the seven planets (notably the five planets, with the two luminaries in their own category) enumerated separately with their powers for both good and evil noted. Here the myth of Sabaoth and Jabraoth is laid forth, and the followers of each are moved to different locations to receive their just deserts (*4PSa* 355-356).<sup>62</sup> Sabaoth the Adamas and his evil archons are bound within the "sphere," which is ruled by the planetary beings. Composing the sphere are the twelve aeons of the zodiac. Through these aeons the planets move to rule over the way of the **MHTЄ**, which is described as existing in airy places "beneath the sphere" (*4PSa* 359). This suggests that the sphere that imprisons Sabaoth and his

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<sup>59</sup> This will be discussed further in Ch. 6.

<sup>60</sup> The concept of the sublunar realms being populated by various entities, especially including negative or flawed ones, was common in later Hellenistic cosmology; see Philo, *On Giants*. 6-8; Eph. 2:2; Tertullian, *Apology* 22; see also A.D. DeConick, *The Thirteenth Apostle*, 53; R. A. Piper, "Jesus and the Conflict of Powers in Q: Two Q Miracle Stories," 323 n.20, in *The Sayings Source Q and the Historical Jesus* A. Lindemann, ed. (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2001), 317-350.

<sup>61</sup> Note that its role is slightly more complicated than this; see Section 3.9 below.

<sup>62</sup> Contrary to C. Schmidt (*Pistis Sophia: Ein gnostisches Originalwerk*, 28) this story does not describe the *origin* of the archontic world: both the aeons and the realms of the **MHTЄ** already exist. Here they are simply reorganized, with glimpses of both their new and original populations offered.

followers is the zodiac, and by virtue of being twelve signs in number is likely still to be thought of as the twelve aeons. The way of the **MHTΕ**, or the five evil sublunar realms, are affected by the planetary influences. It is the beings of the way of the **MHTΕ** that incite men to sin and then punish them—the planets over the sphere/zodiac, in addition to keeping the evil Sabaoth the Adamas in line, can have the positive effect of releasing souls from their torments and giving them another chance to live a righteous life in the world.

In *4PSb* the aeons are not enumerated, but the souls of the judged who are not cast into the outer darkness are sent to the aeons of the sphere, where the receiver of Sabaoth, the Adamas, gives it a cup of forgetfulness. The soul is then cast again into the world in a body befitting its past sins, suggesting a connection between Sabaoth the Adamas, these aeons of the sphere, and fate, the Heimarmene/zodiac. Here Sabaoth the Adamas finally has a clear connection with the aeons/sphere, holding a position of power rather than being imprisoned within it.

The *4PSb* focus on the relationship between the aeons of the sphere and the fate of the soul cast into a material body is continued in the connected *3PS*. Rather than the terms “sphere” or “twelve aeons,” here the Heimarmene “in the places of the head of the aeons” fills the role of the seat of fate, as well as the place of Adamas. Again the cup of forgetfulness is given to the ancient soul, here apparently by Adamas himself.<sup>63</sup> The five planets (again excluding the sun and moon from the traditional seven) are now the five great archons of the Heimarmene, and any traces of a positive nature associated with them are gone. The entire role of the Heimarmene and its archons is to bind the soul to the counterfeit spirit which compels men to sin, and to set the time and manner of death.<sup>64</sup> Interestingly, in addition to kneading the soul out of the sweat of the archons, the five great archons along with the archons of the discs of the sun and moon breathe into the soul—in the process imparting some of the Savior’s power that was cast into the mixture (*3PS* 335). It is this higher power which impels the soul to seek after the light despite the bonds of the Heimarmene. Although the origin of the first man at the hands of the

<sup>63</sup> *3PS* 334: “ΩΑΡΕ ΠΑΡΧΩΝ ΖΩΩΥ ΠΑΪ ΕΤΩΟΠ ΖΝ ΝΚΕΦΑΛΗ ΝΤΕ ΝΑΙΩΝ• ΩΑΧΟΥΩΩΜ ΜΠΑΠΟΤ ΝΤΒΩΕ ΝΤΕ ΠΕΣΠΕΡΜΑ ΝΤΚΑΚΙΑ...”

<sup>64</sup> On the counterfeit spirit and its relationship to the myth of *ApJohn*, see Section 6.5.5.

evil world-creator and his minions, so popular in certain other non-mainstream esoteric Christian texts, is missing here, the twist on the Genesis story is still thus subtly present in this inbreathing of light-power into each soul by the evil archons of fate.

When one recites the mysteries to release the bonds of the archons of the Heimarmene in their presence, one is then freed of the counterfeit spirit, and can enter the Kingdom of Light. The Savior came to the world to impart these mysteries, “For without mysteries no one will go to the Kingdom of the Light, either righteous or sinners” (3PS 346). It is primarily the archons of the Heimarmene—and by virtue of being their king, the Adamas—who are responsible for sins and fate, but purely righteous living is not sufficient for salvation. Reincarnation is still a possibility for one to have a second chance to receive the mysteries, but with the demonization of the planets, a positive reincarnation is now entirely dependent upon the judgment of the Virgin of Light.

In *1/2PS* these lower ranks finally multiply. Here we find the clear separation of the sphere, the Heimarmene, and the twelve aeons of the Adamas—however, they are directly tied to each other, and despite the separation of space, they still fulfill essentially the same functions. Adamas and his tyrants rule all three. The most striking fact is that in the first two, all the beings within them abandon their ranks and prostrate themselves before Jesus (*IPS* 21-22). Only in the twelve aeons do the inhabitants rebel and wage war against the light.<sup>65</sup> The result of this futile battle is Jesus taking a third of their power and turning the Heimarmene and the sphere—those regions under the control of the aeons that capitulated to Jesus and did not struggle—such that their magic in the world of men is less powerful.<sup>66</sup>

The Heimarmene and sphere retain the role of forming souls to go into the world out of the matter of the archons—the breath, tears and sweat (*IPS* 35-36). However, instead of keeping power imprisoned in the world in the souls of men, they (along with the archons of the aeons) choose to preserve their power by consuming their own matter instead of creating souls, thus extending the time needed to reach

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<sup>65</sup> In the last version of this episode (*IPS* 40-41), most of the beings of the aeons also worship him—it is only the “tyrants” who are made powerless.

<sup>66</sup> There are four versions of this struggle: *IPS* 24-25, 26, 37-39, 40-41.

the number of perfect souls (*IPS* 36-37). In this version of the story, all three regions thus act in tandem, furthering their direct connection. In fact, in the latest outlines of the regions in *2PS*, one or the other of the Heimarmene and the sphere is left out, suggesting that the set of three was not embraced as a necessity.<sup>67</sup>

As observed previously, the myth of Pistis Sophia herself operates under a different cosmology from the surrounding text. Both the sphere and the Heimarmene are missing from her story, and the twelve aeons border directly on the Chaos below. Authades of the thirteenth aeon is her main adversary, but Adamas from the twelfth also plays a role in persecuting her—notably only in the section following the initial thirteen repentances, which is likely a secondary addition.<sup>68</sup> His role as adversary in this extra section seems almost like an afterthought; indeed, immediately before the section where he takes an active role, the text first says that when the time comes for her next persecution, “the Authades and all his archons” will oppress her—and only on the next page of the manuscript is the antagonist’s name changed to Adamas (*2PS* 170).

In the context of the fall and redemption story the aeons have no role but as realms through which Pistis Sophia descends and eventually ascends, which are full of antagonistic beings that are jealous of her aspirations for the realm of light. There is one reference that might suggest their typical role as seat of the archons which bind one to fate, but it is highly indirect (*2PS* 155).<sup>69</sup>

In sum, the twelve aeons, the Heimarmene, and the sphere, are inextricably linked, even in those texts that depict them as separate regions. In the early stages there appears to be a connection between the twelve aeons and the five abysses/seven planetary regions depicted in certain other non-mainstream esoteric Christian texts, but these are separated early on. They quickly take on their primary role as the

<sup>67</sup> *2PS* 187-188: the sphere is lacking; 214: the Heimarmene is missing.

<sup>68</sup> He is mentioned in one instance in the first section while she is still in the Chaos, wherein he sends his power down from the twelve aeons and throws the Pistis Sophia down. (*2PS* 138) This appears to be present purely to fulfill one of the verses in the accompanying psalm, that one shall not fear “a demonic blow at midday” (Ps. 91:6). In the interpretation James explains that the twelfth aeon is the hour of midday. See also Section 4.5.

<sup>69</sup> “...and thou didst give to me the authority that I should be released from the bonds of the emanations of the Adamas” (ΑΥΩ ΑΚΤ ΝΑΪ ΝΤΕΞΟΥΓΙΑ ΕΤΡΑΒΩΛ ΕΒΟΛ ΝΜΜΡΕ ΝΝΕΠΡΟΒΟΛΟΥΕ ΜΠΑΔΑΜΑΣ). If this whole myth is indeed an allegory for the soul’s plight in the world, then the physical bonds with which she is afflicted in the Chaos could be analogous to the invisible bonds of fate in the world.

regions of the zodiac, home of the archons in charge of the fate of human beings and forming their souls. The evil Sabaoth, the Adamas, has his home within these regions, with the exception of in *2 Jeu*—that lone early text which gives the aeons a split nature. Elsewhere they are viewed exclusively as either a prison for evil or as evil realms themselves, making the Adamas' presence fitting.

### 3.7 AMENTE

Amente, or the western place, appears only in *4PSb* and *3PS*, which form a set in terms of their overall cosmology and themes. These two texts have the greatest focus on punishments of sinners, as well as the most complex system of underworlds or punishment realms. Amente here forms the first and least harsh of these, followed by the Chaos, the **MHTЄ**, and the outer darkness.<sup>70</sup>

The term “Amente” is from the Egyptian term for the place of the dead, the western place where the sun set, which in the ancient Egyptian religion was considered a positive destination for the soul. Here, in line with the Greek interpretation of the west as an evil direction, it has been transformed into a place of punishment for sinning souls rather than a place of eternal life or rest. The head of this region is called Ariel, and is described in *3PS* as having a dog-head—reminiscent of Anubis, the jackal-headed god of the underworld or judgment in Egyptian religion.<sup>71</sup> Thus the region is clearly adopted from its Egyptian context, transformed in the process into a fiery realm of torture. The only other information given is that it has rivers, seas, and pits of fire (*3PS* 256-258), and that Ariel has two receivers, Abiut and Charmon (*4PSb* 375), which take certain souls for three days, teaching them of the creation of the world before subjecting them to their rightful punishments. Although there is no direct correspondence between the punishments associated with Amente in *4PSb* and *3PS*, it seems that only lesser sinners are first brought here: in *4PSb* those who have murdered or blasphemed (considered extremely serious sins) are first brought to the Chaos, a far worse realm. Its location and role within *3PS* is highly ambiguous: although it is included in the general lists

<sup>70</sup> *3PS* 321-322 gives an explicit order for these realms and their relative harshness. This order is maintained wherever they appear in these two texts, although in certain cases some of the realms may be skipped based on the nature of the sin/punishment required.

<sup>71</sup> See also Section 6.1.6.

of punishment places, it is *not* included in the accounts of souls being taken up after death—while both the Chaos and the **MHT€** are *en route* to the soul’s ultimate judgment and fate.

It should be noted that at one point in *3PS* there is a reference to “Amente of the Chaos” (ⲁⲙⲛⲦⲉ ⲛⲦⲉ ⲡⲉϫⲁⲟϥ; *3PS* 284). This presumably refers to the western region of the Chaos, and not to the discrete region “Amente,” as the passage continues with references to the Chaos only. *1/2PS* also features the term Amente twice (*1PS* 89; *2PS* 163), but in both instances they are in the Psalm counterparts of Pistis Sophia’s repentances—it serves as the symbol for the Chaos, and is simply the Egyptian translation of the term “Sheol” in the Psalms.

Amente in the Jeuian context is thus perhaps best summarized as a minor realm of punishment, adopted and adapted from Egyptian tradition. It is included in the overall cosmology for a relatively brief period of time based on the textual evidence remaining, as its role and origin from a Jeuian perspective are obscure, and its functions become obsolete with changing views of punishment and salvation.

### 3.8 THE CHAOS

The Chaos also appears first and foremost in *4PSb* and *3PS*. It is the first stop of the more serious sinners (apart from those who consume sperm and menstrual blood, who are doomed directly to the outer darkness). In *3PS* it is forbidden to lead a soul that has received the mysteries to the Chaos(es), although it does travel along the path of the **MHT€** (*3PS* 289). This realm is the home of Jaldabaoth, the primary villain and world-creator of several non-mainstream esoteric Christian groups. In *4PSb* he rules over 49 demons, which flagellate the souls of sinners with fiery scourges. In *3PS* he is described as having a lion-face, as is typical of depictions of this figure.<sup>72</sup> Interestingly, there is one reference in *4PSb* to a region of Chaos as the home of Persephone (*4PSb* 377). In Greek mythology she is considered the goddess of the underworld; here she is tied to the punishing of the sinful dead. Unfortunately

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<sup>72</sup> See Origen, *Cels.* 6.31, *HypArch* 94,16-17, *OrigWorld* 100,1-6; also *1PS* 46; see additionally T. Rasimus, *Paradise Reconsidered in Gnostic Mythmaking: Rethinking Sethianism in Light of the Ophite Evidence* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 106-128; H.M. Jackson, *The Lion Becomes Man: The Gnostic Leontomorphic Creator and the Platonic Tradition* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1985).

the text is fragmentary and there is no way of knowing if further explanation of her role or region of Chaos is given.<sup>73</sup>

Similar to Amente, the Chaos is described as having rivers of fire and seas of fire, sulphur and pitch (*3PS* 258-259), and it is primarily involved in the punishment of souls. It is not involved in the creation of bodies or souls or the affairs of fate, as might be expected from Jaldabaoth's presence.

The Chaos does play a role in *1/2PS*, but that role is primarily in the myth of Pistis Sophia, which has a different cosmological structure from the surrounding text. Here it is the realm in which Pistis Sophia becomes trapped, tormented by dark demons that steal her light-power. It appears to directly border on the twelve aeons, as Pistis Sophia arrives in it directly from her aeonic descent. Although Jaldabaoth is present there, the focus of power among the evil ones is much more on Authades who dwells in the thirteenth aeon and his own lion-faced power. Furthermore, there is the suggestion that the Chaos is in fact the world of men, for Jesus explains that upon her restoration to the thirteenth aeon, she wished to tell the invisible ones there "the wonders which I [Jesus] had done for her on the earth of mankind below, until I saved her" (*2PS* 178). If the story is to be taken literally, it is possible that these wonders were indirectly beneficial to her, as she spent a great deal of time waiting for her final salvation just below the thirteenth aeon. However, as it is more likely that the story is rather meant to serve as a form of allegory for the experience of the soul of the human believer on earth, the Chaos serves as a parallel for Earth—a place of torment for a fallen spirit from above.

The only place the Chaos appears outside of the Pistis Sophia myth is in *2PS* in an exposition of knowledge possessed by the mystery of the Ineffable, primarily related to why things exist. This takes the form of a series of antitheses—why darkness exists, and why light, why punishment of sinners exists, and why repose in the Kingdom of Light, etc. Here the Chaos appears in the plural—as it does occasionally in *3PS*—in juxtaposition with the Treasury of Light (*2PS* 208).

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<sup>73</sup> It is also interesting that *4PSa* and *b* are the only texts to preserve elements of Greek mythology, in the form of the planet names, this single appearance of Persephone, and one reference to Adonis as an underworld being (*4PSb* 377)—even *3PS*, with its strong ties to *4PSb*, lacks these elements, having reduced the planets to nameless archons. This may suggest a period of interest in the Greek mysteries and mythology in the Jeuians' development, which was quickly dissolved into the prevailing mythos and language of the group.

Unfortunately this reference tells one little of the position or role of these Chaoses beyond their association with darkness as opposed to light.

The Chaos thus plays a role primarily as a place of punishment for sinful souls. It is introduced in *4PSb*, at the height of the group's interest in sins and their repercussions; and it fades into the background as interest in the soul's plight in the world and the heights to which it could ascend takes the fore in *1/2PS*. Although it is associated with Jaldabaoth, who in other non-mainstream esoteric Christian traditions dwells in the cosmic spheres and is considered the creator of the world, humanity, and fate, here all of these actions are attributed to other entities. Even in its role as punishment-realm, it is neither the least nor worst to which a soul could be subject, sandwiched as it is by Amente and the **MHT€**. Its later importance rests in its mythic equivalence to the material world for the soul trapped therein, and in its opposition to the realm of light. It is important enough that it remains in these aspects, even after the **MHT€** and Amente have been rendered obsolete and faded from the cosmic structure.

### 3.9 THE **MHT€**

The **MHT€** has its first, rather innocuous appearance in *1 Jeu*. In explaining the organization of the Fatherhoods and treasuries, Jesus tells his disciples that “five ranks of Fatherhood are in the **MHT€**, which are the places of the God who is in the midst of all” (*1 Jeu* 83). The presence of the **MHT€** as a distinct region here appears to have gone undetected by previous translators, presumably because 1) typically the **MHT€** is part of the phrase “the way of the **MHT€**” (**ΤΕΖΙΗ ΝΤΜΗΤ€**),<sup>74</sup> and 2) in the later texts it is uniformly a realm of evil and punishment, concepts absent from its presence here among the heights of the treasuries and serving as the dwelling place of a God. These discrepancies are explained, however, by the theological shifts that occur between the composition of this text and its later cousins. Here the treasuries represent the starry sky, and the five ranks of Fatherhood in the **MHT€** through the

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<sup>74</sup> Note however that this is not always the case; see *4PSa* 355, *3PS* 285, 341.

middle of them all are the five planets, moving through the ecliptic.<sup>75</sup> The **MHTĒ** with its planetary ranks is at this time the epitome of celestial power and glory.

By its next appearance in *4PSa*, a dramatic change has taken place in the view of the divine realm. No longer are the stars the final destination of the pious or the home of the gods; rather, the sphere of fate or the zodiac is a prison for the sinful. The **MHTĒ** here has something of a dual nature. As it was viewed as the realm of the planets in *1 Jeu*, it maintains the commonly held astrological view of the power of the planets to attribute personality traits and faults; at the same time, it is located beneath the sphere of stars and is ruled by a set of planetary beings, suggesting a role as the evil sublunar realms found in *2 Jeu*.<sup>76</sup> Thus two conflicting versions of planetary lore are found here: the Greek interpretation of the five planets and their natures, moving through the zodiac and triggering actions in the divine and celestial spheres; and the five planets of the **MHTĒ** being shifted to rulership of the five sublunar realms. These five rulers are named, and each has dominion over a different type of sin—just as the planets were each thought to control different personality traits. In this case it serves a further dual role as cause of human sin and realm of punishment for those selfsame sins. Each of the places within is described in terms of smoke, fire, and perishing.

Interestingly, one of the fragments of the Bruce Codex lists the same names of the great archons of the way of the **MHTĒ**. In that fragment, the final archon—Jacthanabas—is described as “the successor (**ΔΙΑΤΟΧΟΣ**) of the archon of the outer darkness.”<sup>77</sup> This suggests a connection between the **MHTĒ** and the outer darkness in that work. This connection is possible within *4PSa* as well, as the **MHTĒ** and the outer darkness are the only places of punishment referred to in that text. This fragment also supports the possibility that the five lower aeons of *2 Jeu* are later transformed into the ways of the **MHTĒ**: in both cases, the soul presents the beings

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<sup>75</sup> This will be discussed further in the discussion of astrology, Section 6.2.

<sup>76</sup> They are also described in *4PSa* as being in “airy places” beneath the sphere, a description also used to describe the sublunar realm in Hellenistic cosmology.

<sup>77</sup> *2 Jeu* 141.

therein with a mystery in the form of specific power words which causes fear in them.

In *4PSb* the association with the planets is entirely removed and even the connection with the sublunar realms is not clear; it becomes simply a realm of punishment. Unlike the 49 demons of Jaldabaoth, no specific number of archons is given at this point: “each one” of the archons deals out unspecified punishment (related to smoke and fire; *4PSb* 378, 382) for a period of time. Divorced from its astrological significance, it is but one of many punishment realms adopted by this author, without explanation of what makes its residents evil or what hold it has over the souls it torments as is given in the previous text.

*3PS* takes a similar position. The **MHTĒ** is not even included in the list of punishment realms that occupies several pages of its beginning. Its astrological ties are absent, with the “five great archons” once again referring to the planets but now being linked to the Heimarmene. Judgment is associated with it (*3PS* 263, 285, 321), but judgment also is connected with all of the punishment realms in this text. It is connected to destiny, but it is unclear whether it is the beings of the **MHTĒ** or those of the Heimarmene that bind the destiny to the soul.<sup>78</sup> This confusion could be a remnant of moving the planetary aspects from the **MHTĒ** to the Heimarmene. The only clear trace of its earlier position is one reference to Jacthanabas (*3PS* 263)—but even this is phrased in such a way that he could be located beyond the way of the **MHTĒ**, as a soul is taken to his place *after* being taken to the way of the **MHTĒ**.

Despite all of the ambiguity in its origin or nature, and perhaps as a holdover from its previous role, its position as a fearful destination is still strong in *3PS*. Its fire is nine times fiercer than that of Chaos, and is surpassed in fierceness only by the dragon of the outer darkness (*3PS* 322).<sup>79</sup>

The **MHTĒ** thus begins as the ecliptic, the path of the sun and the planets, and part of the height of existence. With the introduction of Greek planetary ideas and a

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<sup>78</sup> *3PS* 287 suggests it is the **MHTĒ**, but *3PS* 341 is less clear.

<sup>79</sup> C. Schmidt, determining that the “underworld” realms are consistent through the texts and that the **MHTĒ** is not one of them but rather is above, overlooks its appearance in this passage where it is clearly included among the punishment realms (as well as its inclusion as one of the lower punishment realms in *4PSb*). See his underworld discussion, *Gnostische Schriften in koptischer Sprache*, 413-420.

concept of wicked sublunar regions, the **MHT€** becomes conflated with the latter. When astrology and the stars come to be viewed as chains binding the soul and dragging it into sin, the five great archons are moved back into a planetary position within the Heimarmene/zodiac, but the **MHT€** remains as a pure punishment realm without clear cosmological placement. As focus on individual morality, sin, and the complex system of punishments resulting for every possible situation fade in favor of focus on the salvation of the soul, Jesus' role, and the destiny of the believing recipients of the mysteries, the **MHT€** too is phased out of the cosmogony.

### 3.10 THE OUTER DARKNESS

This region serves as a place of severe punishment and annihilation—although its placement and the regulations of entry (and exit) vary. It first appears in a single instance in *4PSa*, in a description of what happens when one recites the name that is superior to all names after death:

...When he says it to the demons and the receivers of the outer darkness, with their archons and their powers (*exousiai*) and their powers (*dunameis*), they will all be destroyed and their flame will burn...And when that name is said to the *paralempantai* of the wicked judgments and their powers (*exousiai*), and all their powers and the Barbelo also, and the invisible god and the three triple-powered gods...they will fall upon one another and be dissolved and destroyed. (*4PSa* 373)

After the very detailed explanation of the division in the aeons, the imprisonment of the wicked archons, and the ways and means of the archons of the **MHT€**, this sudden, brief reference to the outer darkness is somewhat jolting. It is especially intriguing that the other entities listed as doomed to destruction with the recitation of this name do not have their regions specified—the receivers of the wicked judgments are most likely the archons of the aeons, and the Barbelo, the invisible god, and the three triple-powered gods all belong to the thirteenth aeon. In the cosmogonic layout of *4PSa*, this leaves one lower region as established earlier in the text: the **MHT€**. It would be odd to destroy all of the surrounding areas, but to leave the **MHT€** standing. Given the potential connection between the **MHT€** and the outer darkness found in the Bruce Codex fragment, it is possible that at this stage these two regions are one and the same. In this way everything beyond the border of the **M€COC** (with the

potential exception of the archons who believed with Jabraoth, which were moved to a space between the thirteenth aeon and the **MECOC**) is destroyed by the power of the most superior name.

In *4PSb* the outer darkness is represented in its own right as the ultimate destination of punishment for the worst sinners. The sins worthy of being cast there are such that the soul is given no chance to be reincarnated in the world after its punishments, instead being destroyed at the final judgment. The text is incomplete so the full list of sins with their accompanying repercussions is uncertain, but the three causes of being sentenced to the outer darkness found here—murder, blasphemy, and pederasty—are in line with the fuller lists of outer darkness-worthy sins found in *3PS*. The outer darkness is in these cases the final stop in a series of the punishment realms through which the sinful soul must travel. The only sin discussed which is not on those later lists (consuming semen and menstrual blood in worship) is a special case leading to instant transport to the outer darkness, with no stops in the Chaos or other realms (*4PSb* 381).<sup>80</sup>

Descriptions of the realm itself in this text are minimal. It is associated with a dragon-faced archon (*4PSb* 380), as is its hallmark in *3PS*. It is said to be a “place in which there is no pity, nor is there light. But there is weeping and gnashing of teeth” (*4PSb* 381).<sup>81</sup> Finally, the time of its dissolution is described as “when the darkness of the **MHT€** will be lifted” (*4PSb* 377). While the two regions are clearly distinct in this text, this continues the suggestion of a connection or border between the outer darkness and the **MHT€**.

The outer darkness sees its greatest developments in *3PS*. Here it is described in great detail:

The outer darkness is a great dragon whose tail is in its mouth, and it is outside the whole world, and it surrounds the whole world. And there is a great number of places of judgment within it, and it has twelve chambers of severe punishments, and an archon is in every chamber and the faces of the archons are different from one another. (*3PS* 317)

After describing the archons in each of the chambers, it goes on to explain,

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<sup>80</sup> This apparently refers to a particular sect that was a threat to this group, as *2 Jeu* also presents this specific, rather unusual practice as the most heinous of sins. This group, or one with similar practices, was evidently known to Epiphanius as well (*Pan* 26.4.5-5.1). The fact that *3PS* makes no mention of it suggests that perhaps by that point the sect in question was no longer a threat.

<sup>81</sup> See Mt. 8:12, 22:13, 25:30; also Mt. 13:42, 50

...each of them has a name according to the hour. And each one of them changes his face according to the hour. And furthermore, to each of these twelve chambers, there is a door opening to the height...And there is an angel of the height watching at each of the doors of the chambers, whom Jeu...has placed to keep watch over the dragon, so that it does not rebel, together with all the archons of its chambers which are within it. (3PS 319)

Although there is only one entry point, the “mouth of the tail” (ἘΠΙΤΡΟΜΗ ΜΠΕΛΑΤ) of the dragon (3PS 320), there are several escape points; each of these doors can be opened if a soul within it recites the name of one of the archons: “at the time when they shall say it, the whole dragon will be shaken and will be exceedingly agitated. And the door of the chamber in which are the souls of those men opens upwards” (3PS 329). Indeed, although the names of the archons are always changing with the hours, “the twelve [names] are within one another, so that he who says one of the names says all of the names” (3PS 320). This is a startling development in light of the conviction elsewhere that the outer darkness is the one place from which there is no hope of escape. Furthermore, a soul can also be freed if one of the living performs the mystery of the Ineffable and prays for that soul (3PS 323). Thus, despite the fact that the fires and judgments within it are “seventy times fiercer” than those of the ΜΗΤΕ (3PS 322), it is not the completely hopeless pit of destruction for souls it was previously.

The outer darkness surrounds the world, with the light of the sun covering the dragon’s darkness by day (3PS 332). At night, however, its darkness enters the world as smoke, so close to this world that it can almost be touched. This suggests its location in the sublunar realm, elsewhere associated with terrifying abysses, falleness and materiality.<sup>82</sup> However, like Amente, it is not included as a realm on the initial journey of the soul on the way to its judgment. It remains reserved for the worst sins (despite the potentials for another chance this text posits).

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<sup>82</sup> As a point of interest, there are a number of references to souls in the midst (ΜΗΤΕ) of the dragon (3PS 327, 329). While this may simply refer to the space within the dragon, given the connection between the ΜΗΤΕ and the outer darkness in previous texts, it is possible that the specific region of the ΜΗΤΕ is here being associated with the dragon. Considering the dragon’s proximity to earth, and the earlier ties between the ΜΗΤΕ and the sublunar realms, this may be more than a simple turn of phrase.

For the record, there are two lists of sins that are worthy of punishment in the outer darkness found in this text. The first, found after lists of sins earning one punishment in the Amente or Chaos, consists of:

- |                |   |
|----------------|---|
| *killing       | *sorceries                              |
| *mercilessness | *blasphemy                              |
| *impiety       | *accepting erroneous teachings          |
| *godlessness   | *teaching erroneous teachings (3PS 259) |

The second occurs as a “reassurance” to the disciples after the description of the dragon and its contents that the only souls sent there are those of these particular types of sinners:

- |                                       |              |
|---------------------------------------|--------------|
| *murderers                            | *slanderers  |
| *poisoners                            | *defiled men |
| *the impious                          | *pederasts   |
| *the godless                          | *adulterers  |
| *those who are in erroneous teachings |              |
| *those who teach errors (3PS 320)     |              |

Although there are some differences between the two groups, there is a great deal of overlap. Primarily, the second group adds sexual sins as being worthy of the outer darkness, while overall the focus is on those sins that dishonor God or result in human death. Interestingly, the first section allots the sins of slander and adultery to the realm of Chaos, suggesting two sources have come from different authors who considered the weight of these sins differently.<sup>83</sup>

The outer darkness appears only once each in *1* and *2PS*. The first is in a prayer of Pistis Sophia, that her tormenter Authades might have the archon of the outer darkness at his right hand always (*1PS* 105). The second is Mary Magdalene justifying her questions so that she and her brothers might preach to men and save them from the hands of the receivers of the outer darkness (*2PS* 201). Although the focus of these two texts is not on punishments, as in the previous two, it is striking that this is the only reference to a realm of punishment besides the Chaos—which itself is primarily found in the Pistis Sophia myth, and is thus not directly parallel to the overall cosmogony. Even in the long list of juxtapositions in *2PS*, the outer darkness does not appear, although the Chaos and “judgments” do. These lists of knowledge are attempts to demonstrate a reason for everything in the universe. The

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<sup>83</sup> The exclusion of the **MHTC** from the initial section listing sins by the punishment-realm they merit also suggests that multiple sources were used in compiling this text.

lack of even passing mentions of the outer darkness and other punishment realms suggests that not only are these *texts* not concerned with places of punishment, but that to this author or compiler they were not in fact regarded as concerns. Evil and tyranny have been transferred wholly to the archons of the aeons, and the myriad different levels of punishments have been rendered obsolete.

In those texts where it appears, the outer darkness is destined for destruction with all of its inhabitants at the end of time. Where it is clearly differentiated as a punishment realm, it is the destination of the very worst sinners, and the place where annihilation of the soul happens rather than reincarnation. However, while originally it was a place that offered no hope to those damned to its punishments, in *3PS* a number of “escape clauses” are provided. Thus no soul was irrevocably abandoned to its tortures—certainly not completely eliminating, but rather reducing its fearsome nature by virtue of the possibility of liberation and another chance given a little knowledge or the kindness of a true believer. In the end it, too, fades into obscurity, as evil and destruction become primarily the purview of the archons of the aeons.

### **3.11 SUMMARY: COSMOLOGY BY TEXT**

#### **3.11.1 *1 Jeu***

This earliest of the texts presently remaining from the Jeuian group primarily discusses the sixty Treasuries of Light, the epitome of existence to which a human soul can attain. The layout and content of the description of the treasuries reflects traditional Egyptian religious influence, and provides a detailed map of the beyond for the ascending soul to navigate the various regions. In this case the treasuries most likely represent the starry sphere, based on a notion of the soul’s final resting place among the stars. The only other region that appears in this text, the **MHTЄ**, likely represents the ecliptic with the five “ranks” or planets moving through it. This region is described as the “places of the God who is in the midst of the All,” most likely representing Jeu as a sun deity—the sun was of great importance in Egyptian religious thought as well as determining the ecliptic or “middle;” Jeu is responsible for the emanation and organization of all the contents of the treasuries, and all of the heads of these regions also bear his name.

There is a lack of any mention of the twelve aeons/Heimarmene, or of any places of punishment. While this could simply be a result of the text being fragmentary, given the nature of the remaining text this seems unlikely. Rather, at this point the author had no notion of the regions of the stars and planets as representing pitfalls. Focus was instead on providing the believer with the detailed knowledge needed to ascend. Although living a good life was considered important, it was not the primary concern, and discussion of the wicked judgments only came to be considered vital later—perhaps in the light of both increasing suspicion of the astral deities and their role in human nature, and of increasing pressure from outside groups or sects, resulting in a more rigid outline of proper worship and behavior.

### 3.11.2 *2 Jeu*

Already here there is a dramatic change in the cosmological outlook. While the Treasury of Light is still the ultimate destination of the true disciple, it is now described as a single region (or perhaps a duality). There is great interest in the various ranks of the Treasury, although the order and number of these ranks vary, and different lists of them pepper the text. It is likely that the author has compiled these variations from a number of sources, and has endeavored to include them all despite some inconsistency between them. Of greater immediate concern in this text, however, is passage through the aeons to reach the Treasury: the regions one must traverse are listed as the twelve divine aeons, the place of the invisible God (the thirteenth aeon), the **MĒCOC**, and finally the place of the right (the Treasury of Light). Again there is a distinct lack of regions explicitly dedicated to punishment—however, the first five aeons are described as being home to archons who fear the divine and flee when presented with the mysteries. Interestingly, Jaldabaoth is said to dwell in the third aeon, who in all other texts in this group is placed within the Chaos punishment realm. This could suggest that although all of the aeons were meant to be surpassed, the first five aeons themselves served as places of punishment for the uninitiated at this point. The place of the three triple-powered gods or archons—the **MĒCOC**—is explicitly described as being without places of correction (*2 Jeu* 137), suggesting the possibility that all of the preceding aeons have a

punishment aspect. Although one is admonished to live without sin, again the goal appears to be fidelity to the group and receiving the mysteries to be included in the Kingdom of Light, lack of which causes one to be stuck in these outer places.

The twelve aeons as a whole may represent the five sublunar and seven planetary realms one must surpass to reach the final destination. The **MECOC** serves as the middle point between the places of the left and right, and as a realm of waiting for those beings which have not yet but will eventually receive the mystery of forgiveness of sins and enter the Treasury.

Thus the aeons are here the lowest realms of the cosmos, the regions from the earth to the outskirts of the solar system through which one must ascend; the bottom regions among these serve as places of punishment or suffering for those who have not received the proper mysteries; the **MECOC** divides the cosmos into an upper and lower realm,<sup>84</sup> and the place of the right is the Treasury of Light, the final destination and resting place for the initiated.

### 3.11.3 *4PSa*

Here the beginnings of preoccupation with sin, judgment and punishment start to show. From the initial story of Sabaoth and Jabraoth being placed in different regions based on their actions, the universe is now full of pitfalls, and sins are attributed to the influence of evil beings who dwell in unsavory regions, waiting to pounce upon the soul at death and torment it.

The Treasury of Light/place of the right remains the pinnacle of existence; indeed, much of the cosmology reflects that of *2 Jeu*: the twelve aeons, the thirteenth aeon, the **MECOC**, and the Treasury of Light. Now, however, the twelve aeons take on the role of the zodiac, and the sublunar region of the way of the **MHTC** must also be surpassed, overcoming the five great archons' efforts to entice one to sin. For one trapped in these punishments, the motion of the planets moving about the aeons/zodiac above can have beneficial results. The planets themselves take on their Greek names, and are accorded the same basic natures they have in Hellenistic

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<sup>84</sup> One hesitates to describe these realms as "spiritual" or "material," as at this point material is still not viewed as uniformly negative.

astrology—Jupiter and Venus are benefic, Saturn and Mars malefic, and Mercury neutral.

Finally, in this text the concept of the populations of certain regions being destroyed upon the performance of certain mysteries comes forth. Those slated for destruction are the receivers of the “outer darkness” (possibly the **MHT€**), those of the “wicked judgments” (likely the twelve aeons), and the powers of the Barbelo, the invisible god, and the three triple-powered gods (all of whom are residents of the thirteenth aeon). Thus all regions below the **M€COC**, that dividing region between the upper and lower worlds, are eventually eliminated.

#### 3.11.4 *4PSb*

Speculation on the punishment realms reaches a plateau here, which continues into *3PS* before dropping away. This is a highly fragmentary text, so it is uncertain if the upper regions receive treatment in the first portion of it; as it stands, the existence of the Treasury of Light is confirmed by a single reference. The **M€COC** is also part of the system, based on the presence of the Little Sabaoth the Good, “he of the **M€COC**,” and also more speculatively by the presence of the Virgin of Light who elsewhere makes it her dwelling. The aeons of the sphere/zodiac play a role in the sending of souls into the world, and the planets maintain their Greek names and natures.

By far the primary focus in this text is outlining the fates of sinners based on their sins, and this presents the reader with an impressive list of possible destinations: from the least to worst, these include Amente, the Chaos, the **MHT€**, and the outer darkness. There are patterns of regions included in the postmortem journey based on one’s life. The outer darkness is reserved for the very worst sinners, and from it there is no hope of another chance. The Chaos is included for most of those who are eventually outer-darkness bound. More general sinners are taken to Amente, the Chaos and the **MHT€**; while those who lived righteously but did not receive the

mysteries visit only Amente and the **MHT€** (*4PSb* 382).<sup>85</sup> It appears that the Chaos was viewed in a darker perspective than the **MHT€**, despite the **MHT€**'s greater fierceness of punishments.

All of these regions originate in the cosmologies of other religious traditions; with the great concern this author shows for sins and punishments, it seems as though he or she adopted several different punishment realms without particular concern for the background or origin of each. However, given that the length of time spent in these punishments, and indeed the number and type of these realms to which one was subjected, varied based on the nature of the sin, it is clear that a sense of justice *was* important to the author. Indeed, even the type of body one is cast into after having undergone these punishments is designed to be fitting to one's past crimes, and one who lived righteously but did not receive the mysteries is sent into a form that will surely find them in its next foray on earth.

### 3.11.5 *3PS*

As noted elsewhere, this text has its closest ties to *4PSb*, and largely shares the same basic cosmological structure—but without the latter's more Hellenistic notions of the planets' names and variable natures. The First Mystery makes its debut as a high entity almost on par with the Ineffable one. With it comes the first suggestion of the spaces above the Treasury of Light, expanding the divine realm. The Treasury is here described as a watershed region for those souls rescued from damnation but which did not receive the mysteries to enter the higher realms. The **M€COC** maintains its role as a place of judgment and middle ground between the regions of right and left. The planets have been homogenized into simply the “five great archons of the great Heimarmene,” and the Heimarmene/aeons play a great role in the formation of human beings, orchestrating their composition and fate. It is possible that the **MHT€** also plays a role in this, a throwback to its previous position relating to the planets and destiny. The underworld still consists of Amente, the

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<sup>85</sup> Interestingly, in *3PS* the soul that receives the mysteries and is freed from the bonds of the counterfeit spirit is taken past the **MHT€**, but it is explicitly forbidden for it to be led through the Chaoes (*3PS* 289). It seems as though there was a particular stigma against the Chaos in regards to the righteous, and that this region could be easily bypassed.

Chaos, the **MHT€** and the outer darkness, and great effort is expended to delineate the types of sins that would merit time in each. The outer darkness in particular is elaborated here, but its frightfulness as the final pit of destruction for the souls doomed to it is lessened by the introduction of a number of possibilities for escape. This, combined with the regular refrain about the all-forgiving nature of the mystery of the Ineffable, highlights an unwillingness to abandon anyone eternally, regardless of the sin.

### 3.11.6 *1 & 2PS*

The cosmology of these texts is complicated by the lengthy myth of the fall and redemption of Pistis Sophia, which uses a cosmic structure not reflected anywhere else in the texts—the rest of *1/2PS* included. Interpreting the myth as an allegory that does not have direct bearing on the wider cosmology of the author would help to resolve many of the issues the differences present. Thus, first the cosmology as it is found in the myth will be presented, followed by the more general structure that is closer to that found in the previous texts and could be logically derived from it.

Within the myth of Pistis Sophia, the main regions are the Treasury of Light, the thirteenth aeon, the twelve aeons, and the Chaos. These exist in a linear hierarchy; thus Pistis Sophia looks up from her place in the thirteenth aeon and sees the light of the Treasury directly above, and later moves down through the twelve aeons directly into the Chaos. This structure could represent the plight of the spirit in human form: when it realizes the higher light/truth (the Treasury directly bordering on the thirteenth aeon), it strives to reach it; this causes jealousy in those ignorant of this higher light who wish to rule humanity and keep it focused on material concerns. The struggling spirit is then persecuted until it is laid low in Chaos, another representation of the material world, full of authorities which torment it for its refusal to conform and mock it for its faith. Only through continual faith and prayer can one be restored, even to one's original place.

In the wider text, the cosmological onion has several more layers which serve no purpose in that allegorical context. Thus here the complexity of the spaces of the First Mystery and the Ineffable are more thoroughly explored, this height of existence now in full blossom. The Treasury of Light and the place of the right have

been divided into separate regions, and serve their primary purposes in relation to the provision of powers to the incarnations of Jesus and the disciples. However, the texts hint that their ultimate role and destiny remains closely bound with the higher spaces/place of the inheritances, and that all three of these realms have sprung from the same original cosmological seed. The **MECOC** has lost its earlier functions, but appears as a filter for higher elements to human incarnations. Although the thirteenth aeon plays a great part in the myth above, outside of that its main role is fulfilled by its resident, the Barbelo, who provides Jesus with his material body. Perhaps in part because of this redeeming function, its power is not touched when Jesus ascends and drains the lower twelve aeons of some of their effectiveness. Division has occurred in these texts in the realm of the aeons as well, as the twelve aeons, the Heimarmene, and the sphere are all depicted as separate regions, despite their functions remaining as they did when they were previously combined. The firmament makes its first appearance, with no elaboration of its role. Despite the multiplication of levels in these texts, their functions—other than as regions to pass through on one’s way to the height—are all described primarily in relation to human beings in the world, be it through powers of fate or the provision of special spiritual elements in particular people at the time of Jesus’ arrival in the world.

The **MHTC**, despite its relatively long history in the corpus, seems to have fallen out of the system entirely at this point, with only the Chaos and the outer darkness remaining as realms of punishment—and even these are mentioned only in passing, and may at this point simply be figures of speech. Only the Chaos is present in the list of universal knowledge the mysteries possess, and it is not accorded any function outside of the Pistis Sophia myth. Indeed, within Jesus’ garments the mysteries of all the regions are found, from the heights down to the firmament, with no inkling of any of the punishment places. While previous scholars have connected these texts directly with *3PS*, thus associating them with a complex series of underworld realms, the lack of any discussion of them in the mysteries of universal knowledge suggests otherwise. Punishments and torments are included, but not the carefully stratified regions based on the nature of sins. Rather, in *1/2PS* it would seem that evil and torments have mainly become the purview of the twelve aeons,

which are described as being in rebellion against the light and hindering the progress of humanity. Jesus himself acts against their wickedness, affecting the course of fate—but this is not the main way he acts as a savior of humanity. The mysteries remain the true key to salvation, despite the veil of Scriptural and mythological interpretation. Jesus presents these mysteries to his disciples to spread them to those willing to believe, thus acting as heavenly savior. Much as in the earlier *Books of Jeu*, the fixation on types of sins requiring specific punishments is lacking; the extra punishment realms beyond the tyrants are redundant, and thus they have fallen away.

### 3.12 CONCLUSIONS

This discussion demonstrates the importance of cosmological speculation to the authors of the *Books of Jeu* and the *Pistis Sophia*, and by extension to the group who utilized them. The lengthy and complex presentations of the various levels of existence, both material and immaterial, closely tie in with the theories on salvation and punishment or damnation. Whether it is the complex path of ascension for the soul that had received the mysteries, or the destination of the sinning soul without the mysteries that is captured by wicked archons, the outline of the universe is of utmost importance. In the earliest text, the focus is entirely on the treasures, the ultimate destination of the saved soul, and this destination is reached solely through possession of the appropriate knowledge of names, seals and symbols. Later texts give increasingly greater attention to the lifestyle of the believer as well as the required knowledge or mysteries, highlighting sins that must be avoided or repented to be allowed passage. In these cases, a great deal of speculation is given regarding the punishments that await those who do not maintain an appropriate lifestyle, and accordingly to the realms dedicated to those punishments. The visible starry realm changes from the epitome of existence to a position of suspicion and fear, and its place in the cosmological spectrum changes accordingly. In the end, although the incarnation of Jesus appears to play a greater role as he changes part of the cosmic order through his ascension, ultimately this change is relatively minor. Even in the final iteration, the underlying focus is still on receiving the mysteries on earth to be granted passage to a place of glory, traversing the complex hierarchy of realms on which this group fixated.

This analysis of the cosmologies contained in the various texts further confirms the order of the texts proposed in this thesis. Regions once called by multiple names are later divided into separate regions that still retain the functions of the original, simpler organization—thus the role and contents of the Treasury of Light become divided among the place of the right, the Treasury, and the place of the inheritances, and the twelve aeons are later joined by the Heimarmene and the sphere. In this instance, the pattern of moving from a simpler to a more complex layout, rather than a complex organization being flattened into simplified layers, seems to be the more logical option. It is further in keeping with other developments of belief and practice identifiable across the texts. Against the argument of circularity is the evidence of the region of the Midst (**MECOC**), which in *2 Jeu* and *4PSa* serves as the midpoint between the regions of the right and the left, the realms of light and materiality. There it serves as a place of judgment, and of waiting to enter the higher realms or to be cast back into the world. The addition of the punishment realms in *4PSb* and *3PS* makes this notion of a midpoint between the right and left somewhat less poignant—*3PS* even includes souls waiting for entry into the inheritances in the Treasury, thus removing one of its main functions. In *1/2PS* it is lost in an increasing stratification of regions, no longer the middle of anything. The change of a realm specifically called the “Midst” or “Middle” from being the middle of two main universal divisions to but one of a myriad of cosmological layers strikes one as a later change, brought about by other developments in cosmological and soteriological speculation. Although the mysteries needed for salvation remain relatively constant, the surrounding structure is adapted to later concerns and ideas.

**Table 3.4: Cosmology by Text**

<p>Treasuries of Light (1-60) (Star Realm)</p>	<p>Treasury of Light/Place of the Right</p>	<p>Treasury of Light</p>	<p>3 Spaces (First Mystery/Ineffable)</p>	<p>Spaces of Ineffable/First Mystery</p>
<p>Midst (MHTE)</p>	<p>Midst (MECOC)</p>	<p>Midst (MECOC)</p>	<p>Midst (MECOC)</p>	<p>Midst (MECOC)</p>
<p>Fourteenth Aeon</p>	<p>Thirteenth Aeon</p>	<p>(Aeons of the Sphere (Zodiac)</p>	<p>Aeons/Heimarmene</p>	<p>Thirteenth Aeon</p>
<p>Thirteenth Aeon</p>	<p>Twelve Aeons/Heimarmene/Sphere (Zodiac)</p>	<p>Aeons of the Sphere (Zodiac)</p>	<p>Heimarmene</p>	<p>Twelve Aeons Heimarmene</p>
<p>Twelve Aeons (5 sublunar/7 planetary?)</p>	<p>Twelve Aeons/Heimarmene/Sphere (Zodiac)</p>	<p>Aeons of the Sphere (Zodiac)</p>	<p>Heimarmene</p>	<p>First Sphere</p>
<p>Midst (MHTE)</p>	<p>Midst (MHTE)</p>	<p>Midst (MHTE)</p>	<p>Midst (MHTE)</p>	<p>Firmament</p>
<p>Midst (MHTE)</p>	<p>Outer Darkness (?)</p>	<p>Outer Darkness</p>	<p>Outer Darkness</p>	<p>Chaos (?)</p>
<p>Outer Darkness (?)</p>	<p>Outer Darkness</p>	<p>Outer Darkness</p>	<p>Outer Darkness</p>	<p>Outer Darkness (?)</p>

*1 Jeu*      *2 Jeu*      *4PSa*      *4PSb*      *3PS*      *1/2PS*

## CHAPTER 4

### TRACING THE TRADITION: IMPORTANT FIGURES

Having explored the changing cosmology of the extant Jeuian texts, it will now be helpful to examine some of the individual figures that feature prominently in the Jeuian theological system. Given the variation found in the cosmic structure, one might expect the roles of the divine entities to change, as well. Certainly between the texts a given figure will be more or less prominent, and there may be an impression of a rise or dip in status; but a close inspection will reveal that the nature of most figures and their actions remains essentially the same. This supports the notion that despite the more obvious differences and developments, these texts are the product of a group that maintained an underlying core of myths and ideas. In the following discussion the development of several beings or entities that play important roles throughout the texts will be traced: Jeu, Melchisedek, Sabaoth the Great/Good, Sabaoth the Little/Good, Sabaoth the Adamas/Tyrant, and Jesus himself. In so doing, the underlying consistency of certain ideas will be revealed, despite the span of time that must have stretched between the original composition of these works.

#### **4.1 JEU: DIVINE DEMIURGE AND OVERSEER**

The first and most obvious connection between the texts is the importance of the figure known as Jeu. His role is of the greatest eminence in the earliest text: in *1 Jeu* he is described as the “true God,” an emanation of the Father of Jesus, and the demiurge who brings forth divine beings with his three creative voices, moved by the command of Jesus’ Father. The Treasuries of Light, which make up the entirety of the divine realm in this text, abound with beings bearing his name as their final element—his children of sorts, emanated to be the heads of the Treasuries. These Treasuries of Light appear to represent the starry realm, which Jeu organizes. He is clearly of the highest rank, subject only to Jesus and his Father.

In *2 Jeu*, the supra-terrestrial realms are divided, with most of the text being devoted to the lower aeonic world and preliminary or initiatory rituals; accordingly the role of as transcendent a being as Jeu is less prevalent, but still present. Jesus presents to his disciples a list of the mysteries they will perform and the ranks

through which they will pass. In the first list, immediately preceding the performance of the three baptisms, Jeu is named as “ruler of the whole treasury” and as the final bastion before their entry to “the treasury of the innermost ones, to the places of the innermost of the innermost, which is the silence and quietness,” where they receive rest (*2 Jeu* 105; see Table 3.3). After the baptisms and the mystery to take away the evil of the archons, again a list of ranks and progression is given. This time Jeu again features near the end of the list, described as “the great Man, he who is the ruler of this whole Treasury of the Light,”<sup>1</sup> and “the father of the Treasury of the Light” (*2 Jeu* 122, see Appendix). Here, however, there are still places to progress beyond his first appearance; he appears to be stationed at the outermost regions of the Treasuries. After passing through further regions into the interior of the Treasuries, they reach the treasury of the “true god.” In *1 Jeu* this is also a designation of Jeu, but here it appears to refer to a separate figure. Once the treasury of this “true god” is attained, the true god presents them with his mystery, seal and great name, and calls upon the “unapproachable god” (ΠΝΟΥΤΕ ΠΙΑΤΝΡΑΤϞ). This is a term which appears in the hymn at the end of *1 Jeu*, also referring to the Father of Jesus (*1 Jeu* 93). This unapproachable god sends forth a light power to complete the disciples in “every pleroma, and make [them] into a rank in that treasury [of the true god]” (*2 Jeu* 125). Thus the place of the true god is the highest to which a human can attain, residing in the presence of the being immediately below the highest being or divine power in existence—who is by his nature “unapproachable.” The division of Jeu, the true god into two separate entities in *2 Jeu* may stem from shifting views on the construction of the cosmos. In *1 Jeu* the only realms discussed are those of the treasuries, and there is no hint of a lower, intermediate realm before approaching them; the true god Jeu thus produces, rules, and gives his name to all their ruling entities. In that text it appears that the visible cosmos and all it comprises are tied in with the Treasuries.<sup>2</sup> In *2 Jeu*, however, the regions are increasingly stratified, perhaps requiring rulers appropriate to each level. The “true god” could easily be taken as a title appropriate to a higher entity, while Jeu, being a knowable

<sup>1</sup> This title suggests the theme of a primal divine “Man” that is later restated but slightly altered in *3PS*; see below.

<sup>2</sup> For more on the cosmology of the texts and its relations to ancient conceptions of theogony and the afterlife, see Chs. 3 and 6.

name, might be considered more appropriate to a powerful but less lofty figure. Jeu maintains his positive nature and residence in the Treasury of Light, as the earlier tradition had him so inextricably tied with its creation and organization, but the true god is exalted to the place immediately before the unknowable one. Jeu's role, beyond "ruler of the whole treasury," is unclear in this text. It might be observed, however, that in the division of Jeu and the true god, Jeu remains lower, better positioned for a role of organization of the visible cosmos and command over the material entities, but still based in the immaterial realm of light.

Although the true god does not feature in *4PSa*, the role of Jeu is again clearly that of a cosmic organizer, specifically of the material aeons, himself based in the Treasury of Light or "place of the right." He appears moving and binding the rebellious archons of Sabaoth the Adamas (different from Sabaoth the Good) "in a Heimarmene-sphere," and he moves the good, believing archons of Jabraoth "to a purified air in the presence of the light of the sun, between the places of those of the Midst (**MĒCOC**) and between the places of the Invisible God" (*4PSa* 355-356). The Heimarmene-sphere here is the zodiac, the sphere of fixed stars, thus binding the sinning aeons within the material realm; in contrast the **MĒCOC** is the border of the light realm, the place where the judge of souls resides—not quite a part of the light realm, but also beyond the reach of the material aeons. In addition to imprisoning and organizing the rebellious archons, he also assigns powers to the five planets, and sets their courses in the sphere. Jeu is further described as "the provider of all the archons and the gods and the powers which have come into existence in the matter of the light of the Treasury" (*4PSa* 360). Thus he exerts power over the material regions and entities, but remains in and derives power from the Treasury of Light.

Jeu is also called the Father of Jesus' Father (*4PSa* 355; 359; 360), a potentially confusing designation given Jesus' origin from the unapproachable or ineffable one. The key to this title is hinted at in *3PS* and clarified in *2PS*: the great Sabaoth, the Good is the one Jesus has called his Father—referring to the "father" of the soul or power of his earthly incarnation and as such, in all likelihood the God of the Bible; Jeu, in turn, is the father of this great Sabaoth. He maintains a powerful position between this and his role in organizing the cosmos. However, despite the

disappearance of the “true god,” he is not alone in his position of power: it is along with Melchisedek that the text says, “these *two* alone are the great lights” (4PSa 360, emphasis mine). As shall be seen below, Melchisedek also dwells in the Treasury/place of the right, collecting light from the material archons and participating in the process of releasing tormented souls from the archontic realms. There is thus another apparently equal being that resides in the same region as Jeu and participates in the maintenance of the archons.

In 3PS Jeu is called the “Overseer of the Light” and the “Messenger of the First Ordinance,” reflecting his position of authority and ties to the light-realm. Again the entities he oversees are in the lower, material realms. He also bears the title “First Man” in this section, bringing to mind the idea of the Man-Son of Man connections in Sethian theology,<sup>3</sup> and thus a role of extreme preeminence in the overall hierarchy of divine emanations. This might also be reflected in his indirect connection with the person of Jesus, being the Father of his Father. One should note that the use of this terminology is not, however, identical to that found in the Sethian system, and that many of the characteristic features of the Sethian figure are lacking from the portrayal of Jeu.<sup>4</sup> The presence of such terminology does not point to a direct adoption of Sethian ideas.

Jeu’s position of power over the lower regions is represented as he commands angels to watch over the archons of the dragon of the outer darkness. These angels take up those souls imprisoned within the torments of the dragon who know one of the twelve mystery-names of the archons of the dragon and deliver them to Jeu, who examines the souls to see if they have “completed their cycles” in the world (3PS 329-330). It should be noted that this is the only instance where the Virgin of the Light, “the judge (ΚΡΙΤΗC),”<sup>5</sup> is bypassed for a soul: Jeu shows mercy to souls that are spared from the outer darkness through this mystery but which have completed their cycles in the world and sends them to the seven virgins of the light. These beings then baptize them and set them aside for purification, sparing them from

<sup>3</sup> See J.D. Turner, *Sethian Gnosticism and the Platonic Tradition* (Québec: University of Laval Press, 2001), 78n.22.

<sup>4</sup> Compare the description in A.D. DeConick, *The Thirteenth Apostle: What the Gospel of Judas Really Says* (2007; revised edition London: Continuum, 2009), 105 and n.16.

<sup>5</sup> She is referenced with this title a few times in 3PS; see 285, 294. Although she functions as judge elsewhere, the only other place where this title appears is in the fire baptismal rite of 2 *Jeu* (110-111).

destruction (*3PS* 330). This appears to give Jeu a unique power of mercy and clemency apart from that of the Virgin of Light that is not found elsewhere in the texts. At any rate, here Jeu is obviously important in the divine realm and plays a role in relation both to the wicked punishment realms and to human souls; his relationship to the more transcendent being or God is not specified.

The final two books present the most downplayed version of Jeu's role and importance. He is still called the overseer of light, and indeed he is still credited with the initial organization of the celestial sphere and its motions. However, Jesus has the power to overturn that ordering, shifting the spheres to face different directions and inhibit the powers of human diviners. In the myth of Pistis Sophia, she calls upon the Light to send Jeu, its "angel," to pursue and smite her tormenters and give off more light (*IPS* 31; 34); thus within this mythic context he is converted from the highest organizer of the heavens to a workaday angel. He is also described as having come forth from the pure light of the first tree of the five trees (*2PS* 194-195), the other trees producing Melchisedek, two leaders, and the watcher of the veil. The mystery of the five trees is one of the key mysteries of the group, appearing throughout the texts; however, it is not the highest mystery, and it places him on equal footing with four other beings.

Thus, in *1 Jeu*, Jeu begins as the highest creative and administrative power of Treasury of Light, the visible sky, which at first is all that exists; and he derives directly from the highest unapproachable or ineffable god. With changes to the view of the cosmic structure and nature, the visible sky is reduced in stature. Jeu maintains both his position within the now-elevated Treasury of Light, and his occupation of maintaining the celestial spheres, represented as the lower, material aeons—although at least at one stage he is afforded some control over the destiny of certain human souls. His origin, once directly from the thought of the highest principle, is moved to a secondary source, the five trees—an important element of the group's system, but still divorced from his initial lofty beginning. Thus, from beginning to end Jeu has the role of initial organizer of the stars and planets; it is the nature of the stars themselves that shifts to the negative. It is due to these latter changes that Jeu's position is gradually reduced in its hierarchical prestige.

## 4.2 ZOROKOTHORA MELCHISEDEK: TRANSPORTER OF LIGHT

This figure, appearing with either or both of his names, appears in all of the texts except *1 Jeu* and *4PSb*. It is unclear whether (Zorokothora) Melchisedek would have played a role in the group's theology at the point of the original composition of *1 Jeu*. This is because elsewhere he is usually closely tied with Jeu (who here is almost parallel with Jesus in terms of closeness to the unapproachable god) and operates primarily moving between realms which in *1 Jeu* have not yet been stratified. In *4PSb*, the text's focus is on sins and punishments, which again are largely unrelated to (Zorokothora) Melchisedek's role; indeed, this is the only text in which Jeu does not appear, as well. As with Jeu, (Zorokothora) Melchisedek's dwelling is found in the Treasury/place of the right, while his primary functions occur in the material regions.

In *2 Jeu*, it is he who is called upon to bring the waters of the first two baptisms (of water and fire) to the place of the ritual. The final baptism is evidently higher and beyond the reach of such an intermediary, requiring the direct intervention of the Father of Jesus (*2 Jeu* 108-114). Zorokothora Melchisedek thus seems to be a sort of high-ranking courier, in this case bringing elements from above for use in rituals below. In *4PSa*, he still acts as a messenger and carrier, now transporting light purified from the archons and bringing them into the Treasury of the Light. His gaze from the height also releases the souls trapped by the third of the five great archons of the Midst (*4PSa* 363-364). In this same section, Jeu looks forth and releases the souls trapped by the second of these great archons. As noted above, Zorokothora Melchisedek is here classified along with Jeu as one of the two "great lights" (*4PSa* 360), affirming his status as one of the highest beings, parallel with Jeu.

In *3PS* the name "Zorokothora" drops out of use. The subordinates of Melchisedek appear delivering the souls of those sinners for whom believers pray from the judgments of archons and the dragon of the outer darkness, and bringing them to the Virgin of the Light for examination (*3PS* 324-326). Melchisedek himself is said to take the purified bits of light from the work of the archons (*3PS* 333-334), and he is further listed among those who seal the souls which have become good and

received mysteries, along with the Virgin of the Light and the Great Sabaoth the Good (3PS 290-291). It should be noted that in this list of high beings the name of Jeu is not found. This supports the notion that Jeu is relegated to working in a different, but perhaps parallel capacity. The subordinates of both Jeu and Melchisedek retrieve certain souls from the damnation of the outer darkness; however, there are two modes by which one might be released, and each is assigned to one of the types. Jeu takes the ones who free themselves with their own knowledge, while Melchisedek handles those who are freed through the prayers and actions of living believers. The tasks of Jeu and Melchisedek, the two great lights, seem to be largely equal in prestige or divine hierarchy, but separate. Jeu and his subordinates maintain the order of the archontic beings and aeons, and Melchisedek with his receivers transport purified light from the work of the archons and souls of men for sealing and transference into the Treasury of Light.

In *IPS* Melchisedek again appears as the Receiver of Light, purifying what power he can of the archons, taking away that purified light and carrying it into the Treasury of the Light (*IPS* 34-36). As discussed above, in *2PS* he is said to come forth from the fifth tree in the mystery of the five trees, placing him at the far end of the trees from Jeu. This, too, reflects a view of the two figures as equally important but different in the roles they fill.

Thus the figure of Zorokothora Melchisedek essentially maintains the role of a divine porter, bringing the holy baptismal waters to earth, as well as being entrusted with collecting and transporting divine light from souls that reject evil and from the dregs of the work of the archons. His hierarchical position is unclear in his earliest appearance, but it is quickly made clear that regardless of early notions, he becomes a high being on par with Jeu. These two beings appear to share essentially similar rank in the divine bureaucracy, but fulfill different, equally important roles therein. As a final note, it should be observed that although Melchisedek is a figure known in Judaism and both mainstream and non-mainstream Christianities, his role as presented in these texts has no direct parallels in other known traditions.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> F.L. Horton, Jr., *The Melchizedek Tradition: A Critical Examination of the Sources to the Fifth Century A.D. and in the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 166.

### 4.3 THE GREAT SABAOOTH, THE GOOD: FATHER OF JESUS' EARTHLY SOUL

The Great Sabaoth appears once in *2 Jeu*, in a list of the ranks through which the disciples are told they will travel (*2 Jeu* 119, see Table 3.3). His rank appears within the gates of the Treasury of Light, between the ranks of the twin saviors and the great Jao, the Good. His place is well below the final or most supreme rank given. No information is given about his power or role. His appears to be a name that was recognized as belonging among the heavenly ranks, but without much place to discuss his wider role in the context of the book.

In *4PSa* he again is referenced once, this time as the first of the five beings whose gaze from the height destroys the places of the great evil archons and releases the souls from their power (*4PSa* 361). He thus shares a role with Jeu and Zorokothora Melchisedek, whose participation in this process has already been discussed. It has already been noted that Jeu is considered the father of the Great Sabaoth, perhaps explaining their closeness and shared power here.

In his one appearance in *3PS*, the Great Sabaoth, the Good is said to be the one “above the gate of life in the place of the right, who is called the Father” (*3PS* 291). His role as father will be discussed shortly. The soul unhindered by the evil of the archons sings him songs of praise and presents him with his seals and defenses; Sabaoth then seals the soul with his own seal. He is presented in conjunction with Melchisedek in the place of the right, which at this point is likely still within the Treasury of Light.<sup>7</sup> He is clearly viewed as a powerful and respected being, but remains in a brief appearance, as the focus of the text is more on the creation, struggles, and journey of the soul, not on the particulars of the inhabitants of the divine realms or the nature of Jesus' incarnation.

In *1/2PS*, however, he finally features prominently. His role here is primarily providing a power of light for the earthly incarnation of Jesus. Early on in these texts, as Jesus explains his formation and conception in the world, he states that having called upon Mary in the form of Gabriel, “in place of the soul, [he] cast into her the power which [he] received from the Great Sabaoth, the Good, who is in the

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<sup>7</sup> See Section 3.3.

place of the right” (*IPS* 13-14). In this way the Great Sabaoth is the father of his earthly incarnation: in *3PS* it is explained that the archons who form the souls are the fathers of those souls (*3PS* 337), but Jesus receives his soul (or “power”) not from the material archons, but from the Great Sabaoth.<sup>8</sup> This power and its relation to Jesus are then used by the disciples in the interpretation of a number of scriptural passages.

The most important of these passages is Ps. 85:10-11: “Mercy and truth have met one another; righteousness and peace have kissed one another. Truth has sprouted from the earth and righteousness has looked forth from heaven.” These two verses are interpreted four times in light of Jesus’ role in the world, twice by Mary, the mother of Jesus, once by “the other Mary,” presumably the Magdalene, and once at the beginning of *2PS* by John. Each interpretation breaks the verse up into three pairs.

The first interpretation by Mary, the mother of Jesus, contains no reference to the power of Sabaoth: it focuses on the material body of Jesus combined with the Spirit from the height which brings the mysteries to mankind. In this sense it is the most “orthodox” of the interpretations, for although a power of Barbelo becoming a material body for Jesus is mentioned, the overall impression is that of the importance of the material body joining with the power of the Spirit from the height to free mankind from sin and preach truth (*IPS* 122).

The second interpretation by the other Mary focuses exclusively on the non-material, interpreting the pairs as combinations of the Spirit of the light/Godhead with the power of Sabaoth the Good. Although the events take place in the world, the elements involved are spiritual and are clearly acting benevolently in helping mankind. This is in keeping with the view of Mary Magdalene as the most spiritually enlightened of the disciples.<sup>9</sup> In this interpretation, Sabaoth the Good is described as truth and peace (*IPS* 123-124).

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<sup>8</sup> C. Schmidt also observes this role as distinct from that of Jesus’ preexistent Father; see *Pistis Sophia: Ein gnostisches Originalwerk des dritten Jahrhunderts aus dem Koptischen übersetzt* (1925; reprint: Graz: Edition Geheimes Wissen, 2010), 67n.3.

<sup>9</sup> For example, the *Gospel of Mary* features her in this enlightened position, and also contains the rivalry of Peter to her that is found in *IPS* 58 and *4PSb* 377. See also *GosPhil* 63,33-64,10, for her close relationship to the Savior. The *Greater and Lesser Questions of Mary* mentioned by Epiphanius (*Pan* 26.8.2) also seem to suggest a place of high esteem for her, although the contents of the former

The third interpretation is again given by the mother of Jesus. Although she does this time incorporate the power of Sabaoth, her interpretation is again very material, tying the verse to the stories of Jesus and John the Baptist's conceptions and lives. Here the power of Sabaoth is mercy, that which came forth from her own womb, while truth is in John who came forth from Elisabeth. Righteousness and peace who meet and kiss are, again, John and Jesus. Finally, righteousness looking forth from heaven is Jesus in the form of Gabriel during the annunciation, and truth from the earth is again the power of Sabaoth from Mary's womb (*IPS* 124-125).

The final interpretation by John again focuses on loftier entities. The power of Sabaoth, this time always directly connected with the matter of the Barbelo, is said to come forth from the "place of the right, which is outside the Treasury of the Light, and [go] to the place of the left" (*2PS* 128). Sabaoth the Good, then, is higher than the Barbelo, who dwells in the thirteenth aeon in the place of the left, but is not included among the beings of the Treasury. The movement of his power from the superior place of the right to the inferior place of the left demonstrates his benevolence, which is further accentuated by his provision of power to Jesus. It should be noted that at the beginning of the section before John begins his interpretation, the figure to whom John is speaking is clearly stated to be Jesus. The First Mystery is referred to as Jesus' father. In the final section of the interpretation, however, John states, "Righteousness...which looked forth from heaven is thou, the First Mystery which looked forth, having come forth from the spaces of the height with the mysteries of the kingdom of the light...thou didst come down upon him who is Jesus our Saviour, like a dove" (*2PS* 128-129).<sup>10</sup> The addressee is thenceforth called the First Mystery in the text. This interpretation is especially interesting, as it identifies Jesus with the dual nature of son and "Father" or First Mystery, which is a view most clearly found in the gospel of John, suggesting the author's awareness of the tradition of John holding such a view.

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as he describes them are at odds with those of the *Pistis Sophia*, suggesting that traditions surrounding her varied from group to group.

<sup>10</sup> The descent of the dove here is not an overt association of the First Mystery with the Holy Spirit. Matthew provides the bulk of gospel allusions in the texts, and this passage appears to utilize one of its striking images without a full appreciation of or call to its original intent.

The other most noteworthy aspect of John's interpretation is that it ties the power of the Great Sabaoth to the myth of the six believing archons of Jabraoth found in its most complete form in *4PSa* (*2PS* 128; *4PSa* 355). It thus combines the assertion of Jesus' shared nature with the First Mystery, the implied importance of Sabaoth's power over and above that of the physical matter of Barbelo, and an integration of the mythos from an earlier iteration of cosmology into the present soteriological focus.

From the sheer number of interpretations one can see that this set of verses was a very important one for the author. Non-mainstream esoteric Christian issues such as Jesus' dual spiritual and material nature, the multiplicity of heavenly beings and their natures, and the interpretation of gospel passages are all found in the interpretations of these two verses. All of the interpretations are praised by Jesus equally, giving the impression that multivalent interpretations were both accepted and encouraged. It is further apparent that the power of Sabaoth was an integral part of the complex series of readings. It is set in juxtaposition with the Spirit from on high, and although associated with the matter of Barbelo it is generally accepted to be superior to it. The interpretations of the spiritual Mary and John correspond to each other, although the phrasing is different; and the more worldly interpretations of Mary the mother of Jesus, particularly in relation to gospel stories, are largely in fitting with introductory non-mainstream esoteric Christian teaching and interpretation tools.

The last references to the Great Sabaoth, the Good come in the middle of *2PS*. The references occur in a lengthy description of the structure and superiority of beings in the divine realms. The text states, "Jeu and the watcher of the veil of the great light, and the paraleptors of the light, and the two great leaders, and the Great Sabaoth the Good will be rulers in the first saviour of the first voice of the Treasury of the Light, who (the first saviour) will be in the place of those who receive the first mystery of the First Mystery" (*2PS* 194). This places him in the highest echelons of the divine ranks to which a human soul can attain, assigned as a ruler in the place of those who have received the highest of the mysteries. Despite the fact that he resides in the place of the right, which in this text has been separated and lowered from the Treasury of Light, in the end he will possess an exalted position.

Shortly thereafter Jesus states, “The Great Sabaoth the Good, he whom I have called my Father, also came forth from Jeu, the overseer of the light” (2PS 195). As has already been discussed, Sabaoth the Good plays the role of the earthly Jesus’ Father, he who provided the material of Barbelo with a soul/power untainted by the archons. Jesus’ higher, spiritual aspect is descended directly from the First Mystery, while his earthly soul is the product of Sabaoth, making both entities, in effect, his Father. It is interesting to note that in the multiple interpretations of the elements of Jesus’ incarnation, the power of Sabaoth is associated with all of the four elements *except* for righteousness. If the Great Sabaoth is the one Jesus called Father in the Scriptures, that makes him most likely the god of the Bible—often described in terms of righteousness.

It must be noted that although the term “Sabaoth” is also found as a proper name in other non-mainstream esoteric Christian sources, the nature and role of these figures are completely different. In Sethian tradition Sabaoth is the offspring of the wicked demiurge (*ApJohn* II 10,34; III 16,25; BG 40,10; IV 26,19), who is sometimes thought to have repented and been exalted over his father (*HypArch* 95,15-25).<sup>11</sup> This Sabaoth’s origin is at odds with that of the divine figure found in the Jeuian texts, who is derived from a high source, not associated with the world or other worldly rulers, and who provides the power to the Savior’s incarnation. Even when Sabaoth is repentant and exalted in other texts, the roles are not equivalent, and show little evidence of connection. The Great Sabaoth, the Good, is clearly independent of other known non-mainstream esoteric Christian traditions.<sup>12</sup>

In sum, the Great Sabaoth, the Good, begins as a figure placed high in the divine realm, but without much information given about his specific role. He is involved in the salvation of souls trapped by evil archons in 4PSa, but in 1/2PS his true importance is revealed: he is the father of Jesus’ earthly soul. As the one Jesus called Father, he most likely represents the god of the Bible. This correspondence is alluded to in 4PSa, but not elucidated until 2PS, where Scriptural interpretation is of high importance. The role of his power in the world through Jesus has a number of

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<sup>11</sup> For this name in other lists of archons, see Origen, *Cels* 6.31; Irenaeus, *AdvHaer* I.30.5; the Brummer gem; for parallels with the repentance account found in *HypArch*, see *OrigWorld* 103,32-104,26.

<sup>12</sup> The same observations are relevant with respect to the Little Sabaoth, the Good, as well.

interpretations, including being a bearer of mercy, truth, and peace to mankind. Although with the increased stratification of cosmological levels his position is downgraded from the high Treasury of Light to the next place down, his role stays the same, and his ultimate destiny remains in the highest of the divine ranks.

#### **4.4 THE LITTLE SABAOTH, THE GOOD: PLANETARY LEADER AND IMPARTER OF WISDOM**

The Little Sabaoth makes his first and primary appearance in *4PSa*. Five great archons, representing the planets, are set over the archons bound in the zodiac-sphere. To each of these great archons, Jeu binds a power from another being of the thirteenth aeon. When only Zeus/Jupiter is left, he “noticed that they needed a rudder in order to guide the world with the aeons of the sphere so that it might not be destroyed by their wickedness. He went into the Midst (**MECOC**), he drew a power out of the Little Sabaoth, the Good, he of the Midst, he bound it to Zeus because he is good, so that he should guide them with his goodness” (*4PSa* 356-357). Later references are to “the Little Sabaoth, the Good, who is called Zeus in the world” (*4PSa* 361-366), reducing the distinction between them further.

This tells one both that the Little Sabaoth dwells in the **MECOC**, that neutral place betwixt the material aeons and the place of the right, and also that his power is associated with Zeus—the benefic planet Jupiter and its movements through the heavenly sphere. It is when the Little Sabaoth/Zeus and Aphrodite (or Venus) take up positions in opposite signs of the zodiac that sinful souls are released from the clutches of the evil great archons (*4PSa* 361-364, 366). Partially because of his motions as or with Zeus through the celestial sphere, evil is gradually destroyed, and human souls are given another chance in the world.

In *4PSb*, the Little Sabaoth, the Good carries out actions in his own right, and is not tied to Zeus—although Zeus/Jupiter still has a key role to play, it is independent. In this text, a soul which committed no sins in life and did good, but which did not receive the mysteries, is placed in the presence of the Little Sabaoth in the **MECOC**. The soul remains there until the planets reach a favorable configuration to go before the judge of souls. After the soul is given the cup of forgetfulness by

Sabaoth the Adamas' lackey, an assistant of the Little Sabaoth, the Good “brings a cup which is filled with understanding and wisdom, and there is soberness in it. And he gives it to the soul, and it is cast into a body which is not able to sleep nor is it able to forget...it will be a goad to its heart continually, to seek for the mysteries of the light until it finds them” (4PSb 383). In a sense, then, one Sabaoth counteracts the efforts of another: although the Adamas' minion still forces forgetting on the sinless human soul, the Little Sabaoth gives the soul the impetus to overcome the forgetting and achieve salvation through the mysteries of the light.

There is a final reference to the Little Sabaoth, the Good, in 2PS. Here he received the power of “Sabaoth the Good,” which is truth, and “cast it into the matter of the Barbelo” (2PS 128). This combination of Barbelo-matter and Sabaoth-power forms the earthly body of Jesus, and as discussed above receives a great deal of exegesis from PS 122-129 (spanning the end of IPS and the beginning of 2PS). The Little Sabaoth is a different figure from the “Sabaoth the Good” (also known as the Great) that actually provides the power, and simply transfers it to the matter. It is possible that the designations of “Little” and “Great” stem from the two beings' residences: the Little Sabaoth dwells in the **MECOC**, that border separating the places of the left and right, while the Great Sabaoth dwells in the place of the right, counted among such illustrious beings as Jeu and Melchisedek. Perhaps the Little Sabaoth appears here as the intermediary between these material and immaterial realms, saving the Great Sabaoth from moving into the former. When he does so, he also preaches on the place of truth to the beings of the left, reprising his role of granting wisdom in 4PSb. However, the focus of the passage is Jesus' great power and benevolence, so it is unsurprising that the Little Sabaoth plays only a minor role.

Thus, the Little Sabaoth is a figure that early appears in association with Zeus/Jupiter, benefic leader of the planets. Through this association he plays a positive role by aiding in the destruction of evil archons and releasing imprisoned souls. Additionally, he provides wisdom to souls that were good and sinless in the world but had not discovered the mysteries of light by the time of their death, therefore giving them a greater chance of finding these mysteries on their next sojourn into a body. In the end he remains a positive figure associated with wisdom and divine assistance, although the nature of the later texts do not afford him much

discussion. Overall he pales in comparison to the role of the Great Sabaoth, the offspring of Jeu who plays a key part in the formation of the earthly Jesus.

#### 4.5 SABAOTH, THE ADAMAS: WICKED RULER OF FATE AND MATERIALITY

Sabaoth the Adamas is referred to twice in *2 Jeu*. First he appears in Jesus' warning to the disciples not to give the mysteries to anyone who is not worthy to receive them; particularly he warns against giving them to

those who serve the eighth power<sup>13</sup> of the great archon, who are those who eat the menstrual blood of their impurity and the semen of men, saying: 'We have known the knowledge of truth, and we pray to the true God.' However, their God is wicked...He is the third power of the great archon. Moreover this is his name: Taricheas, the son of Sabaoth, the Adamas. (*2 Jeu* 100)

The second reference is in the ritual of the mystery to remove the evil of the archons. Jesus, having purified the disciples through the three baptisms, now prays, "Hear me, my Father, thou father of all fatherhoods, thou infinite Light. Hear me and compel Sabaoth, the Adamas, and all his rulers to come and take away their evil from my disciples" (*2 Jeu* 115).

These references depict Sabaoth the Adamas as the epitome of archontic evil. He is the "great archon," whose taint afflicts all men who do not undergo the proper rituals, and whose powers further entice some misguided people from the path of light. No specific actions are attributed to him other than being essentially evil, and that followers of his powers engage in disturbing sexual rituals.

In *4PSa*, there is slightly more specificity as to his wickedness: he and his archons "continued to be concerned with sexual intercourse, begetting archons and archangels and angels and ministers and decans" (*4PSa* 355). This is fitting, given his association with those human beings who participate in sexual rituals mentioned in *2 Jeu*. The various begotten beings likely represent stars and other celestial bodies, epitomizing the material realm in which these entities and their sensuality hold sway. They are all bound in a "Heimarmene-sphere" as punishment (*4PSa* 355)—the visible zodiac, ruled by the planets, and thereby made subject to fate

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<sup>13</sup> Correcting MacDermot's translation, which reads "eight powers." Unfortunately the manuscript is broken off, so it is unclear whether it is a transcription error that results in the disparity between the entity being referred to as "eighth" (MEZH) and "third" (MEZΓ) powers of the great archon.

themselves. Furthermore, in *4PSb* it is one of his underlings who gives the cup of forgetfulness to souls about to be recast into bodies in the world, denying them the knowledge they had acquired from previous lives and punishments (*4PSb* 374; 376; 378; 379; 382).<sup>14</sup> The essence of the Adamas' evil, then, would seem to be an embracing of sexuality and physicality/materiality, in addition to an active role in making the learning process and purification of human souls more difficult.

In *3PS* the name of a figure known as the king Adamas appears four times, without the name Sabaoth associated with it (*3PS* 290, 292, 333). This practice of streamlining names is seen elsewhere in these texts, such as the reduction of “Zorokothora Melchisedek” to simply Melchisedek discussed above. In this case simplifying the name could also be an effort to reduce stigma and confusion associated with the identifier “Sabaoth,” given the overwhelmingly positive role another figure with that name plays in *1/2PS*.

All that is said about the Adamas is the location of his places in proximity to the aeons of the Heimarmene, the fact that defenses and seals are needed to pass safely by his places and tyrants, and the notion that if a soul is returning to the world, his archons give that soul a “cup of forgetfulness from the seed of evil” (*3PS* 333). It is clear that he is a negative figure with power over a number of lower beings, once again in close proximity to the Heimarmene if not directly contained therein. However, beyond the reference to the cup of forgetfulness, which reflects the ideas in *4PSb*, little insight is given into his specific role or actions.

The reduced role of the Adamas is likely due to the different focus of this text. Previously there was interest in discussing what beings or influences incite men to sin. (Sabaoth) the Adamas is a key figure in orchestrating fate, materiality and continued transmigration of ignorant souls. This text, however, devotes much more thought to policies for imparting the mysteries on earth, the ascension process, modes of avoiding the destruction of the dragon of the outer darkness, and the formation of human beings. Adamas here appears receiving his due defences and

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<sup>14</sup> Although there is little connection between this figure and those called “Sabaoth” or “Adamas” in other non-mainstream esoteric Christian mythologies, it is worth noting the parallel that the chief archon in the long recension of *ApJohn*, who is also closely involved with a wicked interpretation of fate, is associated with “water of forgetfulness” that makes humans forget their origins (*ApJohn* II 25,7; IV 39,4-5).

seals on the journey of ascending souls, but the material realm and fate have already been bypassed by the souls under discussion.

The Adamas, now called the “Tyrant” (ΤΥΡΑΝΝΟC), is back to his location in the twelve aeons in *I/2PS*, now clearly ruling over the Heimarmene and the sphere rather than being imprisoned by them (*IPS* 24-25, 37-38).<sup>15</sup> He takes an active role in these texts, first by directly waging war against the light Jesus brings with him as he enters into his realm.

The story of the Adamas and the other tyrants of the aeons reacting against the light of Jesus and his garment is given four times (*IPS* 24-25; 26; 37-39; 40-41). In the first and third case, the archons’ ignorance of the identity of whom they are waging war against is highlighted, and an explanation of the way Jesus changed their paths and influences is given. The second version is a shortened rendition of the events, but all three of the versions mention that Jesus took a third of their power and caused them all to be turned to the left for six months and to the right for six months as they complete their periods of influence. Jeu remains the figure who placed them in their original paths, but himself remains positive, despite the negative view of the astrological science in these texts. All of the negative thrust is directed at the Adamas and his followers.

This further ties the Adamas and the archons of the sphere and aeons to the Heimarmene and astrological concerns. By confusing them and preventing their wicked actions, Jesus has also removed power from “their astrologers and from their soothsayers and from those who tell men who are in the world all things which will happen...they will not understand anything which will happen so as to tell it” (*IPS* 27). Although still connected to fate, here the Adamas is the head of it, acting in the realm of men through magic and astrological predictions.

The fourth version tells a slightly different story, although the result is the same. In this case, when the various beings of the twelve aeons saw Jesus’ garment of light, they all prostrated themselves, worshipping the light and singing praises to the “innermost of the inner” (*IPS* 40). Only the tyrants found themselves with their power diminished, and they “fell down in their aeons, and they became like men of

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<sup>15</sup> On the fluidity of the twelve aeons and the Heimarmene, see the discussion in Section 3.6.

this world who are dead, having no breath within them” (*IPS* 41). A parallel to this is found in the first version, where it says that they “became like the earth-dwellers who are dead and have no breath in them” (*IPS* 25).

Despite the variations among the versions preserved here, the Adamas, as head of the tyrants of the twelve aeons, represents evil through a combination of lust for power, rebellion against the light, and ignorance. Although his wickedness is no longer described in sexual terms as in *4PSa*, that sexuality was in part associated with production of the stars, of which he is here lord and master (even though in both instances it is Jeu who originally set these bodies in their proper paths, according to the will of the light). In both the early and later texts it is his refusal to defer to the superior light that results in his being punished and a reduction of his power.

The final set of instances where the Adamas appears is in the repentances of Pistis Sophia. After she has been afflicted by the figure Authades of the thirteenth aeon and his emanations for some time, and has finally gotten some assistance from the First Mystery, once again the antagonistic forces rally against her. This time Adamas, the Tyrant, joins in to oppress her, as he is angry at her desire to surpass her place and go to the Light of Lights. From his place in the twelve aeons, he too goes down to Chaos to afflict her. However, she cries out to the light, and is enveloped in a great outpouring of light that causes all of the evil emanations to be powerless before her (*2PS* 138-142). His inclusion here appears to be an afterthought, necessary for the interpretation of the Psalm that is given to “predict” the events described. The Adamas, ruler of the twelve aeons, represents the “demonic blow (or destruction) at midday” of Ps. 91:6, for the twelfth aeon represents the hour of midday (*2PS* 146). The primary villain of the tale is Authades, a ruler of the thirteenth aeon, and Adamas disappears again after this interlude.<sup>16</sup> Then, several pages later in what appears to be a separate strand of tradition (or at least taken from another source), Authades disappears and the Adamas becomes Pistis Sophia’s primary antagonist for a final encounter (*2PS* 171-178). After the First Mystery restrains the Adamas’ power in the Chaos, he believes that Pistis Sophia is

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<sup>16</sup> There is another brief mention in a song of praise, where he is denounced in conjunction with Authades as Pistis Sophia’s oppressors (*2PS* 155). This may well be reflecting back on the episode just described.

responsible, and attacks her with his emanations to extract her light. She is pursued by their darkness, calling out to the light to save her, until Jesus returns and lifts her back into the thirteenth aeon where she belongs. Mysteriously, the fate of the Adamas is not described: one moment he is pursuing her; the next she is rescued by Jesus and suddenly back in her rightful place, and the name of the Adamas is not mentioned again. Although the individual may be rescued, his powers of fate and ignorance in the world are never fully overcome. Here there is movement toward anthropomorphizing his actions in emphasizing his ignorance, arrogance, and jealousy, suitable to the narrative allegory of the *Pistis Sophia*'s fall and redemption.

As with the name Sabaoth, a figure called Adamas also appears in the Sethian system. However, like the figures discussed above, the natures of the Sethian Adamas and the one found in the Jeuian texts are entirely different. In the Sethian system Adamas is one of the high divine beings (*ApJohn* III 13,4; *GosEg* III 49,18-19; 50,20-21; 51,5-6.21-22; 55,17-18; 65,15; IV 61,8-22; 62,18-19.30-31; 67,3-4; 77,11-12; *Zost* 6,26; 30,4-5; 51,14; *StelesSeth* 118,25-26; *GosJud* 48,21-26), the Son of Man, the father of Seth, and closely connected with the divine triad.<sup>17</sup> The ignorant, power-hungry, jealous Adamas of the *Pistis Sophia* could not be further from this idealized figure.

In sum, the evil being first known by the compound name Sabaoth, the Adamas, is primarily associated with fate and the zodiac or twelve aeons. Although his position shifts from one of imprisonment in fate to ruler of the same, many of the apparent modifications in his role seem to be tied with changing interpretations of divine cosmology and the nature of the aeons/zodiac rather than innate changes in the figure of Adamas himself. His sins are primarily a refusal to acknowledge the mysteries or power of light, a lust for power, and the promulgation of ignorance, sometimes represented as jealousy, sexual promiscuity, and arrogance. In the end, Jesus reduces him and his fellow tyrants to a degree of impotence in his ascent with the garments of light, accentuating the feebleness of these powers and the strength of

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<sup>17</sup> See also J.D. Turner, *Sethian Gnosticism*, 79. On the development of the Sethian Adamas myth, see R. van den Broek, *Studies in Gnosticism and Alexandrian Christianity* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1996), 56-66; also J. Verner Hansen, "Adamas and the Four Illuminators in Sethian Gnosticism," in *Rethinking Religion: Studies in the Hellenistic Process*, J. Podemann Sørensen, ed. (Museum Tusulanum Press, 1989), 55-72.

Jesus and the First Mystery over and above them—although even so, through divine decree their power is not completely destroyed. Ignorance remains rife in the human world, and fate remains a part of the natural universe and the plan of the First Mystery.

#### **4.6 JESUS: REVEALER OF MYSTERIES WITH DIVINE LINEAGE**

In all of the texts, Jesus serves as a teacher or instructor. He imparts to his disciples, both male and female, information about the divine world that they will require to progress to a higher state of being, as well as knowledge of the cosmic realms, their inhabitants, and their functions. His own specific place in the divine hierarchy is always tied closely to the highest entity.

In *1 Jeu*, Jesus' role consists of explaining the nature of the heavenly demiurge and the cosmology of the heavens, beginning with the emanation of *Jeu* from his Father and moving through the ranks of *Jeu*'s emanations. The unapproachable God is said to be Jesus' Father, and Jesus calls upon his Father so that he causes *Jeu* to bring the other emanations of the treasures into existence (*1 Jeu* 51-52)—thus indirectly contributing to the formation of the universe. Jesus provides the disciples with the names, seals and ciphers they will need to proceed through the highest Treasuries. Overall, his role here is that of a high divine being acting as savior of select humans, through the imparting of saving knowledge in the form of the various mysteries of the Treasuries.

In *2 Jeu*, again Jesus is a presenter of mysteries and bastion of knowledge of the lower divine realms, explaining the information needed to pass through the aeons in much the same way as that needed to proceed through the Treasuries in the first book. Here, however, he also serves another more active function as baptizer. He provides the bulk of the extensive list of plants and materials for offering, officiates over the prayers, recites the necessary 'imperishable' names, and seals the disciples with both the pre-and post-baptismal seals needed for complete purification. His officiating appears to carry with it significant power, as in the final baptism of the Holy Spirit he calls directly upon the power of his Father, the father of all fatherhoods, to purify their iniquities. However, given the likelihood that these rituals were meant to be reproduced for later readers/believers, it is possible that his

performance of this role in this text was meant to confer his own power and position to those officiants who were to follow him.

In *4PSa*, the position of Jesus' Father becomes slightly unclear. He is still called the "father of all fatherhoods" (*4PSa* 353) and the "Father of the Treasury of the Light" (*4PSa* 370-371), but as previously mentioned, Jeu is now called the Father of his Father as well. The distinction between his spiritual father (the First Mystery or highest principle) and the father of his earthly soul (the Great Sabaoth, the Good) has already been discussed, with Jeu as the father of the Great Sabaoth. Jesus himself maintains his position as revealer of knowledge, this time focusing considerably on the archons and types of punishment for sinful souls in addition to the organization of the visible celestial realm. Shifting from imparting the mysteries to avoid being held back from the heights, in both *4PSa* and *4PSb* he now warns about what will happen to those who do not cease in sins and do not receive the mysteries. Furthermore, in *4PSa* he is again shown as baptizing the disciples (*4PSa* 369-371), but the rite itself is much simplified in comparison with the previous baptismal prescriptions. The baptismal prayer again calls out to his "Father," but at the same time the disciples are explicitly instructed to perform this ritual for other worthy believers (*4PSa* 372), further supporting the notion that his performance of the rite in the text was meant to add performative authority to later officiants. Despite the ambiguous position of his father, the role of Jesus himself remains stable as an imparter of divine knowledge and ritual practice.

In *3PS*, Jesus (or the "Savior") no longer has specific rituals to impart, nor is there focus on the specific structure or inhabitants of the divine or sub-divine realms. Instead he discusses the formation of human bodies and souls, and other concerns regarding the imparting of mysteries to believers and the cycles of souls. *1/2PS* present a lengthy discourse both about the hierarchy of mysteries and a myth of the fall and redemption of Pistis Sophia. Jesus presents her prayers or "repentances" and the disciples respond with Psalms which had prophesized them. Jesus also discusses the earthly conceptions of himself, John the Baptist, and the disciples, setting them apart from normal men as beings who had divine powers cast into their bodies rather than the archons' counterfeit spirits. Perhaps most interesting is the fact that here Jesus takes his most active role—for in *1PS*, it explains that he ascended through the

aeons and personally defeated all the archons of the aeons with his mystery. In addition, the first book makes a point of stating that Jesus had imparted but a tiny fraction of the necessary mysteries to his disciples by the eleventh year after his resurrection. It lists a number of mysteries he had not yet mentioned that are also said to be key in the *Books of Jeu* of the Bruce Codex. In *2PS*, Jesus mentions the “two great Books of Jeu” and states that the mysteries they contain are exceedingly numerous, but that some of them are inferior and essentially unnecessary in the face of the great mysteries which he will give them and which are superior (*2PS* 246-247). This is at odds with his statement in *3PS* that “even for the righteous themselves who have never done evil, and have not committed sins at all, it is necessary that they should find the mysteries which are in the Books of Jeu” (*3PS* 349). Even if some of the mysteries in the “Books of Jeu” *are* still considered necessary later, the fact that others are now regarded as obsolete suggests that a process of streamlining and simplification of mysteries was taking place. This is also evident in the simplification of the baptismal instructions between *2 Jeu* and *4PSa*.

In sum, Jesus’ role throughout all of the texts is primarily one of a heavenly being imparting divine knowledge and mysteries to select individuals—in this case the disciples, who themselves rise in prestige until in the final texts they are also said to have heavenly origins. The disciples in turn are instructed to pass on this knowledge to people who demonstrate clear signs of their fidelity to the core beliefs of the group. As the texts progress, previously imparted mysteries evidently decrease in importance in the face of higher but somewhat simpler ones. Furthermore, Jesus acts as an officiant of key rituals, primarily baptisms. In the first example of this role, the rituals are highly complex; however in a later text the ritual he performs is simplified, and is specifically reported as something to be reproduced by the disciples for other true believers. His performance of the rituals appears to be a device meant to give later officiants his authority. In all cases, Jesus is directly associated with the highest entity in existence, and the salvation of any soul is impossible without the information he provides—although in the final texts, interpretations of more mainstream texts and concepts in light of the mythos of the group also take a prominent role in his discourse, apparently attempting to maintain the group’s relevance in a changing religious climate.

## 4.7 CONCLUSION

There are many obvious differences between the earliest and the latest Jeuian texts. Cosmological ideas undergo shifts; astrology becomes demonized; and claims to apostolic lineage and interpretation of Scripture become key in validating the group's authority. As will be explored in Ch. 6, these changes likely represent ongoing developments in the group's cultural environment and its efforts to engage with the ideas and issues that went with them. However, the underlying myths and principles remain essentially the same. In addition to consistent allusions to the mysteries, a close reading also reveals stability in the roles of various divine figures. From the beginning to the end, Jeu is the one who organizes the visible stars; Melchisedek transports purified light, baptismal elements, and souls; the Great Sabaoth, the Good is the Father of Jesus' human soul and likely the god of the Bible; the Little Sabaoth, the Good dwells in the Midst and helps human souls escape the punishments of the archons and find wisdom; Sabaoth the Adamas is the wicked archon tied up in fate and struggling to keep humanity imprisoned in it; and Jesus himself derives from the highest principle and serves to free humanity from the world by imparting the mysteries of the divine realms. These figures appear in greater or lesser relief depending on the focus of a given text, but a basic consistency can be traced from the earliest to the latest points of tradition now available.

By demonstrating the underlying framework that forms the main roles of key figures across these texts, the idea is supported that these works do in fact stem from a shared tradition transmitted over time. Despite the apparent minor changes and cosmological adjustments, the main figures—and the ideas they represent—remain on a steady plane, suggesting a reasonably coherent theological system. From the earliest to the latest textual evidence remaining, the universe was organized by the same basically benevolent figure; evil is represented by the same tyrant, and the only way to salvation is through the mysteries provided to humanity through the compassionate descent of the Savior or First Mystery. That this was not merely an intellectual tradition, but rather a set of beliefs and practices preserved by a community, is suggested by the strong role played by rituals with Jesus' accompanying exhortation that they be performed for others.

Although certain terminology or names of certain figures also appear in other non-mainstream esoteric Christian traditions, their roles within these texts are unique. Despite evidence of interaction with outside myths and beliefs, the core system developed and was maintained separately from other forms of Christian or demiurgical strands of thought. While the depiction of the universe and its workings was affected and modified by outside notions, and ritual practices may have changed and simplified—a phenomenon not unknown in mainstream Christianity—throughout its history this group preserved the core of its beliefs and practices.

## CHAPTER 5

### DIAGRAMS IN THE *BOOKS OF JEU*: CREATION, IDENTIFICATION, AND ASCENSION

The large number of diagrams in the *Books of Jeu* is one of the most noteworthy—and fascinating—aspects of these texts. It is the only extant early non-mainstream esoteric Christian document containing diagrams or images. That even among the paucity of scholarship on the texts so little has been written on them is a testament to their mysteriousness and obscurity. P.C. Finney notes these pictures “have nothing to do with the world as we know it. They are conceptual images, abstracted from nature and nonrepresentational.”<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately, the concepts they depict are quite esoteric and largely lost, in part never to be recovered due to the poor state of the manuscript. Thus this chapter must begin with the cautionary statement that what follows is not an attempt at a definitive interpretation of their meaning. Rather, it is an opening investigation into what will hopefully result in a scholarly conversation on their possible significance in the context of their users.

The fact that so many diagrams are included in these two texts is evidence of their importance in the beliefs and practices of the group that utilized them. That they are meticulously given in extensive systematic patterns demonstrates how vital they were considered to be—it was necessary to have knowledge of the whole system, including the characters and seals of each individual head or ruler. Even in the *Pistis Sophia* texts, which do not themselves include such diagrams, knowledge of them is *presumed* necessary (2PS 247; 3PS 289-291). Despite the suggestion that some aspects of these mysteries might in the later stages of the group’s development be considered unnecessary, the mysteries Jesus promises to present the disciples still include “the heads of the mysteries...in all their types and their ciphers and the seals of the last space” (2PS 247). This strongly reflects the traditions found in *1 Jeu* especially, as each treasury has a head and an associated seal and cipher, and indeed in that text *Jeu*’s development is described in terms of types. It is thus probable that 2PS still considers the material contained in *1 Jeu*, if not *2 Jeu* as well, to be

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<sup>1</sup> P.C. Finney, “Did Gnostics Make Pictures?”, 437; in *The Rediscovery of Gnosticism: Proceedings of the International Conference on Gnosticism at Yale, New Haven, Connecticut, March 28-31, 1978*, Vol. 1, B. Layton, ed. (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1980), 434-454.

necessary for the soul's ascent and salvation. Knowledge of the diagrams and their use is therefore necessary for an understanding of the system of the Jeuian texts as a whole.

Although similar symbols with comparable usage abound in the Medieval and Renaissance periods,<sup>2</sup> there are few other surviving examples from the period in which the Jeuian texts likely arose. Since it is impossible to determine whether a continuous tradition or mindset existed between these periods, the focus shall remain on the diagrams present in the *Books of Jeu* themselves.<sup>3</sup> Some preliminary discussion of the use of mystical diagrams and images in the Greco-Roman period will, however, provide a helpful introduction to the topic.

## 5.1 RELIGIOUS AND MAGICAL USE OF SEALS, DIAGRAMS AND IMAGES

### 5.1.1 Hekhalot or Jewish Ascent Literature

Hekhalot literature can be defined as “the pre-kabbalistic corpus of mystical texts that give instructions on how to ascend (or ‘descend’) to the celestial ‘palaces’ or the ‘merkabah,’ God’s heavenly throne-chariot,” elements of which can be identified from as early as the fifth to seventh centuries of the Common Era.<sup>4</sup> The Hekhalot, or palaces of the divine world, may suggest images similar to the treasuries to be traversed in *I Jeu*. The palaces each have angelic guardians, whose names the person ascending must memorize and to which they must show the appropriate seals: “The name of each one (angel)—you show to him his seal and he brings you into his palace.”<sup>5</sup> However, it is not clear of what the seals consisted, and their images are

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, the *Picatrix* (10<sup>th</sup>/11<sup>th</sup> century), Peter de Abano’s *Heptameron seu elementa magica* (1496), Johannes Trithemius’ *Steganographia* (1500), Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa’s *Occulta Philosophia* (1533), John Dee’s *Monas Hieroglyphica* (1564), the *Arbatel de magia veterum* (1575), *The Lesser Key of Solomon*.

<sup>3</sup> When possible, the image from the codex will be included, but frequently the manuscript has become so damaged the images have not been preserved. In those cases C. Schmidt’s reconstructions will be included, which are in turn often based on C.G. Woide and M.G. Schwartze’s transcriptions, done when the manuscript was in better condition. They are the form most scholars have used to this point; however, frequently they are not an accurate reflection of the original.

<sup>4</sup> J.R. Davila, “The Ancient Jewish Apocalypses and the *Hekhalot* Literature,” 105, in *Paradise Now: Essays on Early Jewish and Christian Mysticism*, A.D. DeConick, ed. (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2006), 105-125.

<sup>5</sup> *Hekhalot Zutarti*, §413, quoted in R.M. Lesses, *Ritual Practices to Gain Power: Angels, Incantations and Revelation in Early Jewish Mysticism* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1998), 257.

not depicted. They may have been written directly on the body, or on pieces of paper attached to the body, or some object held in the hands, or indeed engraved on rings.<sup>6</sup> They are described, however, “as magical names, either of the angels or of the aspects of the godhead, that must be shown as passports to the gate-keepers at the entrances to the seven palaces.”<sup>7</sup> In both *1* and *2 Jeu*, the instructions for safe passage through the aeons and treasuries involves a ψῆφος, a pebble, on which is inscribed a specific number which likely represents some sort of name or phrase of power.<sup>8</sup> In these instructions, the seal-diagram, its name, and the cipher-number are all closely connected both in the text and in the ascension procedure. G. Scholem noted the parallels between the display of seals to guardians in the Hekhalot texts and the *Books of Jeu*, and the attribution of a name to each of the seals, proposing an originally Hebrew origin for the formulas accompanying the baptismal seals.<sup>9</sup>

The idea of holding a sign or amulet in the hands is also found in Jewish adjuration formulae, as it is in the ascent instructions in both *1* and *2 Jeu*. For example, a Coptic adjuration for help calls upon Gabriel, insisting that he come “on account of the seal of Adonai, the father, and the fourteen amulets that are in my right hand.”<sup>10</sup> R.M. Lesses observes that as the text also refers to fourteen firmaments, a correspondence between the amulets and the firmaments is likely.<sup>11</sup> Although this is a calling down of powers to earth rather than an ascension, still as in the *Books of Jeu* each region has its own individual sign that must be known and possessed in order to deal with it. The necessity of holding these symbols in one or more hands—as opposed to worn around the neck or otherwise displayed—is another connection in the ritual practice; for at every level of the aeons and treasuries, the

<sup>6</sup> R.M. Lesses, *Ritual Practices to Gain Power*, 317-319.

<sup>7</sup> G. Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism, Merkabah Mysticism and Talmudic Tradition* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.; New York: JTSA, 1961), 32-33.

<sup>8</sup> The use of numbers to represent particular names was common in ancient magic; one of the best examples of this is Βαυχῶωωχ, the numerical value of whose name, 3663, appears in place of the name in certain magical papyri. For the stone/name connection compare also Rev. 2:17, where the saints are promised a stone with a secret name written upon it.

<sup>9</sup> See G. Scholem, “Über eine Formel in den koptisch-gnostischen Schriften und ihren jüdischen Ursprung,” in *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche* 30 (1931), 170-176.

<sup>10</sup> M. Meyer and R. Smith, *Ancient Christian Magic: Coptic Texts of Ritual Power* (San Francisco: Harper, 1994) 136-137; cited in R.M. Lesses, *Ritual Practices to Gain Power*, 320.

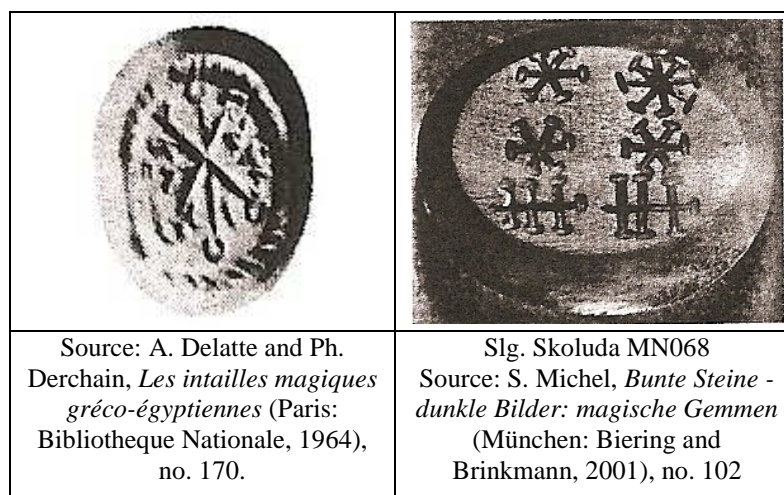
<sup>11</sup> R.M. Lesses, *Ritual Practices to Gain Power*, 320.

cipher-pebble must be held “in your hand(s).” The connection between physical amulets and the heavenly regions shall be discussed with the magical gems below.

### 5.1.2 Greco-Roman Magic

Although images and magical signs abound in the Greek Magical Papyri and gems, none of them provide a direct parallel for the diagrams found in the *Books of Jeu*. Many of them feature drawings of

**Figure 5.1: Magic Gems with Characters**



gods or demons with formulaic writing around them, anthropomorphic or zoomorphic representations participating in the magical action—far from the abstract imagery guaranteeing safe passage in a religious mystical ascent. It is, however, worthwhile to briefly discuss the use of symbols, or “characters,” found frequently in both the papyri and the gems. Although many of them look like modifications of Greek letters, one of the most common symbols is an eight-pointed star consisting of four crossed lines with circles at each point.<sup>12</sup> The eight-pointed star has prehistoric origins, but is perhaps best known from its association with the Babylonian goddess Ištar, from the Old Babylonian to Neo-Babylonian periods.<sup>13</sup> In the context of these later gems and magic, A.A. Barb gives its origin as the Babylonian determinative for names of gods.<sup>14</sup> The eight-pointed figure is certainly viewed as a powerful one for

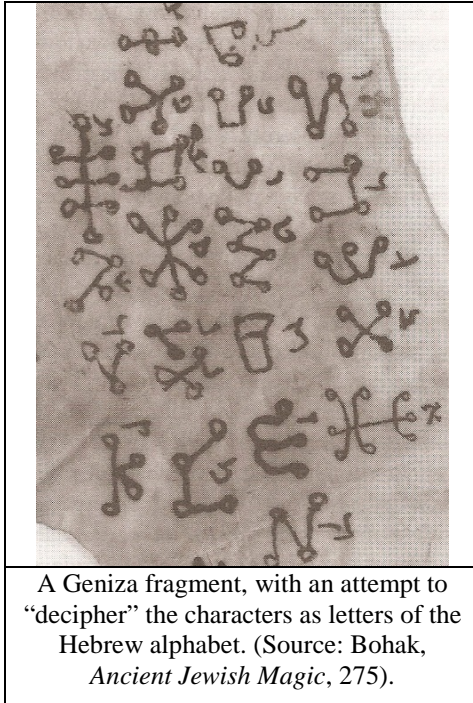
<sup>12</sup> See C. Bonner, *Studies in Magical Amulets, Chiefly Graeco-Egyptian* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1950), 194-195.

<sup>13</sup> F. Rochberg, “Heaven and Earth: Divine-Human Relations in Mesopotamian Celestial Divination,” 174n.20, in *Prayer, Magic, and the Stars in the Ancient and Late Antique World*, S. Noegel, J. Walker, and B. Wheeler eds. (University Park, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003), 169-186.

<sup>14</sup> “Diva Matrix: A faked gnostic intaglio in the possession of P.P. Rubens and the iconology of a symbol,” 216n.48, in *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 16 (1953), 193-238.

ascension past particular celestial entities found in *1* and *2 Jeu*, as shall be seen below.

**Figure 5.2: Sample Characters**



A Geniza fragment, with an attempt to “decipher” the characters as letters of the Hebrew alphabet. (Source: Bohak, *Ancient Jewish Magic*, 275).

The specific meaning of the characters is unknown, but it is clear that they were widespread—they “entered the magical traditions of all late-antique and medieval peoples, languages, and religions—from Ethiopia to Armenia and from Al-Andalus to Yemen.”<sup>15</sup> Despite the dating of much of the material being uncertain, the fact that it is so widespread suggests that even in later texts, earlier traditions may still be present. They could be used as individual symbols, or grouped together as a mystical alphabet. This latter usage was the subject of much speculation among later people, with many

attempts made to decipher their code through ascribing each sign an alphabetic equivalent.<sup>16</sup>

Greco-Egyptian magic was most likely their ultimate origin, and the presence of similar diagrams for sealing and ascent purposes in the *Books of Jeu* comes as little surprise. That the eight-pointed figure in particular is so prevalent both in the magical gems/papyri and the *Books of Jeu* especially speaks to the symbolic importance accorded to it. The fact that in the context of *2 Jeu* it primarily appears in the category of “seals” (as opposed to types or characters, which will be discussed below) suggests that the Jeuian author viewed it as particularly efficacious in an amuletic sense, as the seals are presented to give protection from potentially hostile beings and to gain access to higher regions.

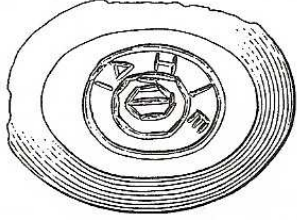
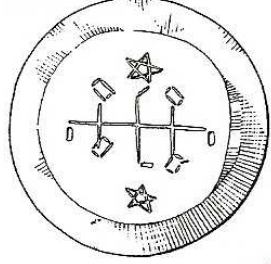

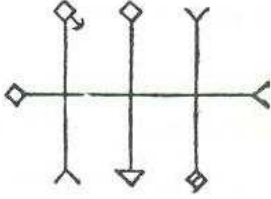
<sup>15</sup> G. Bohak, *Ancient Jewish Magic: A History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 271.

<sup>16</sup> G. Bohak, *Ancient Jewish Magic*, 274.

Beyond the prevalence of the eight-pointed star figure, a few other magical gems feature some intriguing patterns (Figure 5.3). The one on the left is similar to

some of the character diagrams in *1 Jeu*, while the one on the right bears a resemblance to some of the seals given for the ascent through the twelve aeons in *2 Jeu*. The latter in particular is interesting given the two stars pictured with the diagram, and the potential connection of the aeons with a celestial ascent/star journey. Solar and stellar associations are fairly

**Figure 5.3: Comparison of Gems and Figures from the *Books of Jeu***

	
<p>Brit. Mus. Inv. G 233, EA 56233. Source: S. Michel, <i>Die Magischen Gemmen im Britische Museum - Band I Text</i> (London: The British Museum Press, 2001), no.227</p>	<p>Brit. Mus. Inv. G 1986,5-1,152 Source: S. Michel, <i>Die Magischen Gemmen im Britische Museum</i>, no.560.</p>
	
<p>“Character” for Jeu 23 (<i>1 Jeu</i>)</p>	<p>Seal for 9<sup>th</sup> aeon (<i>2 Jeu</i> – Schmidt’s reproduction)</p>

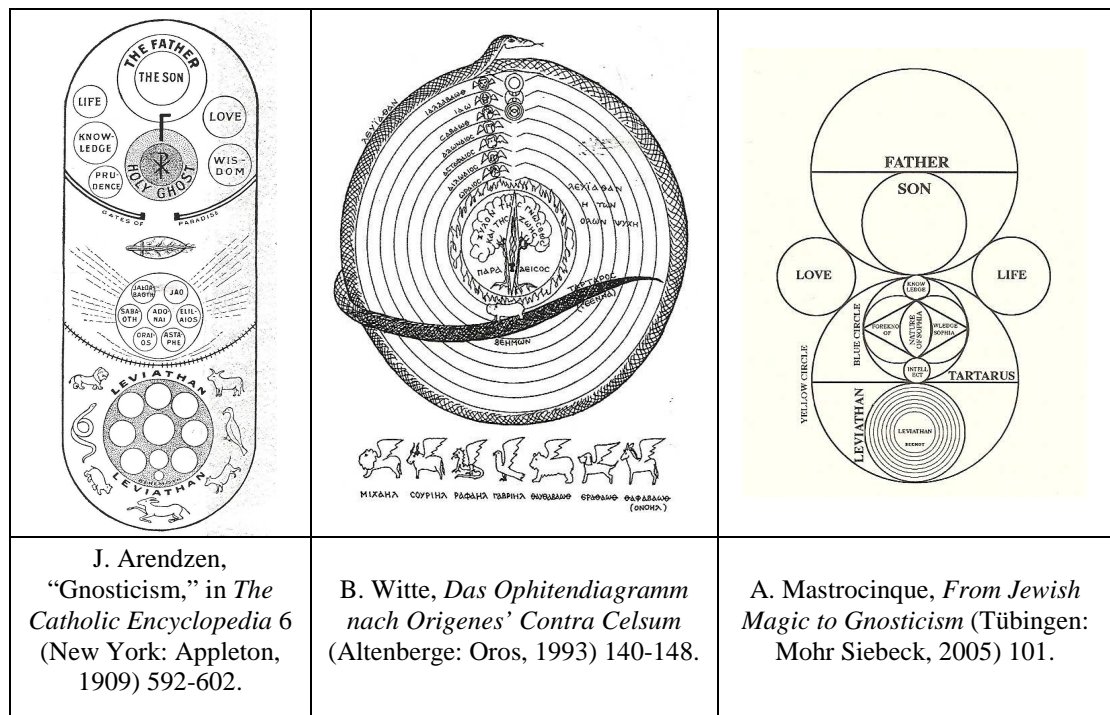
common among the gems. This is not to argue that these gems are associated with the Jeuian group, but simply to point out the presence of similar motifs. The function of the gems is uncertain; however, it has already been noted that the instructions for passing through both the aeons and the treasuries include holding a ψῆφος, a pebble, on which is inscribed a specific number that likely stands for a name. There is a possibility that the seal might also be engraved on such a stone for use in ascension.

### 5.1.3 The Ophite Diagram

Despite being the most famous diagram in the history of “Gnosticism,” this figure is not actually preserved. The extensive description of it given by Origen in *Contra Celsum* is not entirely clear, and has resulted in an impressive variety of

reconstructions by scholars.<sup>17</sup> The section actually seems to give two separate descriptions, that of Celsus and that of Origen, the two accounts differing in certain respects. The diagram consisted of circles representing a map of the celestial (and possibly supracelestial<sup>18</sup>) regions, and other images that may have represented seals to be used in the ascent ceremony.<sup>19</sup>

**Figure 5.4: Sample of Restorations of the Ophite Diagram**



The diagram was accompanied by the names and descriptions of the seven planetary archons as well as passwords to pass by them.<sup>20</sup> It may have served as an aid for the journey of the soul through the various regions, either as a postmortem or a meditative ascent.<sup>21</sup> This is in conjunction with a "sealing" or anointing, which also

<sup>17</sup> For a collection of the different modern scholarly renderings, see plates 1-9 in T. Rasimus, *Paradise Reconsidered in Gnostic Mythmaking: Rethinking Sethianism in Light of the Ophite Evidence* (Leiden: Brill, 2009).

<sup>18</sup> Scholars who feel that the supracelestial realms are included in the diagram include A. Mastrocinque, *From Jewish Magic to Gnosticism*, 96-101; A.H.B. Logan, *The Gnostics: Identifying an Early Christian Cult* (London: T&T Clark, 2006), 43; T. Rasimus, *Paradise Reconsidered*, 244.

<sup>19</sup> A.D. DeConick, "The Road for Souls Is Through the Planets: The Mysteries of the Ophites Mapped," in *Practicing Gnosis: Ritual, Magic, Theurgy and Liturgy in Nag Hammadi, Manichaean and Other Late Antique Literature. Essays in Honor of Birger A. Pearson*, A.D. DeConick, G. Shaw, and J.D. Turner, eds. (Leiden: Brill, forthcoming).

<sup>20</sup> Origen, *Cels* 6.22-38.

<sup>21</sup> Some scholars argue that the text may present a descent rather than an ascent, as Origen presents the passwords in order from outermost to innermost (B. Witte, *Das Ophitendiagramm nach Origenes'*

might be associated with a deathbed ritual<sup>22</sup> or an initiation rite.<sup>23</sup> There is little scholarly agreement on these issues;<sup>24</sup> however, these possibilities are parallel to those of the rituals and ascent descriptions found in *1* and *2 Jeu*. The baptisms, with their sealings of the disciples, appear to be initiatory rather than deathbed purifications—as is likely the case with the Ophite sealing, which is set up by Celsus as a parallel to Mithraic initiation rites (Origen, *Cels* 6.22). Indeed, the term “seal” was used in the early church to refer to baptism or part of the initiation ceremony.<sup>25</sup> However, the ascent procedure is more vague. The instructions are most likely for use in an ultimate postmortem journey, possibly prefigured by one or more ecstatic or meditative journeys.<sup>26</sup> This again seems to be the most probable interpretation for the Ophite diagram’s usage, as well. After having been sealed or purified in life, the names or passwords must be memorized before the lengthy journey of the soul past a variety of cosmic pitfalls.<sup>27</sup> Celsus’ description of certain people returning “into the archontic forms so that some become lions, some bulls, and other serpents or eagles or bears or dogs” (Origen, *Cels* 6.33) seems to suggest a notion of theriomorphic reincarnation for those who do not successfully complete the postmortem ascent.

The Ophite diagram could serve as a contemplative tool, a map, and a memorization aid for the series of passwords to be presented. Although the *Books of Jeu* do not present an overall pictorial cosmological map, the Jeu-diagrams in *1 Jeu*

*Contra Celsum* VI 22-38 (Altenberge: Oros, 1993), 35-39, 101-102, 113, 125-128. However, it is possible that Origen simply read them in order from the top to the bottom of the list, without implication for the ritual order.

<sup>22</sup> T. Hopfner, “Das Diagramm der Ophiten,” 88-89, in *Charisteria Alois Rzach zum Achtzigsten Geburtstag dargebracht* (Reichenberg: Stiepel, 1930), 86-98; N. Denzey, “Stalking Those Elusive Ophites: The Ophite Diagrams Reconsidered,” 98, 105-106; in *Essays in Honour of Frederik Wisse, ARC: The Journal of the Faculty of Religious Studies* 33 (2005), 89-122; A.H.B. Logan, *The Gnostics*, 41-42. Denzey also suggests that the two diagrams described might have been for different purposes, one for a mortuary ritual and one for a living ecstatic ascent (115).

<sup>23</sup> B. Witte, *Das Ophitendiagramm*, 39, 101-102; T. Rasimus, *Paradise Reconsidered*, 249-255; A.D. DeConick, “The Road for Souls Is Through the Planets.”

<sup>24</sup> For a discussion of arguments for both sides, see T. Rasimus, *Paradise Reconsidered*, 244-250.

<sup>25</sup> H. Chadwick, *Origen: Contra Celsum* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965), 342n1; E. Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church: History, Theology, and Liturgy in the First Five Centuries* (Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2009), especially 312-313 and 338-339. On the “Gnostic” mystery of the five seals as initiation, see A.H.B. Logan, “The Mystery of the Five Seals: Gnostic Initiation Reconsidered,” in *Vigiliae Christianae* 51 (1997), 188-206.

<sup>26</sup> On the prevalence of this combination of themes in the Hellenistic world, see A.F. Segal, “Heavenly Ascent in Hellenistic Judaism, Early Christianity and their Environment,” in *Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen Welt* Vol. 2.23.2, ed. W. Haase (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1980), 1333-1394.

<sup>27</sup> T. Rasimus, *Paradise Reconsidered*, 277.

would seem to serve a similar purpose, outlining the various levels, depicting which watchers or guardians are where, and laying out in order the other contents and residents at each stage.<sup>28</sup> At any rate, the preservation of discussion on the Ophite diagram, known both to certain pagans and Christians, demonstrates that among certain sects in the second and third centuries, diagrams were an accepted mode of religious instruction and practice, particularly as ascent preparation. The Jeuians, while certainly not Ophite, clearly embraced a version of this method for presentation of the divine realms.

## 5.2 DIAGRAMS IN THE *BOOKS OF JEU*

As A.F. Segal observes, “knowing the origin tells us something about a cultural item but it falls far short of an adequate description of its meaning in any particular culture.”<sup>29</sup> Knowing something about the use of seals and diagrams in wider Greco-Roman religious culture, and even within other branches of non-mainstream Christianity, is helpful; however, the group that produced the *Books of Jeu* did so on their own terms. Thus, having touched on a number of ancient contexts in which seals or mystical diagrams were used, an analysis of the images found in the *Books of Jeu* themselves shall now be presented.<sup>30</sup> These can be subdivided into categories: “types” (ΤΥΠΟΣ) of Jeu; “characters” (ΧΑΡΑΚΤΗΡ) of each of the Jeu-beings in the treasuries; and “seals” (ΣΦΡΑΓΙΣ) used in baptism and ascent.

### 5.2.1 The Types of Jeu

These appear only in the beginning of *I Jeu*, and refer to the phases of Jeu prior to his emanation of the entities populating all of the treasuries. The final types also possess characters, suggesting that the following phases flow naturally from these initial forms. In Figure 5.5 below both the images from the codex and those from C. Schmidt’s reconstruction will be included, as significant differences are present


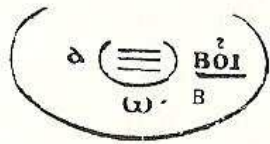


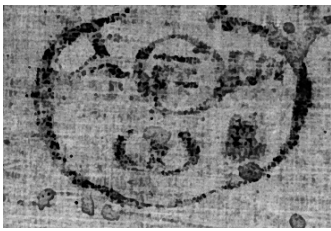
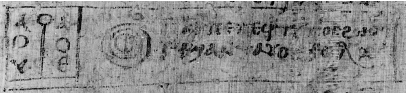

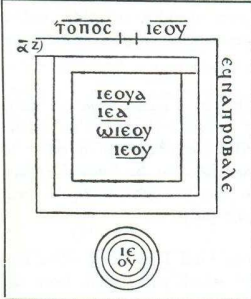


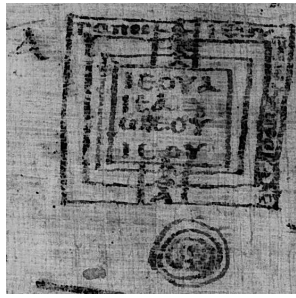

<sup>28</sup> See Section 3.2.

<sup>29</sup> A. F. Segal, *Life After Death: A History of the Afterlife in the Religions of the West* (New York: Doubleday, 2004), 175.

<sup>30</sup> On the diagrams or treasury outlines accompanying the character diagrams, see Section 3.2.

between the originals and reconstructions which have affected past scholars' interpretations.

**Figure 5.5: Types of Jeu**

		
		
<p>Type before he was moved to bring forth emanations</p>	<p>Type when he will bring forth emanations</p>	<p>Type if he brings forth</p>
		
		
<p>Top: Type before he emanated Bottom: His character (on his face)</p>	<p>The first voice; Jeu 1 (first of the treasury diagrams, with character below)</p>	<p>Type when he has emanated</p>

G.R.S. Mead proposes that squares represent substance while circles represent gods or energy.<sup>31</sup> This is a reasonable suggestion, as the squares containing the names in the following treasury diagrams do indeed seem to be representative of locations, depicting the gates and setup of each region, while the character-diagrams, which consist primarily of circular or ovoid shapes, are associated with the entity at the head of each region. However, it should be noted that certain character diagrams also utilize square or rectangular forms, and it is unlikely that a blending of substance and energy is implied in that handful of instances. His further suggestion that the three lines in the first two types, which are described in the text as the voices Jeu will give forth to sing praises to the Father and thus emanate, “represent the potential triad or trinity latent in all manifestation, and this triad acting within the tetrad of the squares produces the infinite ordering into twelves or dodecads,”<sup>32</sup> is apparently based on the faulty copying of the post-emanation diagram found in Schmidt’s edition, which in actuality has seven squares.<sup>33</sup> His description of the third type as resembling a spermatozoon with an ovum of three concentric circles, all representing the manifestation of only one of the three voices, is also interesting but questionable.<sup>34</sup>

The diagrams appear to present a progression. The first type, before Jeu is moved to emanate (ΕΜΠΑΤΟΥΚΙΜ ΕΡΟΦ ΕΤΡΕΦΤΑΥΕ-ΠΡΟΒΟΛΗ ΕΒΟΛ), opens up as he is moved and about to bring forth emanations (ΕΦΝΑΤΑΥΟ-ΠΡΟΒΟΛΗ ΕΖΡΑΙ). If he brings forth (ΕΦΩΑΝΤΑΥΟ ΕΒΟΛ), or as he is about to emanate (ΕΦΝΑΠΡΟΒΟΛΗ ΕΒΟΛ), it seems that the three voice-lines emerge from the central circle, and form concentric circles around a central kernel. The smaller diagram to the left may represent this emerging, with a line coming forth from the central circle. These diagrams appear to represent the potential for emanation, which shortly comes to fruition.

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<sup>31</sup> G.R.S. Mead, *Fragments of a Faith Forgotten* (1905; reprint: New York: University Books, 1960), 536.

<sup>32</sup> G.R.S. Mead, *Fragments of a Faith Forgotten*, 536.

<sup>33</sup> Although it might be a reference to the four squares of the first treasury diagram, it is apparent from his descriptions that he is working with Schmidt’s reproductions rather than the originals.

<sup>34</sup> G.R.S. Mead, *Fragments of a Faith Forgotten*, 536. Note that sperm cells were not discovered until the 17<sup>th</sup> century.


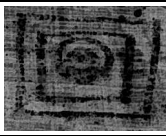


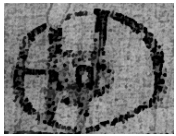



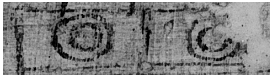


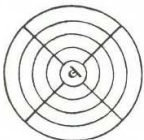
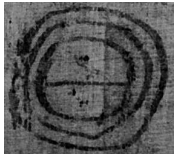
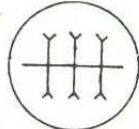
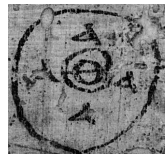


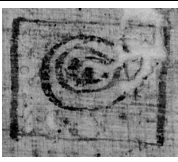
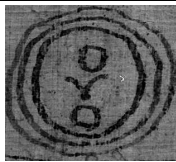
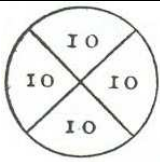
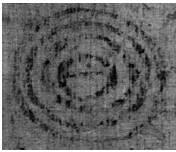

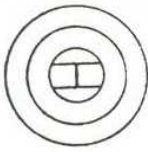
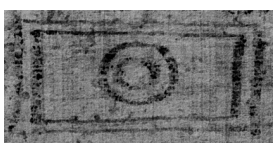
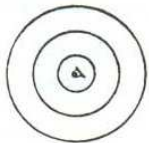

The following diagram is essentially identical to the previous type, now described as being before he emanates (**ΕΜΠΑΤΥΠΡΟΒΟΛΗ ΕΒΟΛ**). This highlights the imminence of the forthcoming emanation, which immediately follows. The inclusion of his character diagram (said to be on his face) here further acts as a reflection of what is to come. The seven concentric circles that make up his character appear to transform for the production of the first treasury: as the Father moves him, he gives voice; and “when he had given voice, there came forth this voice which is the emanation. It was of this type as it proceeded forth from one side after another of each treasury” (*1 Jeu* 51). The following diagram represents that voice, which is the prototype for the following treasury diagrams/maps. There are four concentric squares and three concentric circles, both of which contain the name of Jeu—perhaps a reflection of the pouring forth of Jeu’s original character, which consisted of seven concentric circles. It is labeled as his place, or *topos*, suggesting the locative or physical nature of the treasury diagrams. Finally, there appears his type when he has emanated (**ΝΤΕΡΕΥΠΡΟΒΑΛΗ ΕΒΟΛ**): now all seven circles are represented as squares complete with gates (represented by alphas), containing the name of Jeu “in the tongue of [Jesus’] Father”, **ΙΟΕΙΑΩΘΩΥΙΧΩΛΜΙΩ** Jeu, as it was given in the text prior to his emanating. His transformation from potential to actual ruler of the treasuries is complete. It still remains, however, for the ranks of the treasuries to come forth and populate them. Again the Father moves him, and Jeu again gives voice from his place, moving his own emanations to emanate. Thus the discussion shifts from the true god to his emanations, and their emanations which fill the remaining treasuries.

### 5.2.2 Characters of the Heads of the Treasuries

Each of the treasuries is home to a multitude of emanations, ruled by a being with a mystery name suffixed with the name Jeu. This ruler is depicted in the center of the treasury map, with pathways leading to him covered by veils and guarded by watchers. In each instance, below this representation of the treasury layout there is a diagram representing the character of that treasury’s head. The character diagrams share many characteristics with the types discussed above. They frequently consist

of concentric circles of varying numbers. Some are divided by spokes or diameters; some have squares or rectangles; and some depict vowels as part of the pattern.

**Figure 5.6: Characters of the Treasury Rulers**

			
Jeu 2	Jeu 3	Jeu 4	Jeu 5
			
Jeu 6	Jeu 7	Jeu 8	Jeu 9
			
Jeu 10	Jeu 11	Jeu 12	Jeu 14
			
Jeu 15	Jeu 16	Jeu 17	Jeu 18
			
Jeu 19	Jeu 20	Jeu 21	Jeu 22
			
Jeu 23	Jeu 24	Jeu 25	Jeu 26
			
Jeu 27	Jeu 28		

No information is given as to the use of these symbols; the text simply labels each, “His character.” It is likely that as with the character of the first Jeu, these are represented on their faces. This could suggest that they represent identifying marks on the Jeu-entities themselves, as opposed to the seals which are shown for

permission to pass through their realms. The system by which the characters were derived, however, remains obscure, and with over half of them missing, any interpretation will remain hypothetical. It should be noted that their use is dissimilar to the more typical Greco-Roman magical use of the term “*characteres*,” which as discussed above usually refers to a sort of magical alphabet that often appears in sequences of several in a row. In addition to being visually dissimilar, these are symbols of entities, not meant as an alphabetic code. They are presented individually, perhaps as identifying marks for the beings to be encountered along the ascension path. Given that this entire section appears to serve as a map, this usage would be logical.

### 5.2.3 Seals

As opposed to the types and characters, which appear to be primarily symbolic or representational, seals are used in practical or ritual contexts. There are three types of instances in which seals are used: ascension through the treasuries (*1 Jeu*), ascension through the aeons (*2 Jeu*), and in the course of the baptisms/mystery to remove the evil of the archons (*2 Jeu*). The usage of the seals for both levels of ascension is similar, although the texts are separate and use slightly different procedures.

#### 5.2.3.1 *Treasury Seals*

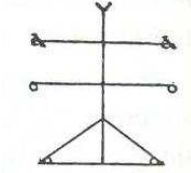
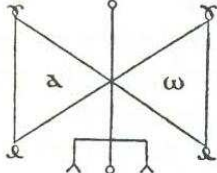
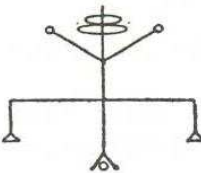
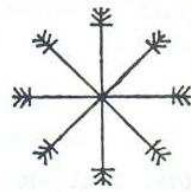
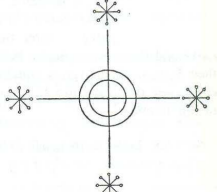
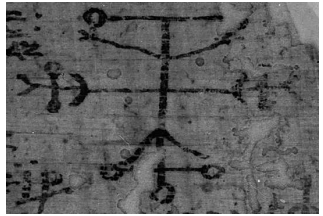
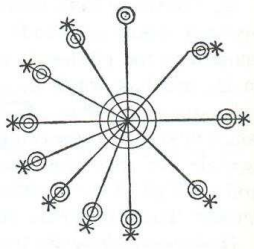
The treasury seals are part of a set of information required to pass through each treasury *en route* to the place of the true god. In addition to the seal with which one must seal oneself, there is also the name of the seal to be recited once; a “cipher,” or number likely inscribed on a pebble, which must be held in one hand; and a second name that must be recited three times. That the ascender must seal himself with the seal lends the diagrams a more active ritual purpose. The use of names/seals in conjunction with a mystical ascent in Hekhalot literature, and the necessity of holding signs or amulets in hand in certain adjuration contexts, have been discussed above.<sup>35</sup> All of the elements here combine to display the knowledge of the ascender, which in turn conveys his worthiness to ascend. When the signs are shown and the

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<sup>35</sup> Section 5.1.1.

proper words recited, all of the guardians move away, allowing passage through the treasury.

**Figure 5.7: Treasury Seals and their Names**

		
<p>54<sup>th</sup>(?) Treasury Seal Name: ΖΑΙΕΩΧΑΖ Cipher: ΟΤΛΛ (70331) Recite (thrice): ΛΑΙΩΕΩΑΖ</p>	<p>55<sup>th</sup>(?) Treasury Seal Name: ΖΩΞΑΕΖΩΖ Cipher: ΧΦΙΕ (600515) Recite (thrice): ΩΩΙΕΗΖΑΖΑΜΑΖΑ</p>	<p>56<sup>th</sup> Treasury Seal Name: ΖΩΑΖΕΟΥΕ Cipher: ΦΥΙ (90410) Recite (thrice): ΟΥΕΙΕΖΩΑΖ</p>
		
<p>57<sup>th</sup> Treasury Seal Name: ΙΕΑΖΩΗΗΖΑΘΑΕΖ Cipher: ΦΥΙΘ (90419) Recite (thrice): ΖΩΖΩΖΩΙΕΗΖΩΑ</p>	<p>58<sup>th</sup> Treasury Seal Name: ΖΑΛΙΥΖΩΑΖ Cipher: ΟΡΚΒ (70122) Recite (thrice): ΕΕΕΕΙΕΗ ΖΗΩΖΑΛΙΖΕ</p>	<p>59<sup>th</sup> Treasury Seal Name: ΖΗΗΑΩΖΩΑΖ Cipher: ΦΡΠΖ (90187) Recite (thrice): ΖΩΟΙΥΩΗΖΑ</p>
		
<p>60<sup>th</sup> Treasury Seal Name: ΖΑΖΑΦΑΖΑΖΩΖΑΗ Cipher: ΛΩΠΕ (30885) Recite (thrice): ΗΗΖΟΜΑΖΑΖΩΑΛΑΩΖΑΗΖ</p>		

In contrast to the circle patterns of the types and characters discussed so far, the seals consist primarily of straight lines and angular figures. Also coming to the fore are the spoke- or star-patterns, generally of eight points, which are furthermore of great importance among the aeon ascension seals. It is possible these seals were meant to

be carved into a pebble or gem, perhaps along with the accompanying cipher-number, which would be carried to impress the seal on the bearer at the correct station. The term seal, or σφραγίς, in addition to an impression or mark, also refers to the stone or signet of a seal-ring.<sup>36</sup> The prominence of engraved gemstones with amuletic roles in Greco-Roman culture, some with patterns similar to those of these seals, has been seen above. That physical objects would be considered part of the preparation for what is most likely a post-mortem ascent is not entirely surprising, when one considers the Egyptian practice of leaving items with the deceased—including copies of the Book of the Dead, in case the person required help remembering the long and complex series of names and spells to be recited at the proper junctures.<sup>37</sup> The “Orphic” gold lamellae represent examples of Greco-Roman-era texts for aid in the post-mortem journey; one might also consider the Greco-Roman practice of placing a coin in the mouth of the deceased, to pay for the ferry ride across the river Styx.

#### 5.2.3.2 *Aeon Seals*

The aeon seals share many characteristics with the treasury seals, including the prevalence of straight lines or star patterns, and their inclusion in formulas for practical use in ascension.

Instead of the one name to be repeated thrice as in the treasury pattern, here there are three additional names to be called upon after the presentation of the seal, name, and cipher.<sup>38</sup> The cipher is now to be held in both hands, rather than just one. It is interesting to note that the ciphers, up to the 9<sup>th</sup> aeon, begin with the numeral corresponding to the aeon.<sup>39</sup> Furthermore, the number of digits is apparently not the important factor, as the 8<sup>th</sup> aeon has only a number with tens and ones after the first numeral 8, signifying its position in the eighth spot.

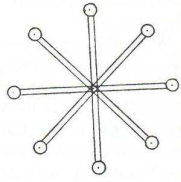
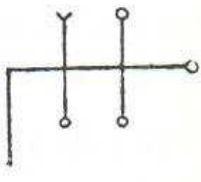
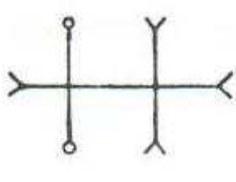
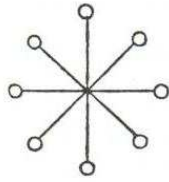
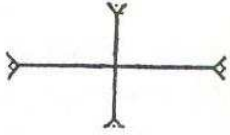
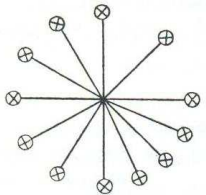
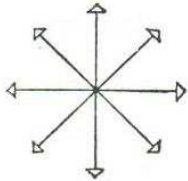
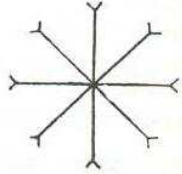
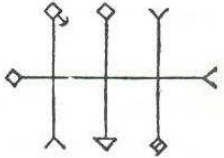
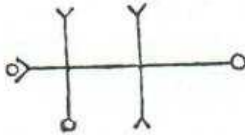

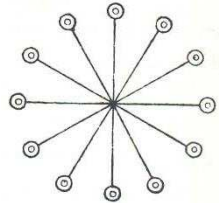
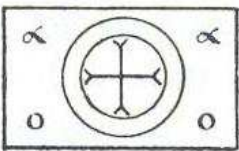
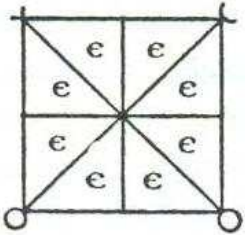
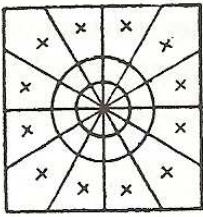
<sup>36</sup> See the definition in Liddell and Scott, *Greek-English Lexicon*, (7<sup>th</sup> ed. 1883) 1513-1514.

<sup>37</sup> Although the Book of the Dead ceased to be used as a corpus of funerary literature in the first century BCE (J.H. Taylor, *Journey through the afterlife: Ancient Egyptian Book of the Dead* [London: The British Museum Press, 2010], 59), motifs from it continued to be utilized.

<sup>38</sup> The number of names is longer in the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> aeons. The pattern for the first twelve may be related to their connection with the zodiac, and an association of the 36 decanal stars with these regions. See Ch. 6.

<sup>39</sup> The first digit of the 9<sup>th</sup> aeon cipher is currently missing. Schmidt tentatively proposed **B** as the first digit, but given the preceding pattern **Θ** is more logical, and could easily be mistaken for a **B**.

**Figure 5.8: Aeon Seals and their Names**

			
1 <sup>st</sup> Aeon Seal Name: ΖΩΖΕΖΗ Cipher: ΑΡΙΘ (1119)	2 <sup>nd</sup> Aeon Seal Name: ΘΩΖΩΑΖ Cipher: ΒCΙΘ (2219)	3 <sup>rd</sup> Aeon Seal Name: ΖΩΖΕΑΖ Cipher: ΓΤΜΘ (3349)	4 <sup>th</sup> Aeon Seal Name: ΑΖΩΖΗΩ Cipher: ΔΦΝΕ (4555)
			
5 <sup>th</sup> Aeon Seal Name: ΑΖΗΩΖΑ Cipher: ΕΤΞΘ (5369)	6 <sup>th</sup> Aeon Seal Name: ΖΑΧΩΩΜΑΖΟΖ Cipher: ϚΡΙΕ (6115)	7 <sup>th</sup> Aeon Seal Name: ΧΩΖΩΦΡΑΖΑΖ Cipher: ΖΩΠΘ (7889)	8 <sup>th</sup> Aeon Seal Name: ΖΩΞΑΩΖ Cipher: ΗΝΔ (8[-]154)
			
9 <sup>th</sup> Aeon Seal Name: ΖΩΦΡΑΚΑC Cipher: (Θ)ΩΠΘ (9889)	10 <sup>th</sup> Aeon Seal Name: ΘΩΖΑΩΖ Cipher: ΔΦΝΘ (4559)	11 <sup>th</sup> Aeon Seal Name: ΖΩΞΑΖΗ Cipher: ΕΦΝΗ (5558)	12 <sup>th</sup> Aeon Seal Name: ΖΦΡΚΑ... Cipher: ΘΩΠΕ (9885)
			
13 <sup>th</sup> Aeon Seal Name: ΖΑΞΑΦΑΡΑC Cipher: ΗΩΝΕ (8855)	14 <sup>th</sup> Aeon Seal Name: ΖΩΕΖΩΖΗΑΖΑΧ Cipher: ΘΩΞΘ (9869)	ΜΕCΟC (?) – Triple Powers Seal Name: ΖΩΩΕΖΩΗΖΑΙΩ Cipher: ΕΦΝΕ (5555)	

That no less than four of the seals consist of versions of the eight-pointed star demonstrates the significance of this figure. It clearly represents a powerful emblem for protection in these dangerous realms. Its use in the seals for the treasuries as well

confirms the belief in its potency for ascent past supraterrrestrial beings by the group producing these texts. There may be some clue to origins of parts of the diagrams in Egyptian hieroglyphics: for example, the symbol for the sun ☉, or pillar Ḳ, several of which in early times were envisioned to be supporting heaven.<sup>40</sup> Given the apparent Egyptian provenance for the origins of the group, this is an attractive possibility; however, the fact that only parts of the diagrams have such potential influence, and the likely temporal distance of the group from a setting where the hieroglyphs would be well-known, raise caution in embracing such a suggestion. In any case, the use of the symbols in the context of the seals is obscure, and any deeper interpretations of their meanings remain hypothetical.

### 5.2.3.3 *Baptismal Seals*

Detailed accounts of three baptisms (of water, fire, and Holy Spirit) and a further “mystery to remove the evil of the archons” are preserved in 2 *Jeu*, each of which involves two sealings: the first after an offering and preparation of the participants but before the prayer, and the second presented after the completion of the baptism or mystery and the ritual meal. Those used in the middle of the rite are given a “true name,” reminiscent of those of the seals used in ascent, and also an “interpretation,” which takes the form of another word or name. It is possible that the use of two names is related to a Hebrew formula that presented a secret name and an expressible name of certain entities, which became garbled in translation into Greek.<sup>41</sup> That this seal is presented prior to the prayer may suggest that this was used as a symbol of knowledge and worthiness to the entities to be invoked, similar to the aeon and treasury seals. The first seals consist of circles of branches similar to the star emblems used so frequently in the ascent seals—and the seal of the third baptism features the eight-branch star itself.<sup>42</sup> The first two may have solar and lunar

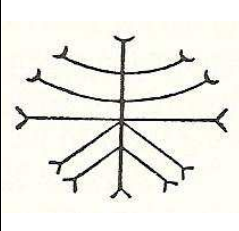
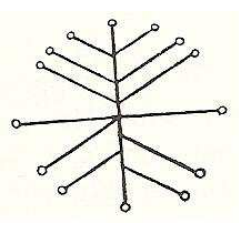
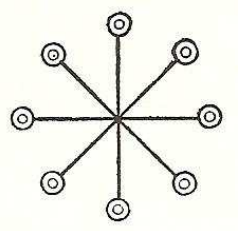
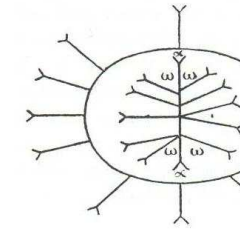

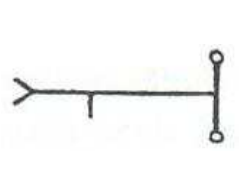

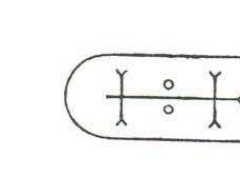
<sup>40</sup> E.A.W. Budge, *The Egyptian Book of the Dead* (1895; reprint: New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1967), ci.


<sup>41</sup> G. Scholem, “Über eine Formel,” 175-176.

<sup>42</sup> M. Rognstad sees in the first three of these diagrams depictions of the Tree of Life, the fourteen aeons, and Venus or Ishtar (“Gnostiske initiasjonritualer: En studie av initiasjonsritualene i 2. Jeubok i Codex Bruceanus.” [Masters thesis: University of Bergen, 2006], 48-53). However, the evidence is not entirely convincing, given the lack of any indication of the group’s use of Genesis mythology (beyond an Enochic reference in 3PS), the fact that when the aeons are referred to, it is always as twelve in number, and that there is no clue of a high divine role for Venus within the wider Jeudian

connections, given their twelve and fourteen branches respectively, representative of the stations of the zodiac the sun progresses through and the days of the waxing period of the moon. Although this is speculative, the group's affinity for light and their high regard of the two luminaries throughout the texts makes this a plausible path for further investigation.

**Figure 5.9: Baptism Seals**

			
			
Water	Fire	Holy Spirit	Mystery to Remove Evil of Archons
Top Row – Pre-Ritual; Bottom Row – Post-Ritual			

The second seals are not associated with names, but their use is somewhat more explicit: they are sealed on the foreheads of the disciples.<sup>43</sup> These seals are smaller and simpler, perhaps making them easier for reproduction on the forehead. It may have used oil, as in more typical Christian anointing, or indeed in Egyptian burial preparation. These were rituals to remove evil and become reborn, giving one the right for post-mortem ascent to the highest regions of the divine world. It is interesting to note that the second seal for the baptism of the Holy Spirit resembles the hieroglyph for *ka*, or spiritual essence: . The materials used for the incense offerings in these rituals also resemble recipes for *kyphi*, the incense used in Egyptian temples.<sup>44</sup> It is possible that Egyptian antecedents should be sought for the

corpus. The sun and moon as luminaries play a much stronger role with souls and the restoration of light.

<sup>43</sup> The second seal of the final ritual shares the characteristics of the first seals, with two names and no explicit sealing placement.

<sup>44</sup> See L. Manniche, *Sacred Luxuries: Fragrance, Aromatherapy, and Cosmetics in Ancient Egypt* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1999), 47-59.

other seals in this category, as with the ascent seals above, although the same cautionary notes apply.

The final seal in the mystery to remove the evil of the archons causes the disciples to become immortal, and allows them to follow Jesus on the ascent thereafter (2 *Jeu* 116). Then the instructions are given on how to pass through the aeons. The purification imparted by these rituals—epitomized by the final sealings—grants the participant immortality and is the first step toward the right to take a place in the kingdom of light.

### 5.3 CONCLUSIONS

Diagrams were a vital aspect of religious learning and practice to the authors of the two *Books of Jeu*. While certain symbols they contain are prevalent in the ancient world, among surviving texts their use here is unique. Although these texts do not present a myth of the origin of the cosmos recognizable from a Biblical tradition, the gradual unfolding of the treasures with all of their inhabitants as presented in the initial types and treasury maps—by inspiration of the highest god and the actions of the true god—certainly seems to suggest a theory of creation. They represent this unfolding through symbolic images and maps. Origins of man and earth are absent, perhaps due to the nature of the tractates. Here the population, nature and navigation of the divine realms are of utmost importance.

Besides being informative of the celestial structure, the texts serve as a handbook for the initiate, giving them the knowledge that will be necessary when the time for ascent comes. The seals, including the names and numbers meant to accompany them, clearly were meant to be studied and memorized. The baptismal rituals provided the initial preparations for a soul's eventual ascent, cleansing it of sin and sealing it to keep evil away and identify it as pure. Sealing allows the ritual to begin, and sealing ends the ritual with a permanent purity. Regardless of whether the procedure is purely a post-mortem one or whether a meditative or ecstatic ascent occurred first in life, seals provide protection for ascent, and with their names present proof of knowledge and the power to continue on the journey.

Thus, for the group utilizing these texts, diagrams are associated with notions of universal creation, divine rulers, ascent of the individual soul, and rituals of

purification—essentially every aspect of divine comprehension and practice. Knowledge of all of these is considered requisite to attain ultimate peace and glory in the world beyond. Even in the later *Pistis Sophia* texts, when the cosmological structure has apparently changed and language surrounding the highest realms has dramatically altered, hints are given that this knowledge of individual seals and diagrams is still considered necessary for the true adept. Perhaps it is unsurprising that these later, more introductory texts, which deal considerably with punishments, worldly conduct and protocol, and exoteric exegesis do not present this most sacred and secret of knowledge. However, its existence and importance remains, as the authors exhort the readers to find these mysteries in the “Books of Jeu.” From beginning to end, this knowledge remains an essential part of the soteriological beliefs and practices of the Jeuian system as a whole.



## CHAPTER 6

### FORMATION OF TRADITION: REDACTION, REFORMULATION, AND ADAPTATION

Having analyzed the *Books of Jeu* and the *Pistis Sophia* in their own internal context, it is now necessary to investigate their contents in light of other religious and cultural movements that would have been contemporary with the development of these extant Jeudian texts. From an early period syncretistic phenomena were common in Egypt, and this tendency extended into the Greco-Roman period.<sup>1</sup> The Jeudian group was certainly not a static tradition, and the texts give clear evidence of permeability, with new religious ideas and mythological figures entering into the existing structure. This evidence demonstrates both an awareness of, and interaction with, a variety of external factors. As one progresses from the earliest to the latest texts, one can detect stages of development: there are signs of a gradual movement from primarily Greco-Egyptian religious and astrological concerns to increasingly displaying a varied amalgam of religious influences, ending with a striking reinterpretation of the Sophia myth found in some non-mainstream esoteric Christian traditions, and a further mainstream Christian veneer of scriptural references and claims to apostolic authority. This chapter will discuss the influences of Egyptian religion, Greco-Roman astrology, popular *nomina barbara*, Manichaeism, Sethianism, and Valentinianism, and will also question the extent of mainstream Christian influence.

#### 6.1 EGYPTIAN RELIGION

Beyond the location of purchase of the Bruce Codex in Egypt and the fact that the sole copy of all the Jeudian texts are currently preserved only in Coptic translation, other evidence supports an Egyptian provenance for the original contents of both the

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<sup>1</sup> J.G. Griffiths, "Motivation in Early Egyptian Syncretism," 43, in *Studies in Egyptian Religion: Dedicated to Professor Jan Zandee*, M. Heerma van Ross et al., eds. (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1982), 43-55; P.D. Scott-Moncrieff, *Paganism and Christianity in Egypt* (Cambridge: 1913), 151-152. The definition (and indeed usefulness) of the term "syncretism" itself is open to debate; for an overview of recent uses and interpretations, see A.M. Leopold and J.S. Jensen, eds., *Syncretism in Religion: A Reader* (London: Equinox, 2004). Although the term has been used in vague, broad manners that are not always appropriate in the study of ancient religion, in the Jeudian texts an active adoption of outside religious concepts seems quite certain. Thus the use of the term with the sense of religious interpenetration, including the assimilation of figures and ideas in an innovative manner, is here suitable.

*Books of Jeu* and the *Pistis Sophia*. Even despite the variety of speculations about their connections with groups known from the heresiologists, their Egyptian origin is widely accepted by scholars.<sup>2</sup> The nature of the signs indicating this provenance are quite varied, ranging from the outlines and maps of the divine realm, to astronomical interest and technical tools, to ritual elements and calendrical clues, to mythological imagery. While in the later texts these elements differ from their original counterparts in role or moral nature, the varied way in which all of these appear throughout suggests that they were originally central to the group's beliefs as opposed to a secondary veneer added to a more Greco-Roman esoteric Christian system, as shall be demonstrated below. The present survey begins with the outline of the divine realm presented in *I Jeu*.

### 6.1.1 Journey through the Gates

The extensive, formulaic pattern of presenting each level of the Treasuries, its heads or rulers, accompanying emanations, and sets of watchers, strongly parallels certain spells in the *Book of the Dead* which act as a guide for the deceased through the various gates of the underworld. The number of gates through which one must traverse in the latter varies from seven to twenty-one, but one of the common features is that at each gate one must speak to three doorkeepers: a keeper, a guard

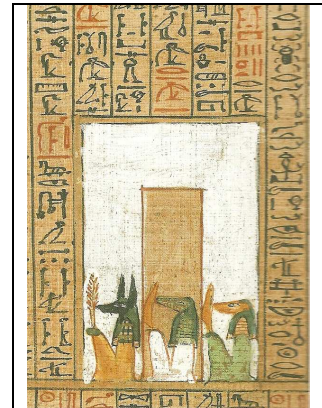
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<sup>2</sup> E. Amélineau, "Les traités gnostiques d'Oxford," 200-203, in *Revue de l'histoire des religions* (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1890), 176-215; G.R.S. Mead, *Pistis Sophia: The Gnostic Tradition of Mary Magdalene, Jesus, and his Disciples* (1921; reprint: Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, Inc., 2005), xxvii; F. Legge, *Forerunners and Rivals of Christianity Being Studies in Religious History from 330 B.C. to 330 A.D.*, Vol. 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1915), 175-177; A. von Harnack, *Die Chronologie des altchristlichen Litteratur bis Eusebius*, Vol. 2: *die Chronologie der Litteratur von Irenaeus bis Eusebius* (Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung, 1904), 184; K.R. Köstlin, "Das gnostische System des Buches Pistis Sophia," 184-196, in *Theologisches Jahrbücher* 13, von Baur and Zeller, eds. (Bielefeld-Leipzig, 1854), 137-196; C. Schmidt, *Pistis Sophia: Ein gnostisches Originalwerk des dritten Jahrhunderts aus dem Koptischen übersetzt* (1925; reprint: Graz: Edition Geheimes Wissen, 2010), 43; C. Schmidt, *Gnostische Schriften in koptischer Sprache aus dem Codex Brucianus* (Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung, 1892), 596; H.-M. Schenke, "Vorwort," xxiii, in C. Schmidt, *Koptisch-gnostische Schriften*, Vol. 1: *Die Pistis Sophia. Die beiden Bücher des Jeû. Unbekanntes altgnostisches Werk 4., um das Vorwort erweiterte Auflage herausgegeben von Hans-Martin Schenke* (1905; revised 4<sup>th</sup> edition Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1981), xvi-xxxiv; G. Massey, *Ancient Egypt: The Light of the World* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1907), 771-786 B.A. Pearson, *Ancient Gnosticism: Traditions and Literature* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007), 255; P.D. Scott-Moncrieff, *Paganism and Christianity in Egypt*, 176. Note that Scott-Moncrieff also feels the authors show a poor grasp of the finer points of Egyptian religion that suggests they were not adherents of the traditional religion (178-179). The discrepancies he notes may simply result from interpretations and modifications of this group, which undoubtedly was not merely a late version of the traditional Egyptian cult, but rather a group of Egyptian origin with a unique syncretistic system.

and an announcer. The deceased must state the names of each to be allowed passage—much as the names of each set of three watchers are stated in *I Jeu*, and their symbols are placed over the entry gates to each level. Furthermore, certain vignettes accompanying spells feature six guardian beings, which in turn could reflect the inclusion of two sets of three watchers in each of the Treasuries—one set at the entrance and one at the exit.

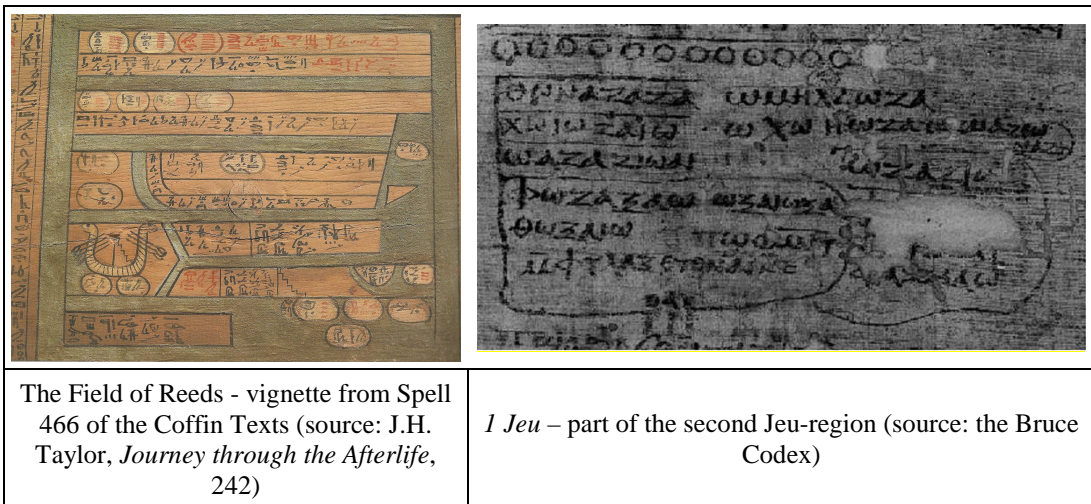
This setup is further suggested in the second section explaining the procedure for passing through each treasury, as each treasury is said to be surrounded by “six places” (*I Jeu* 84-87). The differentiation between three types of gatekeepers is also apparently present in this second section: upon giving the appropriate name, seal, and cipher at each stage, “the watchers and the ranks and the veils are drawn back,” allowing access to the Father of the treasury (*I Jeu* 84-87, 89-91). The names of the guardian beings given in the Book of the Dead texts tend to have a more descriptive nature to them; for example, “He who lives on snakes,” “Fiery,” and “Hippopotamus-faced, raging of power,” are the names of the guardians of the fifth gate in spell 144.<sup>3</sup> However, it must not be

**Figure 6.1: Guardians over the Sixth Gate in the Papyrus of Ani**



Source: J.H. Taylor, *Journey through the Afterlife*, 136

**Figure 6.2: Comparison of Afterlife Realm Maps**



<sup>3</sup> J.H. Taylor, *Journey through the afterlife: Ancient Egyptian Book of the Dead* (London: The British Museum Press, 2010), 136.

ruled out that the mysterious names in *1 Jeu* possessed (or once possessed, and were corrupted in transmission) a concrete meaning to those initiated into the group. At any rate, the depiction of the entities one might expect to meet, and indeed maps of the realms beyond, were commonplace in many of the Coffin Texts as well as the *Book of the Dead* spells.

The goal for this journey through various gates in the Book of the Dead was to reach Osiris in the innermost region, beyond the final gate. It should be noted that while the deceased acquired an “Osiris aspect,” this did not entail a direct association of the deceased and the god; rather, it associated the deceased with the god’s devotees, and upon penetrating the final gate, carried the notion of belonging to that king of the underworld’s court.<sup>4</sup> It seems likely that the Jeu-beings in the Treasuries of Light follow a similar theme. Jesus tells the disciples, “I have borne you into the places of those of the innermost, as you are a rank, so that you proceed with me in all places to which we shall go, so that you serve me in all the places to which I will go, and I will call you disciples” (*1 Jeu* 89). There are many ranks within the treasuries, but the disciples are thus a unit of Jesus’ retinue, as he himself holds the second-highest rank in the divine world—slightly above that of the demiurge Jeu, but after his Father, the unapproachable god. This parallels the Egyptian desire to remain in the presence of the highest lord of the underworld. *2 Jeu* also features the conversion of the disciples into a rank in the treasury of the true god, after they have completed all the mysteries of the preceding places and reached the innermost region (*2 Jeu* 125). They are thus allowed to remain in the presence of the true god, the pinnacle to which a human could aspire.

### 6.1.2 A Stellar Afterlife

From the earliest written records in Egypt, it was believed that the king was destined to ascend to the stars after death, taking his place as one of the “imperishable” or “indestructible” stars—the circumpolar stars which never set. The length of time allotted for the mummification process was also tied to stellar imagery: the seventy-day process was associated with the period of time that the star Sothis/Sirius

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<sup>4</sup> M. Smith, *Traversing Eternity: Texts for the Afterlife from Ptolemaic and Roman Egypt* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 7. It might also be noted that the highest-ranking angels in *3 Enoch* have the name of YHWH appended to their names, demonstrating their closeness to the high deity.

disappeared before its heliacal rising to mark the beginning of the year.<sup>5</sup> The postmortem goal could also be viewed as a joining of the sun god Ra's retinue, traversing the sky in his "bark of millions"—again, referring to a stellar array. These various positions—joining Osiris in the underworld, joining Ra in his bark, and becoming an eternal star—were not viewed as mutually exclusive, and indeed went hand in hand.

While the idea of ascending to the sky and gaining a position as a star was originally reserved for the Egyptian royalty, it was eventually expanded to include others. In the Ptolemaic and Roman periods there are numerous texts referring to a variety of individuals achieving this honored position.<sup>6</sup> It would not, then, be unwarranted to think the users of the *Books of Jeu* might have envisioned a similar stellar afterlife, ascending through the multitude of starry regions to reach the pinnacle of stars to the north. Although in the Egyptian texts the series of gates, guardians, and passwords are generally restricted to spells describing passage to the underworld, it has been established that the Egyptians had a multidimensional view of the afterlife. It is possible that this group extended this idea to the ascension journey, bypassing the sojourn in the underworld. The *Books of Jeu* are highly concerned with realms of *light*, a concept at odds with the dark realm of the Egyptian underworld. The fact that the destinies of underworld journey, retinue of the sun god, and star were all connected in the early stages would allow for a later development combining elements from all of the above: the journey leads to the astral realm, where one remains in the place of the sun/deity of the regions of light in the form of a star. In *2 Jeu* where the Greco-Roman and non-mainstream esoteric Christian ideas of the planetary heavens and zodiacal sphere come more clearly into play, the disciples are told that at the end of their journey they shall remain as a rank in the place of the true god over the treasuries of light, suggesting their conversion into a set of stars or a constellation.

There is further potential for astronomical connection in *2 Jeu*'s instructions for traversing the twelve aeons. At each level one is given a set of three names to

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<sup>5</sup> M. Smith, *Traversing Eternity*, 36.

<sup>6</sup> See M. Smith, *Traversing Eternity*, 197, 239, 289, 293, 326, etc. Compare also Dan. 12:3 for a non-Egyptian notion of the wise becoming as stars in the next life in the later centuries BCE.

recite<sup>7</sup>—perhaps reflecting the thirty-six decans or decan-stars originally used in Egyptian astral timekeeping prior to the implementation of the twelve-fold zodiac, and adopted to some extent in the Greco-Roman astrological scheme.<sup>8</sup> In the later periods these decans were divided into groups of three and associated with each of the twelve zodiacal signs. The assigning of three names to be recited at each aeonic level may reflect such a connection. As a final note on potential astrological connections between Egyptian systems and those found in the *Books of Jeu*, it should be observed that in addition to the thirty-six decans, twenty-four hour stars were also acknowledged, separate from the decanal belt.<sup>9</sup> In 2 *Jeu*, the first twelve aeons feature three name-passwords each—connecting them with zodiac/decanes of the ecliptic—and the thirteenth aeon contains twenty-four emanations. Perhaps this reflects an attempt to maintain the importance of astronomical divisions of the past, while still accommodating changing views on both the created realm and the upper realms of light.<sup>10</sup>

### 6.1.3 Ritual Procedures

Parallels between the *Books of Jeu* and Egyptian religio-magical practices can also be detected in ritual elements beyond the gatekeepers and passwords. Certain spells involved “encircling...or facing in a particular direction – some spells were to be repeated four times, which probably implies facing the cardinal points from which danger might approach.”<sup>11</sup> The two *Books of Jeu*, the richest in ritual detail of the corpus, feature instances of reciting magical names or prayers while turning to the “four corners” of the treasury, world, or general location in which the words are

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<sup>7</sup> It is true that in the transcription for the fifth, eighth, ninth, and twelfth aeons, either two or four names are distinguished. Unfortunately the manuscript is corrupt such that checking the transcription is impossible. In at least one of these instances even the transcription acknowledges an illegible lacuna such that the number of names is unknowable. It seems likely, however, given the repetitive and systematic nature of the author’s system, that three names were meant for each level.

<sup>8</sup> See Manilius, *Astronomica* IV.294-407, G.P. Goold, “Introduction” to Manilius’ *Astronomica* (London: Heinemann Ltd., 1977), lxxxv-lxxxvii; see also J. Evans, “The Astrologer’s Apparatus: A Picture of Professional Practice in Greco-Roman Egypt,” 2, in *Journal for the History of Astronomy* 35 (2004), 1-44, and T. Barton, *Ancient Astrology* (London: Routledge, 1994), 28-29, especially the passage from Stobaeus, Excerpt 6, 1.21.9, 1.189.

<sup>9</sup> O. Neugebauer and R.A. Parker, *Egyptian Astronomical Texts*, Vol. 2: *The Ramesside Star Clocks* (London: Brown University Press, 1969), 5.

<sup>10</sup> It should be observed that the flight of the evil entities of the early aeons to the “west” as a negative realm is decidedly non-Egyptian, as shall be discussed further below.

<sup>11</sup> J.H. Taylor, *Journey through the afterlife*, 33.

being recited (*1 Jeu* 91; *2 Jeu* 107, 109, 114, 116). The same procedure is found in *4PSa*, when Jesus recites names to the four corners of the world before requesting the beings of the archons to move aside and allow himself and the disciples passage (*4PSa* 353-354), and also before opening their eyes to the light (*4PSa* 367). Furthermore there are instances of prayers or rituals wherein Jesus has the disciples surround him and/or stand with their feet together, suggesting that they would stand together in a protective circle (*1 Jeu* 92; *2 Jeu* 107, 109, 114, 115). All of these rites—in *1 Jeu* reciting the name to suffice for passage through all of the treasures, in *4PSa* for safety from the aeonic archons and prior to revelation, and in *2 Jeu* during the baptisms to remove the influence of sin—are performed in a context where evil entities might wish to cause them harm or stop their progress, thus necessitating these defensive positions and maneuvers. The admonition to the disciples not to give the mysteries to any but those who are worthy—including a list of family members (“do not give them to father, or mother, or brother, or sister, or relative...” [*2 Jeu* 100])—also has its parallels in the *Book of the Dead*, where several spells are accompanied by the warning not to use them for anyone but oneself, not even one’s father or son.<sup>12</sup> The expansion of the list in *2 Jeu* to include female family members reflects the later text’s active encompassing of male and female discipleship in its language.

#### 6.1.4 Ouroboros Imagery

The Egyptian ties in the *Pistis Sophia* are of a different nature, but are nonetheless prevalent. The description of the sun and the moon near the beginning of *4PSa* show traces within their amalgam of imagery. The *ouroboros*—a dragon or snake with its tail in its mouth—bearing the seven planetary powers as the disc of the sun could be connected with the figure of Mehen—the coiled snake or *ouroboros* that was said to surround the world, protecting it from chaos, and defending Ra and his solar bark.<sup>13</sup> Its positive nature is bolstered here by its juxtaposition with the lunar boat that

<sup>12</sup> See spells 133b, 137, 190 in *The Book of the Dead OR Going Forth by Day: Ideas of the Ancient Egyptians Concerning the Hereafter as Expressed in Their Own Terms* (T.G. Allen, trans. [Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1974]).

<sup>13</sup> J. H. Taylor, *Death and the Afterlife in Ancient Egypt* (London: British Museum Press, 2001), 238; A. Schweitzer, *The Sungod’s Journey Through the Netherworld: Reading the Ancient Egyptian Amduat*, E. Hornung, trans. (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1994), 218.

collects the light of the archons. However, the snake surrounding the world was not an unequivocally positive image in Egypt. The transformation of the *ouroboros* figure into the personification of evil is complete in *3PS*, where the dragon of the outer darkness is described as having its tail in its mouth, trapping sinners within its inner chambers. This development ties it closer with the evil serpent Apep, Ra's mortal enemy who needed to be overcome every night, and with Ankh-Neteru, as an *ouroboros* with underworld symbolism through whom Ra traveled in his nightly journey.<sup>14</sup> This association is furthered by the twelve beings living within its twelve chambers with names that change "according to the hour" (*3PS* 319). In Ra's journey through the underworld, he visits a different chamber in each of the twelve hours of the night. The fact that in *3PS* the dragon is said to be visible while the sun is beneath the world reflects both the physical world-encompassing nature of the dragon as well as the sun's journey in relation to it (*3PS* 332).

Furthermore the sinners are taken into the dragon "through the mouth of the tail" (ϸΕΝΑΧΙΤΟΥ ΕΒΟΛ ΖΝ ΤΤΑΠΡΟ ΜΠϸΑΤ; *3PS* 320)—not simply swallowed through the jaws as one might expect. This reflects the mode of entry of Ra into the serpent in the *Amduat*, where he enters through the tail and exits through the mouth.<sup>15</sup> It is suggested that souls exit through the mouth of the dragon if they receive a second chance by virtue of a prayer or ritual performed on their behalf by one still living, furthering this connection (*3PS* 324). The additional exits within each chamber found in *3PS*, however, appear to be an original innovation. This perhaps balances the fact that, unlike in more typical Egyptian tradition, no light or rejuvenation ever reaches those within its chambers; it is purely a place of punishment rather than an accepted destination for souls within the underworld. By providing an "emergency exit" for those with the correct knowledge, it gives a possibility of a second chance in what is otherwise a sentence for complete destruction.

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<sup>14</sup> B. Mundkur, *The Cult of the Serpent: An Interdisciplinary Survey of its Manifestations and Origins* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1983), 76; E.A.W. Budge, *The Book of Am-Tuat*, (London: Kegan, Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., 1905), 259-261.

<sup>15</sup> E.A.W. Budge, *The Book of Am-Tuat*, 261; referred to in J. Assmann, *Death and Salvation in Ancient Egypt*, D. Lorton, trans. (London: Cornell University Press, 2001), 183.

### 6.1.5 Decans, Astrology, and Anthropogony

The possible but unspecified implication of the decanal star system in *2 Jeu* has already been discussed above. The term “decan” (ΔΕΚΑΝΟC) appears in four of the five *Pistis Sophia* texts.<sup>16</sup> In *4PSa* it is as a single mention, as one of the variety of entities that the sexually sinning archons of Sabaoth begot: archons, archangels, angels, ministers, and decans. Jeu then binds all of these beings in the Heimarmene-sphere, suggesting that they are all forms of stars found within the sphere of fixed stars. This would allow for the Egyptian interpretation of the decans as starry gods tied into the workings of fate. *3PS* furthers these fate-ties in the two instances they arise: the decans are said to “act upon the soul in the bodies of the soul in the world (ΝΑΪ ΕΨΑΥΡ̄ΖΩΒ ΕΤΕΨΥΧΗ ΖΡΑΪ Ζ̄Ν Ν̄CΩΜΑ Ν̄ΤΕΨΥΧΗ Ζ̄Ν ΠΚΟCΜΟC)” (*3PS* 336); they are also involved in the formation of the fetus in the womb, along with the archons of the Heimarmene (zodiac) and the 365 ministers (day-keepers), suggesting again that the decans have their role in the starry sphere and prison of time and fate (*3PS* 342-343).<sup>17</sup> The astrological significance of the decans is still more blatant in *1/2PS*, where in addition to their role in the formation of the body (*IPS* 14), they are also directly associated with the soothsayers. These soothsayers attempt to gain information from the decans, but their efforts are frustrated by Jesus. (*IPS* 31).

The term “decan” does appear in the Bruce Codex, but not in the context of either of the *Books of Jeu*. It arises in the fragmentary hymn praising the First Mystery in relation to the establishing of the aeons.<sup>18</sup> In each stanza, the unidentified speaker (apparently Jesus) refers to Jeu’s founding of one of the thirteen aeons, and the fact that he has “set up archons and decans and ministers” within it. This fragment shares terminology and cosmogonical suppositions with the later *Pistis Sophia* texts, and seems to place the decans firmly within the astrological tradition.

Returning to *3PS* and the role of the ministers and decans in forming the fetus, it is specified that the time required to form “the whole body with all its

<sup>16</sup> Excepting the fragmentary *4PSb*.

<sup>17</sup> The ministers also seal the fetus with multiple significant dates in its formation, the astrological significance of which will be discussed below, Section 6.2.5.

<sup>18</sup> *1 Jeu* 79-82.

members” within the womb is 70 days (3PS 343)—the same time allotted for the embalming of the dead in Egyptian practice, which as noted above was tied with the cycle of the star Sothis. With the negative view of the physical body held by the author at this point, this connection between the formation of the human body and the embalming of the dead is unlikely to be a coincidence. The formation of the body from the sweat, tears, and breath of the archons also has parallels in the Egyptian system, wherein the gods and humanity are formed from the sweat and tears of a higher being (3PS 333-334).<sup>19</sup>

### 6.1.6 Other Entities and Imagery

Returning for a moment to imagery in 4PSa, accompanying the *ouroboros* bearing the planetary powers is the boat of the moon. The text states, “But the base of the moon was of the type of a boat, and a male dragon and a female dragon steered it, while two white bulls drew it. And the likeness of a child was at the back of the moon, and guided the dragons as they stole the light of the archons from them, while a cat-face was in front of it” (4PSa 354-355). The dragons steering this boat will be discussed in the Manichaean section below, but the two white bulls that pull the boat may be tied to Egyptian funerary practice. After embalming, the body of the deceased was placed on a catafalque in a boat-shaped base, which in turn was on a sledge.<sup>20</sup> This sledge was pulled either by male friends or by oxen, and a cohort of white oxen to pull it was desirable.<sup>21</sup> Thus the body was transported to its final resting place. Here, the light of the archons is taken on a journey from its imprisonment in the evil beings of the left to its proper place, as the deceased went on a journey to his rightful place in the afterlife post-embalming. The child who guides the dragons of the moon may be associated with the moon-god Khonsu; alternatively, it may be representative of the child Harpocrates, who was sometimes depicted on the boat of the sun.<sup>22</sup> Scott-Moncrieff believes it must be a confused interpretation of the solar child Harpocrates, and takes the mistaken lunar attribution

<sup>19</sup> L. Kákosy, “Gnosis und ägyptische Religion,” 245-246, in *Le Origini Dello Gnosticismo: Colloquio di Messina 13-18 Aprile 1966*, U. Bianchi, ed. (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1967), 238-247.

<sup>20</sup> J. H. Taylor, *Death and the Afterlife in Ancient Egypt*, 187.

<sup>21</sup> See 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty stela in J. Assmann, *Death and Salvation in Ancient Egypt*, 301.

<sup>22</sup> L. Kákosy, “Gnosis und ägyptische Religion,” 245; P.D. Scott-Moncrieff, *Paganism and Christianity in Egypt*, 179.

as evidence that the author was not well-versed in Egyptian religion and imagery. It might also be noted that the adult version of Harpocrates, Horus, *is* associated with the moon. As for the lunar Khonsu, he is usually depicted with the sidelock of hair that symbolized childhood; he was also associated with boats<sup>23</sup> and the movement of the moon in its orbit.<sup>24</sup> Thus, the possibility that he is the one intended here cannot be completely ruled out. The cat-face at the front of the vessel is likely related to Bast, the cat and sun goddess who was also considered a moon goddess in the later period after Greek influence. She was sometimes viewed as the moon-eye of Horus, whose eyes were tied to the two luminaries. Furthermore, both Bubastis (*4PSa* 361, 362, 363, 364, 366) and Typhon (*4PSa* 364, 365) play roles in *4PSa*—Bubastis being the Hellenized form of Bastet, who was also associated with Isis and Aphrodite;<sup>25</sup> and Typhon being the Greek name for the evil god Seth.<sup>26</sup>

While the positive Egyptian afterlife destination Amente—the West—has been twisted into a place of punishment throughout these texts,<sup>27</sup> in *3PS* it is also home to the “dog-face” who deals with judgments of the sinners there. This dog-face is likely to be a version of Anubis, who was portrayed with the head of a jackal and was featured as a key figure in Egyptian judgment scenes.<sup>28</sup> The other animal-headed beings that dwell within the dragon of the outer darkness would also seem to reflect the Egyptian iconographic tradition;<sup>29</sup> while originally animal-headed imagery

<sup>23</sup> M.A. Murray, *Egyptian Temples* (1931; reprint: Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, Inc., 2002), 96-99.

<sup>24</sup> D.B. Redford, *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt*, Vol. 2 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 482.

<sup>25</sup> S.K. Heyob, *The Cult of Isis Among Women in the Greco-Roman World* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1975), 51.

<sup>26</sup> See L. Kákosy, “Gnosis und ägyptische Religion,” 246; A. von Lieven, “Gnosis and Astrology: ‘Book IV’ of the Pistis Sophia,” 228, in *Under One Sky: Astronomy and Mathematics in the Ancient Near East*, J.M. Steele and A. Imhausen, eds. (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2002) 223-234.

<sup>27</sup> This association of Amente with hell or a realm of punishment was a part of Coptic Christianity in general; see R.K. Ritner, “Egypt under Roman Rule: the legacy of Ancient Egypt,” 21, in *The Cambridge History of Egypt*, Vol. 1: *Islamic Egypt, 640-1517*, C.F. Petry, ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 1-33.

<sup>28</sup> It should be noted that the Ariel found in Amente in *4PSb* and *3PS* is not Jaldabaoth, despite the connection of the two figures in texts such as *OrigWorld*. In the *Pistis Sophia* Jaldabaoth is associated exclusively with the Chaos region and has a lion face, as he does in other texts, while Ariel is tied to Amente and the dog-faced entity there.

<sup>29</sup> Again, P.D. Scott-Moncrieff observes that the animals chosen do not entirely match up with those used in ancient Egyptian sources, and takes this as a sign that the sources being used by the author were hopelessly corrupt (*Paganism and Christianity in Egypt*, 178-179); one must keep in mind that these texts originated well after the ancient forms of Egyptian religion had faded with time, and also

represented positive gods and guardians as well as evil beings, here they have become purely demonic entities in charge of punishments and destined for destruction.

### 6.1.7 Summary of Egyptian Influence

Although a variety of religious and cultural influences were involved in the composition of the Jeuian texts, as has been demonstrated here they are very likely to be originally of Egyptian provenance. This is shown variously through the cosmogony and journey through the heavenly realms, ritual protocol and procedure, astronomical mainstays, anthropogony, and general imagery of the divine realm and certain of its inhabitants. Although the correspondences are far from exact—indeed, the associations of some of these elements are opposite those of their older Egyptian counterparts with their positive view of the stars, materiality, and incarnation—the themes and vocabulary used from the earliest texts onward cannot be ignored. The earlier *Books of Jeu* present a handbook of earthly initiation and post-mortem travel or ascension of a variety recognizable in the *Book of the Dead*, while the later *Pistis Sophia* texts make use of Egyptian mythological imagery, astrological theory and anthropogonical speculation. While the earliest texts—particularly *I Jeu*—are practically mirror images of Egyptian initiatory and mortuary literature, the latest texts of *I/2PS* contain the least distinctly Egyptian material. This is in keeping with the overall trend of developing ideas that shall be further demonstrated in the following sections. Over time the religious and cultural environment around the group shifted, making this ancient imagery that once captivated the imagination fall away in favor of Biblical references, demonization of the stars and their motions, emphasis on the notion of an Ineffable god, and the anticosmic mythology of certain branches of later Greco-Roman era non-mainstream esoteric Christianities that required a Savior to descend into the world. While early scholars of these texts viewed them as convoluted developments of the Christian Gnosis known from the heresiologists with added Egyptian imagery, the truth, in fact, is the opposite. That

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that this group was open to updating imagery. Despite the differences, an Egyptian source seems certain.

is, they are likely to represent an original Egyptian system that gradually adopted language and imagery from various non-mainstream esoteric Christian groups.

## 6.2 ASTROLOGY

Astrology is perhaps one of the most self-evident elements present in the Jeuian texts—particularly in *4PSa*, where discussion of the planets and zodiac signs by their regular Greek names is present, and also in *IPS*, with the events of Jesus’ ascension and their astrological/astronomical effects. Astrological concepts are prevalent in all of the Jeuian texts; however, the nature of astrological concerns changes from text to text. Because of this, while the other sections of this chapter present individual concepts and trace them through the whole corpus, here analysis will be given by text in chronological order from earliest to latest in order to highlight the developments and why they may have taken place.<sup>30</sup>

### 6.2.1 Astrology in *1 Jeu*

The two *Books of Jeu* are cosmologically the most enigmatic texts of the present Jeuian corpus. *1 Jeu* in particular does not correspond with any other known text on the structure of the divine realms. As has been discussed elsewhere in this thesis, the current mutilated state of the document makes it impossible to get a clear view of the overall structure the author had in mind; however, it is highly likely that there were a total of sixty “treasuries,” which progressed in order from the first and innermost to the sixtieth and outermost. They were further organized such that there were “two ranks of the Fatherhood within, and one in the middle, and two outside (ΕΡΕ-ΝΤΕ ΝΤΑΞΙC ΜΜΝΤΕΙΩΤ ΖΙΖΟΥΝ ΑΥΩ ΟΥΕΙ ΖΝ-ΤΜΗΤΕ. ΑΥΩ ΝΤΕ ΖΙΒΟΛ).” In addition, there are “five ranks of Fatherhood...in the middle (ΜΗΤΕ), which are the places of the God who is in the midst of the All” (*1 Jeu* 83).

The first thing that is immediately striking about this passage is the use of the term “midst” or “middle”—a technical term for the ecliptic in much ancient

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<sup>30</sup> For a broad discussion of the use and development of astrology in Hellenistic culture, see A. Bouché-Leclercq, *L’astrologie grecque* (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1899).

astronomical and astrological literature.<sup>31</sup> In *2 Jeu* there is also a “midst” realm located between the aeons and the treasuries, this time using the Greek term, μέσος. In the *Pistis Sophia* texts there are *two* realms of the midst, one neutral designated by the Greek term and inhabited by the Virgin of the Light, the other negative, called by the Coptic term used here, and at least in the early stages inhabited by the five great archons.<sup>32</sup> That there are “five ranks” within the middle rank of the *1 Jeu* treasuries is unlikely to be a coincidence. As is evident from the later texts, the five planets (excluding the sun and moon from the traditional ancient conception of seven planets) are often grouped together in the system of the users of these texts—although the opinion on the role they play changes dramatically over time. These five ranks “in the places of the God who is in the midst of the All,” then, represent the planets, and are not counted within the total number of the sixty treasuries.

In an ambiguous, damaged passage, the ranks of the five trees—a mystery that appears in all of the lists of mysteries in the later texts—are mentioned in relation to the treasuries. MacDermot’s translation is as follows: “Thou hast caused it [an emanation] to produce 60 emanations which are these fatherhoods. Thou hast set up one (as God?) corresponding to treasuries from the first to the last of them all. It is they which thou hast named as the ranks of the five trees” (*1 Jeu* 96). It is unclear from the passage what exactly is designated as the ranks of the five trees. However, based on the plural (ΕΤΕ-ΝΤΟΟΥ ΝΕ ΝΤΑΚ†-ΡΑΝ ΕΡΟΟΥ) and the term “rank” (ΤΑΞΙC) as descriptor, it is possible that the five ranks of the midst—the planets—are meant. The image of trees has been used in other ancient contexts to refer to divine beings, and especially planetary beings.<sup>33</sup> This would fit in well with the astrological framework of the planets ruling over the emanations of the treasuries—the stars and divisions of the celestial sphere, as shall shortly be demonstrated.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> See Ptolemy, *Tetrabiblos* I.9

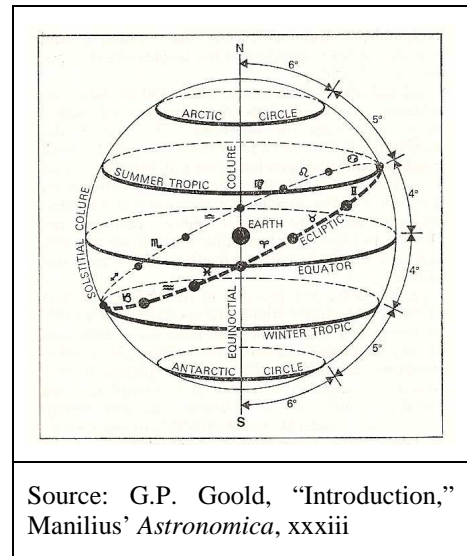
<sup>32</sup> The two Midst realms are discussed further in Sections 3.4 and 3.9.

<sup>33</sup> See A. Toepel, “Planetary Demons in Early Jewish Literature,” in *Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha* 14 (2005), 231-238, especially 233-234.

<sup>34</sup> The idea of the emanations of the treasuries as stars is not unprecedented; the notion of angels as stars is also known from apocalyptic literature (C.A. Gieschen, *Angelomorphic Christology: Antecedents and Early Evidence* [Leiden: Brill, 1998], 28).

There was an idea within ancient astronomy of five parallel celestial circles: the Arctic and Antarctic circles, the summer and winter tropics, and the equator (Figure 6.3).<sup>35</sup> The ecliptic cut a wide path, touching the tropic circles at each equinox and the equator at the solstices. It is possible, then, that the two outer, two inner, and one middle rank of the treasuries represent these celestial divisions, with each circle divided into twelve, for a total of sixty celestial regions through which an ascending soul might pass. The five

**Figure 6.3: The Fixed Circles of the Sky**



planet-ranks move through the midst (**MHT€**), which as the ecliptic is independent of the parallel circle ranks, and here is the place of “the God who is in the midst of the All”—Jeu, who dwells in the first treasury in the innermost of the inner (*I Jeu* 89).<sup>36</sup>

As convenient a method for mapping the sky as this might have been, it should be remembered that half of the sky would have been wholly unknown, and thus the resulting descriptions of each rank cannot be imagined to represent an entirely concrete depiction of the starry abodes. The fact that the names given for both the rulers and smaller emanations in each rank are otherwise unknown from either religious or astronomical texts demonstrates that the author or group was involved in speculative designation of the heavenly beings based on a uniform grid of the celestial sphere—each portion containing an equal number of beings, regardless of observable entities.

In the context of a celestial sphere-based interpretation of the Treasuries of Light and the entities inhabiting them, the nature of the highest divine beings—the

<sup>35</sup> See Manilius, *Astronomica* I.563a-602; extract from Geminus, *Introduction to the Phenomena* in J. Evans, *The History and Practice of Ancient Astronomy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998) 91-94; see also G.P. Goold, “Introduction” to Manilius’ *Astronomica*, xxxiii.

<sup>36</sup> Note that the designation of this God is ambiguous—elsewhere in *I Jeu*, Jeu is referred to as the “true God,” while the Father of Jesus is called the Father or the unapproachable God. Jeu seems the most likely candidate, as he is described as having a physical location, whereas the unapproachable God appears to be purely ineffable and without a specific dwelling—indeed, he is surrounded by and distributed through all the places (*I Jeu* 94).

unapproachable God, Jesus, and Jeu—should be considered. The unapproachable God is described as shining within himself, and shining forth to form the emanations from Jesus to Jeu all the way down to the places of the treasuries, distributing himself throughout. He is ineffable, both filling and being surrounded by all. Jesus, on the other hand, as his first emanation which first shone within him before being poured forth, describes himself in praise to his Father as “being thy whole likeness and thy whole image” (*I Jeu* 93). He is thus a light-being, but not necessarily to be considered as a visible element such as the stars. Jeu, however, the true God, is brought forth to effect physical changes: the Father “will move him to bring forth other emanations, so that they fill these places...he will be set up in this type as head of the treasuries which are outside this” (*I Jeu* 47; see also *I Jeu* 95-97). This seems to suggest that his role is a more concrete one in the cosmos. The fact that he is called “‘Jeu,’ so that those in all the places should be called ‘Jeu,’ so that they should be made kings over them all” (*I Jeu* 97) further suggests a more essential tie with the cosmic entities, even as he is their head. Could Jeu here be considered as the Sun, ruler of the cosmic treasuries? This is a distinct possibility, for while he is set apart from the five ranks of planets, they are still said to be in his places—the ecliptic, the path of the sun. Given the Egyptian ties of the texts as a whole, a strong reverence for the sun over and above that for the other cosmic deities would not be out of place.<sup>37</sup>

There would thus appear to be here a combination of visible astronomical religion and sun-reverence with the more metaphysical, ineffable supreme God of the Platonists and Christians. The five trees (or planets) serve over the sixty treasuries (or celestial sphere-divisions) and their emanations, separate from them but still subject to the *true* God and producer of all the emanations, Jeu, the sun. The unapproachable God, an incorporeal, ineffable being which permeates all existence, is indirectly the cause of the visible realm through his production and influencing of Jeu. Jeu thus serves as a version of the Platonic demiurge—creator of the physical realm who leaves creation of the lower emanations to his own emanations, but in no way negative or ignorant as in other non-mainstream esoteric Christian traditions. It is indeed a complex and unique amalgamation of ideas.

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<sup>37</sup> His later title as one of the two “great lights” (*APSa* 360) may also reflect this association.

### 6.2.2 Astrology in 2 *Jeu*

2 *Jeu* is no less complex, but it appears to be operating in an almost entirely different system. No more are the 60 treasuries set out in even ranks, ruled by a demiurge and flanked by the planets. Previously always plural, the “Treasury of Light” is now a single entity—although in the longest account of the places through which the ascending disciples will travel, there are at least two treasuries explicitly mentioned (2 *Jeu* 123). The place of the “true God” is still the farthest one can hope to reach, but this entity is now distinct from *Jeu*, who as the “father of the Treasury of Light” now remains several ranks behind. Much of the concern of this book has shifted to the twelve aeons, with the “midst”—here with the Greek term as mentioned above—playing a minor role, existing above these aeons, and indeed above the “thirteenth aeon” that surmounts them. This is the beginning of the cosmology that sees its flowering in the books of the *Pistis Sophia*.

These twelve aeons are something of a puzzle. There is the obvious possibility that they represent the signs of the zodiac—and indeed, such is the role of the twelve aeons in 4*PSa*, the text with the closest ties to this one. The description of the aeons, however, also presents a potential reading as representing the five sublunar levels of chaos or the underworld followed by the seven planetary heavens (see *GosJud* 51,4-52,14; *ApJohn* III 17,17-20; BG 41,12-15, II 11,4-6).<sup>38</sup> The first five aeons, when presented with the appropriate signs and seals, “flee to the west and the left,” the directions of evil. Names familiar from other traditions as evil entities, Jaldabaoth and Samael, have been appended by the author or compiler to the archons associated with the third and fourth aeons.<sup>39</sup> There is overall a sense that these are terrifying realms of malevolence.

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<sup>38</sup> For the seven and five division, Z. Pleše explains the case of the *Apocryphon of John* by suggesting a mixed Greco-Egyptian origin involving a particular manner of constructing the world horoscope (*Poetics of the Gnostic Universe: Narrative and Cosmology in the Apocryphon of John* [Leiden: Brill, 2006], 183-184). A.D. DeConick suggests that it is a blending of two systems, one with focus on the seven planets, the other on the zodiac (A.D. DeConick, *The Thirteenth Apostle: What the Gospel of Judas Really Says*, (2007; revised edition London: Continuum, 2009), 153. See also A.J. Welburn, “The Identity of the Archons in the ‘Apocryphon Johannis,’” in *Vigiliae Christianae* 32 (1978) 241-254; A.D. DeConick, “Apostles as Archons: The Fight for Apostolic Authority and the Emergence of Gnosticism in the Tchacos Codex and Other Early Christian Literature,” in *The Codex Judas Papers: Proceedings of the International Conference on the Tchacos Codex at Rice University, Houston, Texas, March 13-16, 2008*, A.D. DeConick, ed. (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 255-257.

<sup>39</sup> For further discussion of Jaldabaoth, see Section 6.5.4.

A change occurs, however, at the sixth aeon—it is called the “Little Midst (**MECOC**),” and “the archons of those places have a little goodness within them, because the archons of those places have believed” (2 *Jeu* 129). If the Midst is indeed the path of the sun, it is possible that the “Little Midst” represents the path of the moon—which moves at a slightly different angle to that of the sun, and indeed is the first of the seven planetary realms. The moon is generally considered to have a positive nature in ancient thought, and as a luminary in particular is sometimes set in a category with the sun apart from the five planets.<sup>40</sup> Here it leads into the remainder of the aeons, which do not flee in terror before divine knowledge, but simply withdraw to allow progress. It is thus possible that the seven aeons from the sixth to the twelfth represent the planetary realms, all of which have a neutral to positive aspect. This is again in contrast to other non-mainstream esoteric Christian cosmologies that attribute wholly negative qualities to the planetary “demons.”<sup>41</sup>

To return for a moment to the possibility of direct zodiac correlation, it is interesting to note that for each aeon, regardless of the number of “archons of the aeon” introduced as its inhabitants, three names are called upon to allow passage to the next level.<sup>42</sup> As discussed in the Egyptian section above, this could be indicative of an acceptance of the concept of the decans of Egyptian astronomy, three subdivisions assigned to each sign of the zodiac with their own magical or divine names.<sup>43</sup>

The fact that nowhere are any specific names or concepts given that might provide definite context for these entities makes a precise analysis impossible. The visible, planetary Midst (**MHT€**) of *I Jeu* is conspicuously absent here before its sinister return in *4PSa*. The Midst (**MECOC**) appears above *all* of the aeons including the thirteenth, excluding it from a position as the path of the sun whether the aeons

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<sup>40</sup> On the path of the moon and its importance—including as a division between light and darkness or righteous and sinners—see *I En* 41:5-8.

<sup>41</sup> See the discussion in Z. Pleše, *Poetics of the Gnostic Universe*, 181-193. T. Rasimus gives an excellent discussion of the typical set of planetary demons and their permutations in a variety of Gnostic and heresiological sources; although his proposed correspondences for entities in *2 Jeu* are highly questionable (*Paradise Reconsidered in Gnostic Mythmaking: Rethinking Sethianism in Light of the Ophite Evidence* [Leiden: Brill, 2009], 103-128; 104 for the chart of correspondences).

<sup>42</sup> See n.7 above.

<sup>43</sup> See Section 6.1.2.

represent the zodiacal circle *or* the planetary and sublunar sphere. It takes on the role it fills from here onward as borderland between the lower, visible and upper, divine realms. A clue to the text, however, lies in the fact that names prominent in the Sethian tradition—Jaldabaoth, Barbelo, the invisible god—have been evidently (and at times clumsily) *appended* to an existing tradition. It could be possible, therefore, that both interpretations are in a sense true—that a zodiac scheme with accompanying decans has acquired an additional understanding as the five chaos/seven heaven scheme found in certain Sethian texts such as the *Apocryphon of John* or the *Gospel of Judas*.<sup>44</sup> In any case, it is apparent that ascending beyond the thirteenth aeon takes one beyond the visible realm, and thus beyond the scope of the present section.

### 6.2.3 Astrology in 4PSa

As was noted earlier, 4PSa has the most obvious signs of astrological influence. Firstly, there is the singular mention of the disc of the sun as “a great dragon with its tail in its mouth” who “carried seven powers of the left” (4PSa 354)—a clear reference to the seven planets moving through the ecliptic. The moon is an elaborate boat, steered by two dragons—likely a reference to the lunar nodes, as will be discussed in Section 6.4. These two descriptions are unique, however, and at odds with the rest of the cosmology of the book and indeed that of the rest of the Jeuian texts, suggesting they are an addition from an outside source.

Of greater importance for the book is the description of the division of the twelve aeons into the six that believed in the mysteries of the light, and those that persisted in sexual intercourse. This is likely to represent the division of the zodiac signs into diurnal and nocturnal groups of six each.<sup>45</sup> The result of this division is the elevation of the good archons to a location between the thirteenth aeon and the good Midst (**MECOC**), just below the border between the lower regions of the left/the cosmos and the upper regions of light. The transgressing aeons, by contrast, are

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<sup>44</sup> It should be noted that in attributions of planetary ties to the signs of the zodiac, it is more typical to find them split into two groups of six; one diurnal and one nocturnal group, headed up by the sun and the moon respectively. That this division is the case in at least certain parts of the Jeuians’ history is evident from the references to the “six aeons” that are good here in 2 *Jeu*, and in the Jabraoth and Sabaoth myth in 4PSa.

<sup>45</sup> See A. von Lieven, “Gnosis and Astrology,” 225.

bound within the “sphere,” with 1800 archons bound in each aeon, 360 archons placed over them, and five great archons to rule them all: Cronos, Ares, Hermes, Aphrodite and Zeus. This is most likely a depiction of the zodiacal circle and the planets ruling over it: Saturn, Mars, Mercury, Venus and Jupiter rule over the 360 degrees of the circle and the 1800 individual minutes of each of its twelve divisions.<sup>46</sup> Here as always in these texts, the Sun and Moon are exempt from inclusion in the normal workings of the sphere of fate.

These planet-archons are then endowed with powers taken from various entities. Four of them receive powers from beings of the thirteenth aeon, or place of the left: Saturn and Mars, the maleficent planets, take them from the invisible god and one of the two evil triple-powered gods; Mercury, the neutral planet, from (Β)ΛΙΝΧΩΩΧ, the neutral/good triple-powered god;<sup>47</sup> and Venus, one of the benefic planets, from the Pistis Sophia, daughter of Barbelo and the only acknowledged good being of the 24 invisible emanations in the thirteenth aeon.

The remaining Jupiter receives a power from the Little Sabaoth, the Good from the good Midst (ΜΕCOC), that he might be a “rudder in order to guide the world with the aeons of the sphere so that it might not be destroyed by their wickedness” (4PSa 357). Thus the traditional division of the five planets as two benefic, two malefic, and one neutral, is preserved and blended with the cosmology of the present author, who explains their natures through their association with beings of his own mythos.

Furthermore, Zeus/Jupiter is given “two aeons as dwellings in the presence of those of Hermes” (ΝΑΙΩΝ CΝΑΥ ΜΜΑΝΩΩΠΕ ΕΥΜΠΕΜΤΟ ΕΒΟΛ ΝΝΑΦΕΡΜΗC; 4PSa 357).<sup>48</sup> It becomes apparent after analyzing the following passages that these two aeon-dwellings are the signs of Pisces (♋) and Virgo (♍), the only two signs that are not involved in the destruction of the places of the archons of the way of the Midst (ΜΗΤΕ), as shown in the table below.<sup>49</sup> Pisces is one of the

<sup>46</sup> A. von Lieven, “Gnosis and Astrology,” 225.

<sup>47</sup> The triple-powered ones are discussed in Section 6.5.2 below.

<sup>48</sup> V. MacDermot suggests either “in the neighborhood of” or “in the presence of” those of Hermes.

<sup>49</sup> A. von Lieven’s statement that his dwellings “can only be” his day and night houses, Pisces and Sagittarius, is tied to an over-interpretation of the importance of the traditional houses and aspects

two houses of Jupiter, and Virgo one of those of Mercury—thus giving Jupiter both his own house and one in Mercury’s presence. Given the importance of the oppositional aspect in the text, it is also possible that Pisces’ opposition to that Mercurial house also was involved in referring to it as being “in the presence of” those of Mercury (see Table 6.1).

This interpretation of the planets and their relationship to the zodiac is then combined with an interpretation of the five sublunar punishment realms and their connection with human foibles. Again, 360 evil archons are taken by Jeu and bound this time *beneath* the sphere, in the “way of the Midst (ΜΗΤΕ),” where they are ruled by another “five great archons” (4PSa 359). Here the term for the “Midst” has returned to the Coptic word, which in *I Jeu* referred to the paths of the planets in their relation to the divine treasures—but now it plays a sinister role. The five great archons are pure evil and drive men to sin, later tormenting them for those selfsame sins.<sup>50</sup> These archons are given names and physical descriptions, sometimes matching with descriptions of particular gods or goddesses (Hekate, Typhon), sometimes not. This clear division of the planets and the sublunar realms seems to clarify the situation previously suggested in the twelve aeons of *2 Jeu*: here the planets move through the zodiac-aeons and affect through their motions the realms of the sublunar archons.

Thus the negative beings of the sublunar realms drive men to sin and then collect them for punishment, while the planets’ motions through the heavens can have either positive or negative results, in keeping with a more typical Greco-Roman view of astrological workings. As Jupiter and Venus move into opposition in

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throughout the text—in this case, the square formed by the houses of Jupiter and Mercury (“Gnosis and Astrology,” 226).

<sup>50</sup> A. von Lieven’s proposal (“Gnosis and Astrology,” 226-230) that the five ranks of the way of the Midst should in fact be six, and that they represent the thirty-six decans, is unconvincing. W. Bousset relates the five archons and the 360 under their power to the Babylonian calendrical system as days (*Hauptprobleme der Gnosis* [1907; reprint: Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1973], 358-360, and B. Przybylski also ties them to a calendrical system, this time Egyptian (“The Role of Calendrical Data in Gnostic Literature,” 56-57, in *Vigiliae Christianae* 34 [1980], 56-70). There is no evidence for an original six ranks, and the decans are clearly mentioned in another context as offspring of the wicked archons (4PSa 355). The calendrical arguments fail to take into account the association of the great archons with human sins and punishments, tying them to fate and/or human nature. The uniqueness of this text’s portrayal of these five archons’ role in fate causes them to be shifted to the role of the planets within the Heimarmene in *3PS*, when all possibility of a positive role for the planets has been eradicated.

specific signs, the places of one of the five evil archons in the sublunar **MHT€** are destroyed and the souls in their domain are freed to return to the sphere. This is not an ideal situation for the human souls, as they are still trapped within the domain of fate; however, they are given reprieve from immediate torment, the possibility of resisting the temptations of the archons, and the opportunity to learn the mysteries of the author’s community, the only way to fully transcend the cycle and enter the realm of light.

**Table 6.1: Positions of Jupiter and Venus in the Destruction of the Ranks of the MHT€**

Rank	Archon	Jupiter Position	Venus Position	Time soul is in rank
1	Paraplex	Aries ♈	Libra ♎	133 years, 9 months
2	Ariuth	Cancer ♋	Capricorn ♑	113 years
3	Hekate	Scorpio ♏	Taurus ♉	105 years, 6 months
4	Parhedron Typhon	Sagittarius ♐	Gemini ♊	138 years
5	Jacthanabas	Aquarius ♒	Leo ♌	150 years, 8 months

	Remaining signs (likely the “dwellings” of Jupiter): <b>Pisces (♓); Virgo (♍)</b>
	<p><b>Total Time: 648 years, 11 months</b></p> <p>Length of Soli-Lunar Cycle: ~<b>649 years</b></p> <p>Length of Jupiter’s Synodic Period: <b>13 months</b></p> <p>13-month period fits exactly 599 times in a 648 year, 11-month timeframe</p>

One of the intriguing things to note in the description of the cycle of motion and soul release is the very specific amount of time given that the soul will spend in each rank. It is not easily explained by the planetary periods; nor by the times when the key planets Jupiter and Venus move into their allotted signs. A. von Lieven has

proposed calculating Jupiter's beginning point and attributing meaning to the sign of departure, but this too is unsatisfactory.<sup>51</sup> Although it does not give an explanation for the specific periods of time for each rank, one possible thing to consider is the total amount of time for all of the periods: adding the amounts from each rank, one arrives at a total of 648 years, 11 months. The shortest amount of time for a complete soli-lunar cycle—the time when an eclipse of the same type occurs at the same time of day and year—is approximately 649 years.<sup>52</sup> This would suggest that the entire process of the planets' motions in relation to the ranks of the archons lasts as long as one full soli-lunar cycle. Furthermore, it is stated that Jupiter's circuit is established such that he “should spend thirteen months in every aeon, firmly fixed” (*4PSa* 357). This might be considered puzzling as its zodiacal period, or the time it takes to fully revolve around the sun, is twelve years. However, its *synodic* period—when the Earth, the sun, and the planet in question return to the same relative positions—is thirteen months (~399 days).<sup>53</sup> Thus, when Jupiter has a heliacal rising—when it first becomes visible for a brief moment just before sunrise, after a period of time it has not been visible—in Leo, its next heliacal rising will be thirteen months later and will be in the following sign, Virgo.<sup>54</sup> Finally, Jupiter's thirteen-month synodic period fits exactly 599 times in a 648-year, 11-month soli-lunar cycle. Thus, it would appear that the author is basing his system of release for tormented souls on the visible cycles of the sun, the moon and Jupiter in relation to the celestial sphere.

#### 6.2.4 Astrology in *4PSb*

Under the cosmology of this section, both the number of realms of punishment and the time given for punishment of a particular type of sinner have increased. For example a murderer, who in *4PSa* faces 113 years under the torments of Ariuth, is

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<sup>51</sup> “Gnosis and Astrology,” 230-231. It again relies on importance of arbitrary planet-sign associations, and gives no explanation for the actual time periods given.

<sup>52</sup> See N. DeVore, *Encyclopedia of Astrology* (Abingdon, MD: Astrology Classics Publishing, 1999), 166.

<sup>53</sup> D.R. Williams, “Jupiter Fact Sheet,” NASA, <http://nssdc.gsfc.nasa.gov/planetary/factsheet/jupiterfact.html>, accessed 22 November 2011.

<sup>54</sup> See C. Nelson, “399-Day Mean Synodic Period of Jupiter,” [http://www.timeemits.com/HoH\\_Articles/399-Day\\_Mean\\_Synodic\\_Period\\_of\\_Jupiter.htm](http://www.timeemits.com/HoH_Articles/399-Day_Mean_Synodic_Period_of_Jupiter.htm), accessed 22 November 2011.

tortured in the each of the places of frost and snow, the places of Jaldabaoth in Chaos, the places of Persephone in Chaos, and the way of the Midst by each of their inhabitants for three years and six months. Thus with Jaldabaoth and his 49 demons each taking a turn, the murderer is subject to over 170 years of punishment in the Chaos alone. As the first part of the text is missing, any clues to the system being used to determine these periods are lost. However, the positions of the aeons/zodiac and the benefic and malefic planets still play a role in the cycle of transmigration.

The Virgin of the Light, the Judge, sends souls back into the world at suitable alignments of these entities, ensuring the just deserts of sinners and the eventual receipt of mysteries and salvation for the righteous. Generally speaking, when Jupiter and Venus are in her presence in their own aeons and Saturn and Mars are behind her, all souls going into the world will become righteous; but when Saturn and Mars are in her presence and she cannot see Jupiter and Venus, all souls going into the world will be wicked and unable to find the mysteries of the light (*4PSb* 383-384). However, for those souls that committed no sins but did not receive the mysteries, the Virgin of the Light places them with the Little Sabaoth, the Good, until a positive planetary alignment occurs—thus guaranteeing a positive reincarnation (*4PSb* 382). There is a conflict, as she here seems to represent the sun—the planets come into contact with her, and her location, the neutral Midst (**MECOC**), is associated with the “light of the sun” (*4PSa* 355). However, the realm of the Midst (**MECOC**) is also considered to be a higher realm than that of the aeons through which the planets move. Regardless of the specific nature of the Virgin of Light and her realm here, that at least some of her attributes are tied to those of the sun seems highly likely. Ptolemy views the sun as a neutral planet (*Tetrabiblos* I.5), taking on the attributes of those planets it becomes associated with. Here we have the Virgin of Light bestowing beneficial lives when in aspect with the benefic planets in their own aeons,<sup>55</sup> and when in aspect with the malefics, all souls that go into creation become wicked.

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<sup>55</sup> Interestingly, using the traditional attribution of the planetary houses, with Jupiter and Venus in their own houses only a sextile aspect is possible; however, if Jupiter is allowed Virgo as suggested in *4PSa*, then the powerful, positive trine aspect with Venus becomes possible. However, given the positive effects associated with opposition in *4PSa*, traditionally a negative aspect, one should be

### 6.2.5 Astrology in 3PS

In 3PS, the five great archons—along with the separately delineated archons of the discs of the sun and moon—are found to be associated with the Heimarmene rather than the way of the Midst (**MHTΕ**), transforming them into the planets by their relationship with the zodiacal sphere of fate. This is a logical shift given that this author had no place for the traditional planetary natures, viewing all astrological phenomena as negative; it was only fitting that the entities which drive men only to sin and are five in number should be the five non-luminary planets.<sup>56</sup> The punishment aspect, however, remains in the way of the Midst (**MHTΕ**), and indeed now appears to be its whole function. This perhaps helps to explain why it is phased out in the following texts, as it no longer serves a distinct purpose, especially given the introduction of the Chaos in addition to the outer darkness. The neutral Midst (**MECOC**), despite its association with the light of the sun, again appears to be located above the aeons/Heimarmene.<sup>57</sup> Thus the two Midsts, the regions terminologically most likely to be associated with the ecliptic and/or the planets, further develop astronomically ambiguous (although increasingly morally polarized) statuses, divorced from direct connection with the celestial entities.

As noted above, the more typical planet representations—along with their association with the Virgin of Light in 4PSb—are absent here, suggesting that they, too, have been phased out. It is the Virgin of Light alone who decides the fate of souls brought before her—here almost exclusively in positive or at least just terms, in opposition to the passage in 4PSb that condemned souls born while the maleficent planets were in her presence. The five planetary archons now play an active but

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cautious against positing too strong an importance for the traditional powers and roles of these aspects.

<sup>56</sup> The fully negative interpretation of the planets in Manichaeism should also be considered.

<sup>57</sup> “...ΝΑΡΧΩΝ ΝΤΝΟΘ ΝΖΙΜΑΡΜΕΝΗ ΕΤΜΜΑΥ ΠΑΪ ΕΤΖΝ ΝΤΟΠΟΣ ΝΤΚΕΦΑΛΗ ΝΤΕ ΝΑΙΩΝ ΕΤΕ ΠΤΟΠΟΣ ΕΤΜΜΑΥ ΝΤΟϢ ΠΕ ΕΩΔΥΜΟΥΤΕ ΕΡΟϢ ΞΕ ΠΤΟΠΟΣ ΝΤΜΝΤΕΡΟ ΜΠΑΔΑΜΑΣ•ΑΥΩ ΠΤΟΠΟΣ ΕΤΜΜΑΥ ΝΤΟϢ ΠΕ ΕΤΜΠΕΜΤΟ ΕΒΟΛ ΝΤΠΑΡΘΕΝΟΣ ΜΠΟΥΟΪΝ. . .” (3PS 332-333) There is a more explicit distinction between the aeons and the “way of the light of the sun” where the Virgin of the Light dwells at 3PS 263 (see also 285 and 290). Based on the position of this neutral Midst in both earlier (2 *Jeu*) and later (1/2PS) texts, and the fact that in these texts it always refers to a region independent of the planets, it seems likely that the phrase “in the presence of” suggests a border between the region of the archons and that of the Virgin of the Light, which places that of the Virgin on a higher level.

wholly negative role in the formation of the human being, each placing its part in the soul.<sup>58</sup> Furthermore the 365 “ministers” of the archons of the aeons carry the intangible elements of the human being into the womb and go about forming the being’s members (3PS 340-344), further tying the body to the solar year and the machinations of the zodiacal archons. A number of significant dates are “sealed” onto the child’s body in the womb, including the day the soul came forth from the archons as well as the time the birth should occur (3PS 343-345). Ancient astrological theory considered the date of conception to be as or more important than the date of birth in determining a person’s horoscope (Ptolemy, *Tetrabiblos* III.1).<sup>59</sup>

Evidence for more concrete astronomical influence appears at 3PS 349, when Jesus describes the placement of the Books of Jeu after Enoch copied them, so they might be protected from the Flood. Jesus says, “I caused him to place them in the rock of Ararad, and I placed the archon Kalapatauroth, which is over Skemmut, upon whose head are the feet of Jeu, and who goes round all the aeons and the Heimarmene...” Ararad (or Ararat) is known from Gen. 8.4 as the location where Noah’s ark finally came to rest, tying it to the earlier flood narrative—however, the fact that this is the only place in the whole of the *Pistis Sophia* that refers to Genesis suggests that this detail was likely obtained from another source.<sup>60</sup> Relevant here, rather, is the information regarding the archon charged with guarding the books. Skemmut (ϠΜΜΟΥΤ) is a constellation in Egyptian, possibly the Pleiades.<sup>61</sup> The Pleiades were also associated with the Flood in Jewish lore.<sup>62</sup> Furthermore, the Pleiades are located in the constellation of Taurus; one might observe that the latter part of the name of the archon that is “over” (ϠΙΧΝ) Skemmut, “Kalapatauroth”

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<sup>58</sup> The sun and moon also play a part; however, they maintain an ambiguous status—they are only discussed in connection with breathing a higher, positive power into the soul. See 3PS 334-336.

<sup>59</sup> The fact that 3PS is the only one of the present texts to discuss the origin and formation of the human being accounts for the fact that the extremely broad and complex science of astrology in connection with horoscope calculation is not touched upon in the other texts (although the nature of the five great archons in 4PSa has implications in this vein).

<sup>60</sup> On certain non-mainstream esoteric Christians’ use of the idea of a sacred mountain to deposit ancient texts, see G. Stroumsa, *Another Seed: Studies in Gnostic Mythology* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1984), 115-116.

<sup>61</sup> See W.E. Crum, *A Coptic Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1939), 821.

<sup>62</sup> F.C. Burkitt, “Pistis Sophia,” 271, in *Journal of Theological Studies*, 23 (1922), 271-280; E.W. Maunder, *The Astronomy of the Bible* (1908; reprint: Wildside Press LLC, 2007) 222-223; in the Babylonian Talmud, *Berakoth*, folio 59a.

(ΚΑΛΑΠΑΤΑΥΡΩΘ), bears some resemblance to the Greek constellation name. It is possible this is not coincidental, and some remnant of positive celestial guardianship is here preserved. In any case, clearly some form of astronomical mythology is at work. Immediately prior to this passage, it states that correct knowledge of “the establishment of the air and the heaven and the cycles and the stars and the luminaries and the earth and all things within it” (3PS 349) is necessary to be recognized as a teacher of truth. The connections to Enoch—who was also thought to have received astronomical wisdom (1 En 72-82; 2 En 1-48)—may further reflect this astronomical concern. If the “Books of Jeu” of the Bruce Codex are those mentioned here in the *Pistis Sophia* (or if they are not identical but closely related), then the “mysteries” they contain are likely to relate to their astronomical content—which has already been presented above as their main concern.

Beyond this section of apparently positive astronomical mythology, in 3PS we also see the beginnings of the idea that fate could—and should—be escaped by the faithful, through repentance, righteous living and receipt of the mysteries (3PS 286-291, 298-299, 337, 339-340, 346-347). Previously it was viewed as something unavoidable, and could potentially have positive as well as negative effects. Now the full brunt of a malevolent conception of the stars is in place, with the particular faith and ritual tenets of the author or group thus needed for hope in the afterlife. While at this point fate itself is still at full power and controls all aspects of the outsider’s birth, life, and death, this state changes quickly in the following texts.

### 6.2.6 Astrology in 1 & 2PS

As with all of the texts in the corpus that specify a context, the teachings of 1/2PS take place after the resurrection. This is the only text, however, that involves narrative action for Jesus beyond the roles of instructor or officiant of rituals. As he and the disciples are sitting on the Mount of Olives “on the 15<sup>th</sup> of the moon in the month of Tôbe, which is the day on which the moon becomes full” (1PS 4), the sun rises and a great light-power comes down, surrounding Jesus and taking him to the heights. This then happens at the time the luminaries are at full power, between the sun and the full moon. Three hours after he disappears into the heavens, “all the powers of the heavens were disturbed, and they all shook against one another, they

and all their aeons, and all their places and all their ranks and the whole earth moved with all who dwelled upon it” (*IPS* 6). This agitation continues until the ninth hour of the following day, when Jesus returns, resplendent in light.<sup>63</sup> This gives a total of 33 hours from initial ascension to return, with 30 hours of cosmic and earthly disturbance.

Upon his return, Jesus explains to the understandably concerned disciples where he went and what happened over the course of his disappearance. He traversed the cosmic realms, causing awe or terror along the way. Specifically, when he took up his garment of light and ascended through the spheres, the archons of the aeons waged war against his light. The description of the encounter with the archons of the aeons is given four times (*IPS* 24-25; 26; 37-39; 40-41).

What is first interesting to note is that before reaching the twelve aeons, Jesus first traverses three regions: the firmament, the sphere, and the second sphere, or Heimarmene. This division of regions is a clear change from the previous texts, which associated the twelve aeons/zodiac directly with the Heimarmene—and in fact in *4PSa*, at least, the Heimarmene/sphere was meant as a prison or controlling mechanism for the aeons (*4PSa* 356).<sup>64</sup> Here the nature of these two regions is both divided and reversed: the aeons control the Heimarmene. This is likely due to the change in the view of fate: again, while previously fate was an unchangeable fact of the universe and could have good or bad effects, likewise it applied to nonhumans as well as humans, and the archons who persisted in sin were subject to its bonds. Now that it is a purely negative entity, it is subjected to the will of the evil archons rather than vice versa. This relationship of control further implies the separation of the

<sup>63</sup> It is possible that this return at the ninth hour reflects the Markan tradition (Mk. 15:33) of the darkness at the crucifixion. While there he dies and here he returns at the ninth hour, both involve a restoration of light after a period of darkness or chaos. There is minimal evidence the author was familiar with Mark, however, so this remains conjecture.

<sup>64</sup> H.J. Hodges argues that these regions are one and the same here, as well, going so far to support a standard astronomical view of the whole cosmology as to correct the text: he opts to “interpret **ΤΕΣΦΑΙΡΑ** as a haplography for **ΤΕΣΣΦΑΙΡΑ** since this makes more sense in the context...” (“Gnostic Liberation from Astrological Determinism: Hipparchan ‘Trepidation’ and the Breaking of Fate,” 367n.49, in *Vigiliae Christianae*, 51 (1997), 359-373.) He would thus condense the first sphere, the Heimarmene or second sphere (which is clearly distinct in the description of Jesus’ journey, as well as being called the “second sphere,” “**ΤΜΕΖΩΝΤΕ ΝΟΦΑΙΡΑ**”), and the aeons of the archons, all into the zodiacal circle—a gross misjudgment of the author’s cosmology and a deliberate misreading of the text.

aeons from the zodiac, lifting the aeons to a higher region beyond that celestial sphere. J. van der Vliet observes that in the *Trimorphic Protennoia*,

the author's aim is a demonological interpretation of the archontic regime rather than a technical description of astrological realities. In *PS*, the twelve eons, in spite of apparently being modeled on the zodiac, are at the same time distinct from and superior to the celestial bodies situated in the two spheres. The archons of the eons use the latter as instruments in constructing what from the human point of view is Fate. Likewise, in the *Apocryphon of John*, the Chief Archon and his powers created Fate 'and fettered in measure and times and moments the gods of the heavens and the angels and the demons and humanity, so that all of them would be in its (scil. Fate's) bond (MPPE) and it be master over everyone (BG 72.4-11; Waldstein-Wisse, synopsis, 75-76). Time and space are a prison governed by Fate on behalf of the archons.<sup>65</sup>

We can thus see a trend in a number of different non-mainstream esoteric Christian documents wherein the aeons of the archons are not depicted as the actual physical zodiac but as transcending it, with the archons as the creators or subjugators of fate rather than beings subject to its cosmic law. These are concepts that have evidently been grafted into the author's system, for as has been demonstrated, in the earlier texts such is not the case. Even here traces remain of the higher origin of fate and its courses—as Jesus himself notes, the periods of influence of the Heimarmene and sphere were originally fixed “through the command of the first ordinance and through the command of the First Mystery, Jeu the Overseer of the Light had placed them so that they were looking to the left at all times, as they completed their (periods of) influence and their action” (*IPS* 25; see also *IPS* 31, 34). In *4PSa* it is Jeu who fixes the archons in the Heimarmene as in a prison and places the planets over them (*4PSa* 356, 359).

The results of Jesus' passage through the spheres and aeons, on the immediate surface, cause dramatic changes in the nature of the powers of fate: Jesus announces,

I took a third part of all their power so that they should not work their wicked actions, and in order that when men who are in the world call upon them in their mysteries...they are not able to complete them. And (as for) the Heimarmene and the sphere over which they rule, I turned them and caused them to spend six months turned to the left, as they complete their (periods of) influence, and to look to the right for six months, as they complete their (periods of) influence. (*IPS* 25)<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> J. van der Vliet, “Fate, Magic and Astrology in *Pistis Sophia*, Chaps 15-21,” 529, in *The Wisdom of Ancient Egypt: Jewish, Early Christian and Gnostic Essays in Honor of Gerard P. Luttikhuisen*, A. Hilhorst and G.H. van Kooten, eds. (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 519-536.

<sup>66</sup> See also *IPS* 27, 29.

The removal of a third part of their power is strongly reminiscent of Rev. 12.4-9, wherein the dragon casts a third of the stars of heaven to the earth and is subsequently destroyed by the powers of heaven. The second part of the action—the turning of the spheres—is more puzzling. H.J. Hodges proposes that it is connected with the precession of the equinoxes as discovered by Hipparchus:<sup>67</sup> however, the long, unobservable process of the precession is incompatible with the swift changes of Jesus' ascension *or* the rotation of the spheres. The events described do not match the theory proposed. Van der Vliet's suggestion is far more attractive, connecting the idea to a passage from Plato's *Statesman* (269ff).<sup>68</sup> This passage attributes the dual motion of the cosmos to periodic intervention by an extrinsic divine cause which corrects its motion; thus it moves one direction when left to its own devices, and in the opposite direction when under corrective guidance. "Plato's representation of a destructive course of the world that needs to be reverted influenced later and, in particular, Christian concepts of Fate, which links it to the astrological and soteriological discourse of *PS*."<sup>69</sup>

This notion further fits in with the stipulations that follow the announcement of this cosmic reordering.

When the astrologers find the Heimarmene and the sphere turned to the left, according to their first distribution, then their words concur and they will say what is due to happen. But when they meet the Heimarmene or the sphere turned to the right, they do not speak anything of the truth, because I have turned their (periods of) influence and their quadrangles and their triangles and their figures of eight... Likewise also the soothsayers, when they call upon the name of the archons, and they meet them looking to the left, everything concerning which they will seek of their decans, they will tell them with certainty. However, when their soothsayers call upon their names as they are looking to the right, they will not hear them, because they look in another form than their first ordinance in which Jeu established them, since their names are other when they are turned to the left than when they are turned to the right. (*IPS* 30-31)

The limits to the powers of the astrologers, soothsayers, and other purveyors of astral magic only apply fifty percent of the time—the rest of the time when the spheres move in their accustomed direction, all of these powers work without hindrance. This hardly appears to be an overwhelming victory of the Incarnation over the bonds of fate. However, it does fit with the concept of the cosmos being regularly corrected

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<sup>67</sup> H.J. Hodges, "Gnostic Liberation," 369-373.

<sup>68</sup> J. van der Vliet, "Fate, Magic and Astrology in *Pistis Sophia*," 530.

<sup>69</sup> J. van der Vliet, "Fate, Magic and Astrology in *Pistis Sophia*," 530. It must be noted however that this concept is limited to this portion of the *Pistis Sophia*, and in fact that positive traces of fate's origin from earlier iterations of the cosmic structure are present even here, as has been noted above.

in its motion by divine intervention (Jesus), while the rest of the time it is allowed to go in its own, opposite direction, the science of which allows for the accurate usage of astrology and other forms of divination.

Yet the limited obstruction of the diviners does not stop with the changed spherical motions:

I have now caused them to spend six months turned to the left, and six months turned to the right. He who now will find their reckoning from the time when I turned them, placing them to spend six months looking to their left hand parts, and six months looking to their right hand paths, and who will now consult them in this way, will know their (period of) influence with certainty, and he will predict all things that they will do. (*IPS* 30)

Thus, an intelligent astrologer may be able to completely overcome the limitation by virtue of calculating the times for either rotation. Finally, anyone who knows the mysteries and magic of the thirteenth aeon will always use it accurately, for as Jesus states, “I have not taken power from that place, according to the command of the First Mystery” (*IPS* 29). What initially appears to be a powerful change in the cosmos and a serious hindrance for astrologers and magicians now appears to be a minor inconvenience overcome with relative ease. The powers of fate and magic are still active in the world, and their knowledge accessible to those who know how to ascertain it. Despite their evil nature they were established through divine channels, and Jesus’ actions were never intended to achieve a full defeat over them, by the decree of the First Mystery.

Van der Vliet summarizes the nature of contradiction and harmonization in the *IPS* text in the following terms:

The author’s technical appreciation of magic and astrology is balanced by ethical and demonological rejection. Against the background of this dilemma, his paradoxical attitude towards the occult sciences can be resolved. His astonishing concessions are meant to make room for a primarily technical understanding of magic and astrology, considering as scientifically or at least empirically undeniable facts. Instead of blaming Jesus with failure, he adopts a sophisticated though apparently contradictory attitude that accepts basic categories but nevertheless allows an ethically motivated distance. Thus he goes beyond many of the standard polemics against magic in negotiating a common ground where both the scholar and the Christian may tread.<sup>70</sup>

### 6.2.7 Summary of Astrological Influence

A strong astronomical/astrological presence is detectable from the earliest to the latest stages of these texts; however, the nature of that presence reverses itself from

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<sup>70</sup> J. van der Vliet, “Fate, Magic and Astrology in *Pistis Sophia*,” 536.

the beginning to the end. Originating with a complex view of the celestial sky as composing the divine realm, the observable sky becomes increasingly detached from the divine, eventually becoming an actively malevolent force operating against humanity. Specific entities early associated with these realms, such as Jeu or the Virgin of Light, remain positive—but the regions in which they dwell and operate become divorced from the visible cosmos. A system combining the typical Greek conceptions of the planets with a wholly negative set of sublunar archons is introduced, which is quickly reduced to a single set of purely negative planets. The concept of the Midst (either the Coptic or Greek term) is entirely removed from that of the ecliptic, which is tied to the twelve aeons, the Heimarmene, or both. The Coptic Midst is phased out of the system after its role in influencing human sin is reassigned elsewhere. In the final stages, even as astrology is viewed as a fully negative science, its original organization by divine channels is acknowledged, and its apparent empirical evidence in the world is not denied. Even in this final iteration, it is not fate—the Heimarmene—itsself that is considered evil; despite their fear, the beings within it offer Jesus praises in his ascent. The true source of evil and rebellion has been made to transcend fate itself, making the fate-spheres simply controlled by malevolent entities. In his ascent Jesus affects these spheres but does not destroy their power fully, through the decree of the First Mystery. As important a role as Jesus comes to fill, the only way to truly escape the bonds of fate and the chains of the archons is to receive the mysteries professed by the community of the author—the mysteries which present the one constant through all of the texts.

### **6.3 MAGICAL NAMES AND WORDS**

The debate on the definition of “magic” and its distinction from “religion” has been raging for millennia. The boundaries are quite fluid, and are largely influenced by the culture of the individual doing the defining. As A.F. Segal has noted, “no definition of magic can be universally applicable because ‘magic’ can not and should not be construed as a properly scientific term. Its meaning changes as the context in which it is used changes. No single definition of magic can be absolute, since all

definitions of magic are relative to the culture and sub-culture under discussion.”<sup>71</sup> One person’s magic is another’s religious act. Thus, despite elements in both the *Books of Jeu* and the *Pistis Sophia* that might be considered “magical” by some definitions, this section will be limited to a discussion of names and phrases of power, or *nomina barbara*, found predominantly in the Greek Magical Papyri and other ancient Greco-Egyptian magical ritual sources. While the roles of traditional Egyptian religion and Greco-Egyptian astrology have been discussed above, this section supplements these, covering an important subsection of ancient Greco-Egyptian esoteric culture.

Due to the esoteric nature of these names and phrases, concrete explanations are impossible in most cases. Their use in the magical papyri is fluid and they can appear in a variety of circumstances, limiting one’s understanding of the reasoning behind the selection of the particular names preserved in *4PSa*. Indeed, the fact that these recognizable magical names occur primarily in *4PSa* is remarkable in itself.<sup>72</sup> It suggests that the author of that text was particularly interested in connecting the Jeuvian system with what he felt were established names of power, and furthermore that such a preoccupation was not widely shared within the group and was thus allowed to be phased out. The primary purpose of this section is to further demonstrate the cultural environment in which these texts took form. The author of *4PSa* was writing within a culture where practical religion or magical handbooks of a type typical of Greco-Roman Egypt flourished.

### 6.3.1 Aberamentho

The name “Aberamentho” is used three times to refer to Jesus. It is spelled in two different ways (ΑΒΕΡΑΝΕΝΘΩ/ΑΒΕΡΑΜΕΝΘΩ), and in two cases corrections were

<sup>71</sup> A.F. Segal, “Hellenistic Magic: Some Questions of Definition,” 350-351, in *Studies in Gnosticism and Hellenistic Religions: presented to Gilles Quispel on the Occasion of his 65<sup>th</sup> Birthday*, R. van den Broek and M.J. Vermaseren, eds. (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1981), 349-375.

<sup>72</sup> With a few exceptions: the name ΒΑΙΝΧΩΩΧ appears once in *4PSb*, and Typhon in the fragment on the archons of the Midst (ΜΗΤΕ) found in the Bruce Codex. Both of these texts are highly fragmentary, preventing analysis of any further parallels. In these instances these figures both maintain the same roles they do in their *4PSa* appearances, suggesting a steady tradition in those specific instances; however, the fact that these same beings appear elsewhere in the corpus but without these more common “magical” names suggests that they were ultimately short-lived associations. The name Jao also appears in several of the Jeuvian texts as well as quite frequently in the magical papyri; see below, n.85.

inserted in the manuscript. This lack of concern for consistency is seen further in the spelling of ΒΑΪΝΧΩΩΧ, which also appears as ΧΑΪΝΧΩΩΧ (4PSa 356). Although certainly there was flexibility in the spelling of certain names, the variety of spellings found within this single text suggests that the author was either ignorant of or not terribly concerned with the more traditional use of these terms. In the Greek Magical Papyri, Aberamentho is frequently used as shorthand for a much longer palindromic phrase, Αβεραμενθουθλερθεχαναχεθρελθουωθενεμαρεβα.<sup>73</sup>

G. Massey claims the name represents Jesus as “lord of Amente/Amentho” and sets him in the position of Horus in Amente;<sup>74</sup> this proposal has received little scholarly attention or support. Beyond the issues of etymology, in 4PSa—the only text in which he is called Aberamentho—Amente does not exist. In 4PSb, where Jesus does speak with the disciples in Amente, he does not have this title. Massey’s overall view of the texts blends all of the *Pistis Sophia* documents into a whole, resulting in some erroneous assumptions and confusing conclusions. F.C. Burkitt suggests that the name is derived from ‘Rhadamanthus,’ one of the Greek lords of the underworld. The argument is hinged on a magical spell of the Leiden Papyrus invoking Typhon Seth, one of whose ‘authentic names’ is Aberamenthōu, and whose other authentic names may represent some other ancient underworld deities such as the Sumerian goddess Ereshkigal.<sup>75</sup> Thus he suggests that the author of the spell was collecting various foreign names for the Lord of the Underworld, some of which were misspelled, and that the name ‘Rhadamanthus’ had been misread and transformed into Aberamentho. He states, “Rhadamanthus in Classical tradition was just and kindly, as is the Aberamentho of *Pistis Sophia*.”<sup>76</sup>

There are a number of problems with this theory.<sup>77</sup> Burkitt was working with the limited information of a single spell. The Greek Magical Papyri contain several examples of the name Aberamentho, as part of the palindrome or as shorthand for

<sup>73</sup> H.D. Betz, ed., *The Greek Magical Papyri in Translation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 331. Magical palindromes often had over 30 letters, sometimes 100 or more, and thus common ones were often abbreviated in formulae.

<sup>74</sup> G. Massey, *Ancient Egypt: The Light of the World*, 772.

<sup>75</sup> In the *PGM*, XIVc.16-27.

<sup>76</sup> F.C. Burkitt, *Church and Gnosis: A study of Christian thought and speculation in the Second Century* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1932), 83.

<sup>77</sup> C. Bonner also calls this theory “futile speculation” (*Studies in Magical Amulets, Chiefly Graeco-Egyptian* [Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1950]), 203.

it.<sup>78</sup> This palindrome has few obvious ties to underworld deity names. It is used to address a variety of gods for a variety of purposes. Furthermore, the spell Burkitt refers to is addressed to Typhon, who appears later in *4PSa* as a wicked archon. The spell itself is calling on Typhon to strike down a rival; hardly presenting itself as representative of a kindly underworld figure. Finally, contrary to Burkitt's theory, in this text Jesus does not, in fact, act as an underworld deity. He believes that it is Jesus as Aberamentho who arranges for souls to be sporadically released from the torments of the wicked Midst (**MHT€**),<sup>79</sup> but the text contains no inkling of this. It is Jeu who arranges the planets, their motions, and their workings.

M. Tardieu proposes that the Aberamentho palindrome derives from an amalgam of terms, specifically here the Hebrew phrase for "power of waters" and the Greek version of the name of the Egyptian god Thoth, sometimes considered to be the Egyptian Hermes. It would thus ultimately refer to Thoth in a position of power over the waters. As in the Greco-Roman period Thoth was assimilated to Hermes, his powers over water were combined with Hermes' as lord over the world and elements. In the *Pistis Sophia*, "Jésus est Aberamenthō parce qu'il exerce la fonction d'Hermès-Thot comme souverain de tous les στοιχεῖα, lettres et elements."<sup>80</sup> He cites part of the opening of the book as evidence; thus as Jesus stands upon the water and recites the names of the Father, he personifies the deities represented by the palindrome. J. Fossum and B. Glazer support this theory, stating that by virtue of these actions "he is the Lord of the waters and the formulas controlling the cosmic powers."<sup>81</sup>

This theory, however, is not beyond question. It assumes that the author of this text would have been familiar with the Hebrew meaning of part of the palindrome, although there is little sign that the authors of any of the Jeudian texts had a familiarity with Hebrew. If this etymology was common knowledge, it is not made obvious through the instances in which the palindrome is used. Furthermore, the

<sup>78</sup> *PGM* I.294; II.125-126; III.67, 116-117; IV.181, 3272; V.180; XXXVI.8; LIX.6; CXXVI.13.

<sup>79</sup> F.C. Burkitt, *Church and Gnosis*, 81.

<sup>80</sup> M. Tardieu, "Aberamenthō," 416-417, in *Studies in Gnosticism and Hellenistic Religions: presented to Gilles Quispel on the Occasion of his 65<sup>th</sup> Birthday*, R. van den Broek and M.J. Vermaseren, eds. (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1981), 412-418.

<sup>81</sup> J. Fossum and B. Glazer, "Seth in the Magical Texts," 92, in *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 100 (1994), 86-92.

passage referring to the ocean is as follows: “ΤΟΤΕ ΙC ΑΦΑΖΕΡΑΤΦ ΜΝ ΝΕΦΜΑΘΗΤΗC ΖΙΞΝ ΠΜΟΥ ΜΠΩΚΕΑΝΟC” (4PSa 353). Tardieu’s interpretation ignores the fact that standing with Jesus “upon” the ocean are all of his disciples, and this before they have received the mysteries; it is not Jesus alone showing personal power over the waters. Although the word given, ΖΙΞΝ, is most frequently translated “upon,” it can also mean “beside,” and it is thus that V. MacDermot translates the passage. This paints an easier picture of the scene, as in addition to Jesus and the disciples, it is stated that there is an altar with Jesus standing “ΖΙΞΜ” it and the disciples behind him. If they are standing upon an ocean, it seems likely to be a figurative one. At any rate, the name Aberamentho is not applied to him in the passage concerning the ocean, for reasons to be discussed below. Furthermore, the “cosmic powers” which Jesus controls in this immediate context—“the archons and the powers and the angels and the archangels, and all the powers and all things of the Invisible God Agrammachamarei and the Barbelo, the leech” (4PSa 354)—are all material entities, and are in fact primarily controlled by Jeu at this point. While Thoth ruled the stars and individual destinies, and Hermes was considered a cosmic deity and world-ruler,<sup>82</sup> in the Jeudian texts these are lower roles, and Jesus himself is far above them. Hermes Trismegistus himself, the combination of these figures arising in the Hermetic tradition, is essentially an enlightened human, and in any case is far from being the son or power of the highest Father that Jesus represents. It seems unlikely that the author would wish to associate Jesus with Thoth, Hermes, or Thoth-Hermes/Hermes Trismegistus. Rather, his power and knowledge of divine names and mysteries is far superior to any of these figures.

A. Mastrocinque also proposes a reason for the attribution of the name to Jesus, based around his larger argument for a prevalence in certain groups of serpentine solar figures and a possible etymology of the full palindrome which divides it in four parts and associates them with the four directions: “Jesus was merged with the magical Egyptianizing god known as Aberamentho because he was

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<sup>82</sup> G. Fowden, *The Egyptian Hermes: A Historical Approach to the Late Pagan Mind* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 22-26.

a serpentiform god residing in the celestial pole in the extreme North, and was also a solar deity.”<sup>83</sup> There is, however, no suggestion that Jesus is meant to have the form of a serpent—there is no reference to such a form in the text at all, and the one description of a dragon in *4PSa* is discussed in a separate context; nor indeed is there any inkling that Jesus was considered a solar deity, in part because he was considered superior to the cosmic entities. Indeed, the dragon mentioned above is described as the disc of the sun, and it is quite independent from Jesus. If any figure is likely to be a sun god in this text it is Jeu, one of the two great lights.

The attribution of this common name of ritual power to Jesus is more likely related exclusively to his earthly body or functions in the aeonic or material realms, as opposed to his true divine nature. This is likely as in each of the three instances he is referred to with the name Aberamentho, it is in either the context of his earthly incarnation or controlling of the lower material powers. First it is before he requests the archons of the material aeons to move (*4PSa* 354); next, as he explains that the Father of his Father is Jeu—thus referring to Sabaoth the Good, Jeu’s offspring and the father of his power or soul in his earthly form, as explained in greater detail in *1/2PS* (*4PSa* 360),<sup>84</sup> and finally, as he discusses the elements he brought with him into the world in the form of his earthly body (*4PSa* 367). The name is not used when he is associated with the Father of the Treasury of Light directly—for example, when he prays to that Father in the passage beside the ocean—nor when he promises the higher mysteries or presents the baptism to include the disciples in the Kingdom. The fact that Jesus is the only higher entity given such a common name of power here further supports the proposition that it refers only to his material or cosmic functions. While it is likely that the author viewed Aberamentho as being a particularly powerful or efficacious name, suitable for the figure of Jesus with all his earthly powers and wisdom, it is unlikely that an association with Thoth/Hermes, or any other deity, was in mind.

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<sup>83</sup> A. Mastrocinque, *From Jewish Magic to Gnosticism* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 191.

<sup>84</sup> See especially *IPS* 123-125, *2PS* 127-129 for interpretations of the formation of Jesus’ body and Sabaoth’s role; see also Section 4.3. Sabaoth the Good is explicitly called by Jesus “He whom I have called my Father” at *2PS* 195, again clearly referring to his earthly form as opposed to his higher connection to the First Mystery.

### 6.3.2 Maskelli

The next closest approximation to a positive adoption comes in the form of the being named “Zarazaz” whose gaze destroys the places of the fourth great archon of the Midst (ΜΗΤΕ). This Zarazaz is the one “whom the archons call by the name of a powerful archon of their places, Maskelli” (ΠΑΪ ΕΤΕΩΑΡΕ ΝΑΡΧΩΝ ΜΟΥΤΕ ΕΡΟϞ ΖΜ ΠΡΑΝ ΝΟΥΑΡΧΩΝ ΝΧΩΩΡΕ ΝΤΕ ΝΕΥΤΟΠΟϞ ΧΕ ΜΑΩΚΕΛΛΙ; 4PSa 365). One notices that Zarazaz himself, who must belong to the higher, spiritual place of the right, is not named Maskelli—it is in fact the name of one of the material archons, which the archons apply to Zarazaz as well. Thus the name “Maskelli” maintains a material, archontic association.<sup>85</sup>

The Maskelli figure in the magical papyri—as with Aberamentho, a name more typically found as part of a longer formula—also appears in a variety of capacities, but perhaps most frequently associated with “necessity” (ἀνάγκη) or “destiny.”<sup>86</sup> That this name is associated with “a powerful archon of their [the archons’] places” is quite interesting, as the archons are in this body of texts associated with fate. It is not clear why this particular entity is singled out to be called by the name of an archon, but the selection of this name in particular may be related to a combination of the popularity of the Maskelli formula in spells, and its ties to destiny.

### 6.3.3 Agrammachamarei

Moving down the hierarchy, the invisible god of the thirteenth aeon is once called ΑΓΡΑΜΜΑΧΑΜΑΡΕΙ (4PSa 354), another name found frequently in the magical papyri with a few variant spellings. First, it should be observed that this name appears in a list of entities that Jesus commands to move out of the way, quoted

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<sup>85</sup> This form of referring to a higher being by one of the lower, archontic names occurs in one other place, notably in 2PS (196), where it states that the archons of the aeons call the great hegumen of the Midst (ΜΕϞΟϞ) “the Great Jao, according to the name of a great archon of their place.” This is striking as the Great Jao appears as early as 2 *Jeu* where he is associated with the Treasury, and in later texts associated with the Midst, but this is the only instance where it is suggested that this is not his proper name. Perhaps by the time 2PS was composed, the name had greater stigma attached to it from its frequent use in magical practices.

<sup>86</sup> See PGM III.121; VII.302, IX.10, XXXVI.342-346.

above. By being associated with the invisible god of the thirteenth aeon, it is a name describing a material being, which is subject to commands from a higher rank. Ascribing the invisible god a “magical” name would have been thought to give greater power over him—a practice seen also with the planets in this text, which in addition to their usual names, “by which the men of the world call them” (4PSa 357), are given “imperishable” names unknown from the currently preserved magical papyri, but which are nonetheless of the same ilk. G. Scholem proposes an Aramaic origin for the name Akramachamarei, from whence comes the imperative phrase, “uproot the magic spells.”<sup>87</sup> However, there is again little sign that this linguistic origin or semantic meaning played a role in its selection for use here. Interestingly, there is a curse tablet featuring Ἀχραμαχαμαρει as “master and ruler of the heavenly firmament;”<sup>88</sup> this would reflect a fitting role for the invisible god in the thirteenth aeon, ruler of the height of the material realm.

#### 6.3.4 Bainchooch

ΒΑΙΝΧΩΩΩΧ appears twice, once in each 4PSa and b. It is used to refer to the same figure both times: the neutral triple-powered one. This name is used frequently in the magical papyri, and although it can be part of a longer palindrome, it is more commonly seen in this form, which is translated to “soul of Khukh,” god of darkness.<sup>89</sup> This is the only triple-powered one that interacts with human souls in a semi-positive way, escorting those souls that lived righteously but did not receive the mysteries to allow them access to the Treasury of Light, and teaching them of the creation of the world with gladness (4PSb 382). This then appears to be another case of a name being considered particularly efficacious, and being thus associated with a figure that plays an active role with the human realm and particular souls.

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<sup>87</sup> G. Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism, Merkabah Mysticism, and Talmudic Tradition* (New York: The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1965), 97.

<sup>88</sup> A. Audollent, *Defixionum Tabellae* (Paris, 1904), 325, II. 7-8; cited in G. Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism*, 96.

<sup>89</sup> See H.D. Betz, *The Greek Magical Papyri*, 18n.3.

### 6.3.5 Hekate and Typhon

Finally, both Hekate and Typhon appear as great archons of the Midst (**MHT€**), tormenting the souls of sinners. Although these names apply to divine figures found outside of magical contexts as well, they are included here for their frequency of appearance amongst the magical papyri. In *4PSa*, Hekate is described as three-faced; this is in keeping with Greco-Egyptian magical tradition, which frequently depicts her as three-formed.<sup>90</sup> As a goddess of magic among other things, she is not automatically considered an evil being. Typhon's form, although not given a physical description in *4PSa*, is slightly elaborated in the parallel fragment in the Bruce Codex, where he is said to have an ass's face (*2 Jeu* 141). This, too, is in keeping with common Typhon imagery, the Greek name of the evil Egyptian god Seth.<sup>91</sup> Both figures are used frequently in the magical papyri, for a variety of purposes. As with the previously discussed names borrowed from magical tradition, there is no immediately obvious reason for these particular figures to have been imported; nor are the origins of the other three great archons of the Midst (**MHT€**) clear.

### 6.3.6 *Thernopsi* Formula

One other formula deserves a brief mention here. The “Thernopsi” formula is a series of words basically composed by rearranging the syllables ψι, νω, and θερ: ψινωθερ νωψιθερ θερνωψι. It appears at least twice in the Greek Magical Papyri, with another instance perhaps including corruptions or variant readings.<sup>92</sup> *Psinother* derives from the Egyptian for “son of God.”<sup>93</sup> The formula appears twice in *4PSa*, again with variant spellings, as is typical also with the names discussed above (*4PSa*

<sup>90</sup> See *PGM* IV.2119,2608-2610,2727,2880; XXXVI.190; see also C. Bonner, *Studies in Magical Amulets*, nos. 64, 66; A. Delatte and Ph. Derchainé, *Les intailles magiques gréco-égyptiennes de la Bibliothèque Nationale* (Paris: Bibliothèque Nationale, 1964), 189, nos. 252, 253, 254.

<sup>91</sup> For Typhon as the evil Seth or opponent of the sun, see for example *PGM* XII.373-374; XXXIIa.1; XXXVI.319; LVII.4; LXVIII.1; LXXVIII.7

<sup>92</sup> See *PGM* III.186; IV.828-829; VII.316; also H. Betz, *The Greek Magical Papyri*, 339.

<sup>93</sup> E. Amélineau, *Essai sur le Gnosticisme égyptien: Ses développements et son origine égyptienne* (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1887), 320; P.D. Scott-Moncrieff, *Paganism and Christianity in Egypt*, 170n.1; H.D. Betz, *The Greek Magical Papyri*, 54n.112; M.W. Meyer, ed., *The Ancient Mysteries: A Sourcebook* (1987; reprint: Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press, 1999), 212. Alternatively, T. Hopfner (*Griechisch-ägyptischer Offenbarungszauber*, Vol. 1 [Leipzig: Haessel, 1921], sec. 750) proposes that the formula derives from the Egyptian for “highest god.”

353, 370). In both instances they appear in appeals for the Father of the Treasury of Light (as opposed to Sabaoth the Good, Jesus' earthly "father") to hear, immediately after a series of permutations of the letters of  $\iota\omega\omega$ . A few other unknown magical words are common to both of these invocations, while in the first a number of other common magical words also appear. It should be clarified that these invocations do not represent a name or names of this highest Father—that name is not written down. These written lists of names of power contain those of lower entities such as Jeu and Sabaoth, suggesting that these words are meant to get the hearer's attention and act as signifiers of the speakers' wider divine knowledge.<sup>94</sup> Regardless of whether the etymological origin or meaning of the phrase was known, it is clear that the author felt it appropriate in an address to the highest entity of his system.

### 6.3.7 Summary of Magical Name Usage

This demonstrates that the author of *4PSa* in particular had both access to and interest in names and verbal formulae found primarily in practical ritual or "magical" texts of a Greco-Egyptian provenance. These elements are not found together in any one particular spell or text, but are scattered across a variety of sources, suggesting both the popularity of the terms for ritual use and the variety of materials the author of *4PSa* may potentially have utilized. Despite the proposed etymological origins of several of the above terms, there is little evidence that the author had these in mind in selecting these particular elements for incorporation. Rather, it seems that they were chosen for their perceived power. Aside from the *thernopsi* formula, which while addressed to the highest Father does not pertain to him directly, they relate to entities dwelling or acting in the material realm. This perhaps in the author's mind explained why they could be called upon in more material ritual contexts. In Jesus' case, the name Aberamentho is related purely to his material incarnation and powers, as opposed to his spiritual origin in the Treasury of Light. This maintains the division between the upper, spiritual elements and the lower, material ones in the author's system.

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<sup>94</sup> So for example at *4PSa* 354, after giving a list of such names, then the text simply says that Jesus "cried out again, saying the name of the Father of the Treasury of the Light."

## 6.4 MANICHAISM

Although several of the core beliefs of the Manichaeans are either not present or outright contradicted in the *Books of Jeu* and the *Pistis Sophia*, it is possible to see traces of what may have been originally Manichaean ideas in them. More speculatively, given the likelihood of a temporally parallel development of these traditions, the syncretistic nature of both groups, and the widespread nature of Manichaeism, it might be possible that some influence traveled from the Jeuian group to the Manichaeans as well, as will be discussed at the end of this section.

### 6.4.1 The Virgin of Light

The Virgin of Light is one of the most obvious starting points to look for Manichaean influence, as this figure is prominent in Manichaean literature. Upon further inspection, however, the connection essentially ends at the name of the figure. In Manichaeism the Virgin of Light is associated with the moon;<sup>95</sup> in the *Pistis Sophia* she is tied to the sun.<sup>96</sup> In the former her main role is in exciting the archons to release their light and (in part) in transporting it to the light realm (*Keph VII 35.15-17*);<sup>97</sup> in the latter she acts as the judge and main arbiter of transmigration of souls. It is interesting to note the Manichaean connection of Jesus with the moon<sup>98</sup> and its presentation of Jesus as the eschatological Judge at the end of the Great War (*Shabuhrgan 60-160*).<sup>99</sup> As Jesus and the Virgin of the Light both originate from the Third Messenger (*Keph VII*), they might thus both be connected with the

<sup>95</sup> See P.O. Skjærvø, *An Introduction to Manicheism I* (course notes, Early Iranian Civilizations 103, 2006 Fall term), 48.

<sup>96</sup> *2PS 186*, and indirectly at *4PSa 355*, by associating the Midst with the sun; the Midst is always the abode of the Virgin of Light in these texts. See also A. Dieterich, *Abraxas: Studien zur Religionsgeschichte des spätern Altertums* (Leipzig: B.G. Teubner, 1891), 101.

<sup>97</sup> See S.N.C. Lieu, *Manichaeism in the Later Roman Empire and Medieval China: A Historical Survey* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985), 15; P.O. Skjærvø, *An Introduction to Manicheism I*, 47. Note that although she is referred to as judge at one point, she is so called with a masculine form: “Oh judge of (all) the worlds...O true father of the orphans, the (husband...) of the grieving widow...(O) Perfect Man, virgin of light, draw my soul to you (from this) abyss” (I. Gardner and S.N.C.Lieu, *Manichaean Texts from the Roman Empire* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004], 85).

<sup>98</sup> P.O. Skjærvø, *An Introduction to Manicheism I*, 48; *An Introduction to Manicheism II - Texts* (course notes, Early Iranian Civilizations 103, 2006 Fall term), 11 (BT 11 no.3.4).

<sup>99</sup> See translation in D.N MacKenzie, “Mani’s Šābuhragān,” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London* 42 (1979), 500-534. As Skjærvø notes, this account closely follows Mt. 25:31-46 (*An Introduction to Manicheism I*, 53).

masculine entity taking the role of Judge. However, the role is still not the same as that of the Virgin of the Light in the *Pistis Sophia*: in the latter she judges souls in the here and now, determining their fate in reincarnation, while Jesus in the *Shabuhrgan* acts as final Judge when the darkness and sinners are sealed away forever.

The Virgin of the Light is called upon to participate in the baptism of fire in 2 *Jeu* (110-111), a rite performed in the world, while the Manichaeans eschewed all external rites and worldly purifications (Augustine, *Contra Faustum* 20:3-4),<sup>100</sup> viewing matter as inherently evil such that no amount of cleansing can purify it. Portions of the *Books of Jeu* and the *Pistis Sophia* both have a strong emphasis on baptisms and rituals to rid the earthly body of archontic influence, and the Virgin of Light plays a key role in at least one of these rites. Thus, although the title is similar, the actual nature and role of the figure is significantly different between these traditions.

#### 6.4.2 Solar and Lunar Imagery

The image of the sun and the moon as ships, transporting the Third Messenger and the Virgin of Light and collecting light from the archons, is key in the Manichaean myth. Celestial boat imagery appears only once in all of the Jeuvian texts: “But the base of the moon was of the type of a boat, and a male dragon and a female dragon steered it, while two white bulls drew it. And the likeness of a child was at the back of the moon, and guided the dragons as they stole the light of the archons from them, while a cat-face was in front of it” (4*PSa* 354-355). Here then, it is only the moon which is depicted as a boat, while immediately preceding this passage the disc of the sun appears as a dragon with its tail in its mouth, carrying “the seven powers of the left”—the seven planets. The two dragons steering the boat of the moon most likely represent the lunar nodes, also considered important in the Manichaean myth: the *Shabuhrgan* specifically states that the beings forming the firmament “attached the

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<sup>100</sup> See also L. Cirillo, “The Mani Logion: ‘The Purification That Was Spoken About Is That Which Comes Through Gnosis’ (CMC 84, 9-12)” in *New Light on Manichaeism: Papers from the Sixth International Congress on Manichaeism*, J.D. Beduhn, ed. (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 45-59. Although J.K. Coyle warns against taking Faustus’ statements at face value (*Manichaeism and Its Legacy* [Leiden: Brill, 2009], 90), his examples to the contrary derive from “Gnostic” evidence—including the *Pistis Sophia*—not from Manichaean sources.

seven planets and suspended the two dragons (= the lunar nodes) and chained them” (*Shabuhrgan* M 98-99).<sup>101</sup> However, in the Manichaean sources, these nodes or “Ascendants” were considered evil, sometimes serving to replace the positively-viewed sun and moon in the list of seven planets with their evil natures<sup>102</sup>--whereas here they are part and parcel of the lunar package, working towards the collection of the light from the archons.

This passage has been used to support Egyptian connections for the *Pistis Sophia*, and such connections have been discussed above. However, despite the solar snake imagery in ancient Egypt, as far as boat imagery goes the solar barque was far more important to the Egyptians than a lunar one—and no solar ship appears here; also neither the sun nor the moon was thought to *collect* light. This concept of light collection is key in the Manichaean system. In this way the *Pistis Sophia* passage seems more closely tied to Manichaean imagery than Egyptian, although still the correspondences are far from exact. Furthermore, the lack of connection of the images in this passage with anything else in the texts suggests that this is an insertion from an external source (although the following material has apparently been conflated as well).

### 6.4.3 Purification of Light

The purification of light within matter is an important concept in both the Manichaean and Jeuian texts. The process of purification is at times more immediate and visceral in Manichaean tradition: the bodies of the elect purify the light trapped within fruits and vegetables by digesting them.<sup>103</sup> The initial process of making the archons give up the light they had swallowed, however, is slightly closer to what is found in the Jeuian texts, if again the latter is less graphic: a heavenly being (or beings) appears before them and causes them to unwillingly give up their purified light, then takes that light back to the treasury or kingdom of light; the remainder or dregs go into the world to be purified. As seen above, the sun and the moon work together in some capacity to bring this about. *4PSa* says that Jeu and Melchisedek are “the great lights. Their rank is this, that they come down to the archons and they

<sup>101</sup> Referenced in P.O. Skjærvø, *An Introduction to Manicheism II - Texts*, 29.

<sup>102</sup> T. Pettipiece, *Pentadic Redaction in the Manichaean Kephalaia* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 63-64.

<sup>103</sup> See references in S.N.C. Lieu, *Manichaeism*, 21n.122.

(the lights) are purified in them. And Zorokothora Melchisedek takes what is purified of the lights which have been purified in the archons, and takes them to the Treasury of the Light” (*APSa* 360). It is possible that these two were at this time associated with the sun and the moon; with Jeu’s potential association with the sun in *I Jeu* and Zorokothora as the other great light here, this cannot be wholly discounted. It is not explicit, however, and in *IPS* the receivers of the sun and moon both report to Melchisedek (*IPS* 35), who is of the place of the right above the cosmic spheres (*2PS* 195). At any rate, there is no boat imagery associated with them, nor the vomiting or lustful ejaculations of the light found in the Manichaean texts.

Further connections can be made from other aspects of the narratives, however. First, there are two accounts of light being unwillingly extracted from the sons of darkness and archons before the creation of the world in the Manichaean myth: the Living Spirit appears before the sons of darkness, causing them to vomit part of their light; and the Third Messenger with the Virgin of Light appear before the archons, causing them in lust to ejaculate part of theirs.<sup>104</sup> In each case, the divine being takes what is pure of their light and the remaining mixture goes into the formation of the world. The *Shabuhrgan* explains that the being Âz taught lust to the demons, who produced misbirths, which Âz in turn devours through the male and female demons it had formed as garments for itself. The male and female demons of Âz then mingle and produce Adam, who possesses most of the light power that had been consumed through the misbirths of the earlier demons (*Shabuhrgan* M 7984.1; 7982).<sup>105</sup> Thus goes the story of the creation of the first human.

The elements of 1) purified light being taken directly from the archons and transported to the light-realm while yet-to-be purified mixture goes into the world, 2) the development of the human being and the soul from that mixture, and 3) the archons consuming their own matter all play roles in the *Pistis Sophia*, although in

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<sup>104</sup> See P.O. Skjærvø, *An Introduction to Manicheism I*, 47. It should also be noted that the imagery of a divine being appearing before flawed lower beings and inciting them to ejaculate their illicit light-power out of lust is also found in Epiphanius’ description of the Nicolaitans (*Pan* 25.2.4), where it is Barbelo who is the mother of the archons and who appears before them to collect their seed to recover her power. In that case, however, the story is apparently used to excuse wanton sexuality within the group, whereas the Manichaeans depict the lust and sexuality of the archons as the basest of things, to be avoided.

<sup>105</sup> See P.O. Skjærvø, *An Introduction to Manicheism II - Texts*, 34.

different contexts. The boat of the moon stealing (ΤΩΡΠΠ) the light of the archons has already been mentioned, minus the bodily imagery of vomit or semen. In *3PS*, the light that is purified within the archons is taken away by Melchisedek, but the remainder goes into a soul which then has the opportunity for purification in the world. This new soul is formed from “the sweat of the archons, and from the tears of their eyes, or else from the breath of their mouths”—in other words, the dregs of the matter of the archons (*3PS* 333-334). A more in-depth description of the formation of the whole human being comes in *3PS* 340-345, but there is no description of the creation of Adam or the first man. Rather, the production of any human being is explained, with the system of reincarnation already in place; and it is through this system that the soul has opportunities to purify the dregs from which it derives. This use of the material dregs to form the souls of men and the creatures of the world is reiterated in *IPS* 35,<sup>106</sup> and it is also in this text that the description of the archons consuming their own matter is found. In the Manichaean texts, Âz wished to preserve itself from destruction brought on by the gradual purification of the light out of itself, and thus consumed the abortions of matter. In *IPS*, after Melchisedek had come and collected the power of the archons of the aeons and Heimarmene, they began to swallow their own matter instead of allowing it to go into the world as souls so they might not become completely powerless and weak (*IPS* 36). The themes of purification of light in the archons, that power being taken by a representative of the light realm, the remaining dregs going into the world for further purification through humans living properly, and the archons attempting to retain power by consuming their own matter, are thus common to both traditions, despite the vehicles and specific imagery being different.

#### 6.4.4 The Five Trees

The concept of the five trees is another potential tie between these two bodies of literature. The five trees certainly play an important, if vague, role in the Jeuian

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<sup>106</sup> See also *2PS* 249, where the Savior says, “Now you especially are the dregs of the Treasury, and you are the dregs of the place of those of the right, and you are the dregs of all the invisible ones and all the archons”—indicating that mankind derives not only from traces of light found in the archons, but from the higher realms as well. However, “the emanations of the light have no need for the mysteries, for they are purified; but the race of mankind have need because they are all material dregs.” (*2PS* 250) Their mixed origin still requires a great deal of struggle before they are purified.

texts, appearing in every version of the list of mysteries one must receive to attain a place in the heights.<sup>107</sup> The potential connection of these trees to the planets in *I Jeu* has already been discussed, in a phase when astrology still had the potential to be positive. The explanation of the five trees given in *2PS*, when such a view would no longer have been feasible, ties a number of important figures from the place of the right to the trees, including Jeu and Melchisedek (*2PS* 194-195)—in other words, the five trees are associated with beings of the light-realms, albeit one of the lower light-realms at this point in the group's cosmological development.<sup>108</sup>

The five trees in Manichaean literature—at least, in as much as remains today—are tied to the forces of *darkness*, beginning in the lands of darkness and bearing evil fruit (*Keph* VI 30.19-21; XV 48.14-16). This is a far cry from the high view of the five trees found in the Jeuian texts. It should be noted, however, that these five trees together constitute the “Tree of Death,” the counterpart to the “Tree of Life” that contains all good things in the kingdom of light.<sup>109</sup> While it is possible that five light trees were also posited, the mirror reflection of those in the realm of darkness, insufficient evidence remains to say so with certainty.

#### 6.4.5 The Five Worlds of Darkness and the Way of the Midst

The five evil realms associated with the way of the Midst (**MHTĒ**), however, may well be tied to the Manichaean idea of the five worlds of darkness. The five Manichaean worlds of darkness are each associated with a dark element: smoke, fire, wind, water, and darkness. Each is furthermore ruled by a being with a different physical and sensory description, and each rules over a different subset of people: the powers and authorities of the earth, the fire-worshippers, the idol-worshippers, the baptizers, and the soothsayers (*Keph* VI 33.5-34.5). T. Pettipiece is persuasive in his suggestion that these five sub-rulers are “a reflection of the compiler's desire to identify and attribute a particular governing spirit or authority to what he perceived as five spheres of negative influence in the world;”<sup>110</sup> i.e. the Sassanian kings, their Zoroastrian clergy, traditional cults, Christians and other baptizing groups, and

<sup>107</sup> See Table 3.3.

<sup>108</sup> *GosThom* also mentions five trees in paradise; see saying 19.

<sup>109</sup> S.N.C. Lieu, *Manichaeism in the Later Roman Empire and Medieval China*, 10.

<sup>110</sup> *Pentadic Redaction*, 61

elements of popular religion such as oracles and soothsaying. Thus the fivefold division of the evil domains would reflect actual opposition or perceived negative influences facing the group in the world. While the *Kephalaia* warns to “not interact with them, so that you might escape their bond and their punishment forever” (*Keph* VI 34.10-12), it does not give any details as to the nature or length of the punishments.

The five great archons of the way of the Midst (**MHTЄ**) also each have their own physical description, albeit less systematically than the Manichaean versions. Here, each archon rules over people who commit certain sins, such as anger/slander, murder, swearing false oaths, fornication/adultery, or impeding justice and neglecting the needy. This description of the evil realm and its rulers presents an author or group more concerned with ethical behavior in its members than with denouncing specific social or cultural groups and trends in the world. Furthermore, these realms are specifically associated with *punishments*—although the archons drive men to behave in these ways, souls that give in to their prodding and engage in these sinful behaviors in the world are taken to be punished by these same beings. These punishments are described in more detail than their Manichaean counterparts, as the soul is consumed with dark smoke and wicked fire until the planets align for it to be allowed back into the world. While the Manichaean author was concerned with immediate apostasy and social pressures, the author or compiler of the *Pistis Sophia* was focused on the more abstract temptations in the world, the ascetic and ethical principles of the group, and the journey of the soul after this life.

#### **6.4.6 Reverence of the Sun and Moon Apart from the Traditional Planets**

This fivefold division of the evil realms may be in part related to the Manichaean separation of the sun and the moon from the five other, evil “planets.” The demonizing of the five planets while revering the luminaries was unusual in ancient thinking, and in fact in some instances Manichaean authors included the two ascendants or lunar nodes to make up the more typical planetary number seven.<sup>111</sup> The importance of the sun and moon in the Manichaean system has been discussed,

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<sup>111</sup> See Section 6.4.2.

as they serve to transport purified light from the dark mixture of the world back to the kingdom of light. The book in the Jeuian corpus dealing most extensively with astrology, *4PSa*, also holds the sun and moon apart, although its view of the other five planets is more in line with popular thinking at the time (Saturn/Mars being malefic, Jupiter/Venus being benefic, and Mercury being neutral) rather than presenting them all as evil. The movements of the benefic planets can have positive responses.

The later texts, however, cease to see the motions of the planets as having any potential positive effects—and while in *3PS* the “destiny” is still associated with the way of the Midst (*3PS* 285, 287), the “five great archons” become tied to the Heimarmene, or the zodiac (*3PS* 333, 334, 336). At this time the archons of the discs of the sun and moon also join the great archons as they form the human body, but their role is to breathe into the soul a part of the Savior’s power (*3PS* 334-336). Thus these two entities are kept separate from the five evil planet-archons who knead in their dregs and the evil draught of forgetfulness, and are still associated with the higher powers. In *IPS* we again see that the receivers of the sun and moon remain as servants of the higher realms, as they take the light-power from the aeons, the Heimarmene and the sphere, and present it to Melchisedek, the receiver and transporter of light to the Treasury par excellence (*IPS* 35). The five great archons/planets are no longer as important as a set unit at this point in the timeline of the texts, and the idea of evil has become focused on the archons of the twelve aeons and the machinations of Authades.

The idea of divine power being imparted to human beings on their entry into the worldly sphere is wholly alien to Manichaean sensibilities, and the sun and the moon would have been thought to take light purified through the Elect as well as from the archons. However, the designation of the five evil entities ruling five evil realms, especially as seen in *4PSa*, and their role in forming and subjugating humanity through sin, could be seen as having Manichaean influence.

#### **6.4.7 The Five Evil Realms and Division of the Zodiac**

The division of the zodiac into five realms, each having “two” signs, is found in differing forms in the *Kephalaia* and *4PSa*. *Keph* LXIX discusses the zodiac and its

divisions and relations with each of the five evil planets at some length, and while it posits two signs per world of darkness, two of them have three associated signs to make up the total of twelve. These divisions do not have an immediately obvious logic: while the divisions of four sets of three later in the chapter are sorted by the traditional four-element classifications, each evenly separated from the others in its group, in the divisions by the five worlds of darkness they are scattered across the board. Furthermore, each of the five planets is associated with one of these divisions, without regard to traditional ideas of planetary rulership of the signs. It seems that there was a perceived need to connect the zodiac to the five worlds of darkness, but perhaps without great consideration of the significance for the way in which this connection was made.

The *4PSa* divisions solve the problem of assigning the twelve signs to five realms slightly more elegantly, by pairing the signs in opposition and having the two remaining as the dwelling of Zeus/Jupiter, benefic ruler of the planets. Rather than having the five divisions “belong” to each of the five realms, it is through the positioning of the benefic planets in them that they are related to and in fact serve to aid in destroying each section. In a way, the sphere of fate is thus turned into a positive force for human souls in opposition to the archontic rulership of the Midst (**MHT€**). By divorcing the planets from the five evil realms and not considering them or the zodiac as purely evil, this system allows for more flexibility and balance in tying the zodiac to the five archontic realms. Thus any Manichaean influence has been subsumed into a new and innovative system.

#### **6.4.8 Chariots of the Sun and Moon**

As a final, speculative thought, it is intriguing to note that in a reference to the sun and moon, it describes how the Living Spirit fitted their two chariots with “five ring walls” each. In the case of the sun, “in each ring wall he fitted twelve doors. And altogether there are 60 doors” (BT 4 no. 11 Pa).<sup>112</sup>

As has been established, *I Jeu* features sixty “Treasuries of the Light,” which are said to be divided such that there are “two ranks of Fatherhood within, and one in

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<sup>112</sup> See P.O. Skjærvø, *An Introduction to Manicheism II - Texts*, 43.

the middle, and two outside” (*I Jeu* 83)—making sixty treasuries divided into five sets of twelve, each with (at least) one gate. The possibility of associating *Jeu* with the sun has already been suggested, and the idea of tying the Treasuries of Light in their ranks with this image from Manichaeism is an intriguing one. However, there is no suggestion that the Treasuries participate in gathering light, nor a higher realm beyond the Treasuries to which one might ascend—none of the trappings of the sun’s role in Manichaeism. As *I Jeu* seems likely to be the earliest of the texts in the present *Jeuian* corpus, and thus the one most likely to originate at the earliest stages of Manichaean development, might it be possible that a degree of influence might have gone in the other direction? This format of 60 units in five sets of twelve is highly unusual in ancient cosmological speculations, yet in *I Jeu* it is the centerpiece of the divine realm, highly developed and described at great length. The reference in the Manichaean fragment is associated with the sun and moon as vehicles for the collection of light, but it is difficult to imagine what purpose the 60 doors would serve for such a purpose. Perhaps the ascending pure soul and purified light in the world would have been equated. The source materials on both sides are too fragmentary to say for certain, but it is a possible avenue for further investigation.

#### **6.4.9 Summary of Manichaean Influence**

It is evident that both Manichaeism and the *Jeuian* religion were evolving, syncretistic entities, adopting and adapting traditions over time. Encounters between the two groups may have been fruitful. Throughout the corpus of *Jeuian* texts traces of ideas that are important in Manichaeism can be found, although the imagery associated with the ideas is frequently dramatically different. The images of the Virgin of Light and the Five Trees may seem on the surface to be some of the more obvious ties, but a look at the way these elements function in the texts reveal that their role and nature is quite different in each. On the other hand, certain similarities—the necessity of extracting light-elements from the archons and of purifying their dregs in the world, the division and rulership of the parts of the realm of evil or darkness, and the style of astrological speculations between the two traditions—are at times striking. Although the *Jeuian* texts are certainly independent, lacking certain key Manichaean features and possessing others that are wholly

against Manichaean sensibilities, it seems likely that at an early point in their history a meaningful encounter occurred that would leave a lasting impression on their cosmological outlook.

## 6.5 THE SETHIANS

Sethian (sometimes called “Classic Gnostic”<sup>113</sup>) traces within the Jeuian texts are faint, yet present. As with many of the early non-mainstream esoteric Christian groups, there has recently been much debate as to what constitutes “Sethian” teaching.<sup>114</sup> One of the most intriguing arguments comes from T. Rasimus’ study of the Ophites, arguing for the differentiation of Ophite, Barbeloite, and Sethite material in the body of texts frequently cited as “Sethian.”<sup>115</sup> However, that proposal includes the combination and blending of these various strands in different texts. This section is not intended to discuss the finer points of these traditions and their boundaries, and for present purposes, “Sethian” may be used as a heuristic term to describe the body of texts that embraces all three strands.

It should be noted that the *Untitled Text* of the Bruce Codex is widely considered a Sethian text.<sup>116</sup> This means that, regardless of who authored the various treatises, the compiler of the codex had both Sethian and Jeuian texts available. While theologically there is little connection between the *Books of Jeu* and the *Untitled Text*, the fact that tractates from the separate groups were geographically present in the same area supports the notion that the sort of exchange of ideas suggested here would certainly have been possible.

The *Books of Jeu* and *Pistis Sophia* lack most of the hallmarks of Sethianism, but signs of the adoption of certain figures and concepts—albeit far removed from

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<sup>113</sup> See B. Layton, *The Gnostic Scriptures* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1987), 5-21; B.A. Pearson, *Ancient Gnosticism: Traditions and Literature* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2007), 51-100.

<sup>114</sup> For example, H.-M. Schenke, “The Phenomenon and Significance of Gnostic Sethianism” in *The Rediscovery of Gnosticism: Proceedings of the International Conference on Gnosticism at Yale, New Haven, Connecticut, March 28-31, 1978*, Vol. 2, B. Layton, ed. (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1981), 588-616; F. Wisse, “Stalking Those Elusive Sethians” in *The Rediscovery of Gnosticism*, Vol. 2, 563-576; J.D. Turner, *Sethian Gnosticism and the Platonic Tradition* (Québec: University of Laval Press, 2001), A.H.B. Logan, *The Gnostics: Identifying an Early Christian Cult* (London: T&T Clark, 2006).

<sup>115</sup> *Paradise Reconsidered in Gnostic Mythmaking: Rethinking Sethianism in Light of the Ophite Evidence* (Leiden: Brill, 2009). He also uses the term “Classic Gnostic” to refer to the Sethian corpus (5).

<sup>116</sup> See Section 2.1.8.

their original context and significance—appear from *2 Jeu* onwards. There is a degree of mythological overlap that is not explicable without positing some interaction with the Sethian system, but the Jeuian authors' different understanding of cosmic structure and theogony is maintained. The nature of the overlap does not suggest a familiarity with any particular Sethian text as they are currently available, but rather utilizes a selection of figures from Sethian teaching that would perhaps have been the most prominent: those from the top of the hierarchy, and the ruler of the bottom. The fact that the figures being adopted are used in different ways from their original roles—primarily by demoting them from higher to lower status—suggests that the Jeuian authors considered the Sethian system seriously enough to need to account for it, taking those figures they felt were most important and fixing them into their own system as they saw fit. This results in the characters in question possessing entirely different natures from their Sethian originals. The fact that these unique interpretations of the figures remain relatively constant (with some shifts, which will be discussed below) supports the position that the Jeuian authors operated within their own tradition and theological trajectory, accepting outside influences only in the context of their own system.

### 6.5.1 The Sethian “Trinity”

The first traces of decidedly Sethian influence appear in *2 Jeu*, in the journey through the aeons. In the twelfth aeon the disciples are told they will encounter the invisible god, the Barbelo, and the unbegotten god (*2 Jeu* 133).<sup>117</sup> This appears to be an adoption of the highest trinity in the Sethian texts, epitomized in the *Apocryphon of John*, which consists of the Invisible Spirit, the Barbelo, and the Self-begotten One (Autogenes)—or Father, Mother, and Son. In that text, after the Self-generated one is completed as son of the Barbelo via the Invisible Spirit, twelve aeons are given to attend the Self-begotten (*ApJohn* BG 34,10-11; III 12,18-19; II 8, 22-23), and the lower powers worship them: “I glorify and praise you, Invisible Spirit. For it is

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<sup>117</sup> The change of the title of the third member of the triad from Self- to Unbegotten is a curious one. The term “unbegotten” is used with some frequency within the Sethian texts to refer to a variety of beings; however, it does not appear elsewhere in reference to the third member of the original triad. The significance of this change in terminology is uncertain, as this is the only appearance of the Sethian trinity in the Jeuian corpus.

because of you that the all has come into being, and (it is) into you (that) the all (returns). I praise you and the Self-begotten and the three aeons: the Father, the Mother, and the Son, the perfect power” (*ApJohn* BG 35,13-20; see also III 13,11-16; II 9,6-11; IV 14,63-65).

In 2 *Jeu* this triad is far removed from the pinnacle of existence afforded it in the Sethian world, placed *within* the twelve material aeons. Although “there are many other gods in that aeon who in the Treasury of Light are called archons” (2 *Jeu* 133) who rule over all the aeons and serve these three, they remain firmly in the material domain. The fact that it refers to “gods” who are known as mere archons in the higher Treasury suggests that while the author knows the Sethian hierarchy, the importance afforded to this trinity, and the various ranks unfolding below it, he views it as misguided and blind to the true heights of reality represented by his own theogony. The main point of the insertion of these figures appears to be a deliberate demotion of them from spiritual to material entities. By placing them within the twelve material aeons and stating that others wrongly call them “gods,” the author emphasizes the superiority of his own system over that of the Sethians.

It should be noted that this triad is likely a secondary addition to a preexisting list of aeons and their inhabitants. The typical pattern for each aeon (with some minor variations in wording) lists the mystery name(s) of its archons: “When you reach the (x)<sup>th</sup> aeon, the archons (...), (...), and (...) will come before you.” This is followed by instructions to present the proper defenses, which include a seal, its name, a cipher, and commanding the same archon names to withdraw themselves. However, in the twelfth aeon, the description of the invisible God, Barbelo and unbegotten god appears to have been inserted with little concern for continuity. It is somewhat jarring after the flow of the previous sections. After this introduction, however, the text continues with the usual pattern: “Again the archons of that aeon will come before you. These are their names: **ΧΑΡΒΥΩΘΩ. ΑΡΖΩΖΑ. ΖΑΖΑΞΑΩΘ**” (2 *Jeu* 133). This is followed by a seal, its name, a cipher, and a series of different mystery names, suggesting further corruption has entered the text. Despite the final corruption, the rest of the section corresponds precisely with the pattern established by the previous aeons—with the exception of the block of text

describing the Sethian triad. The author or compiler of this text must have considered this grouping of beings significant enough to require explanation within his own preexisting system—by inserting them within the twelve material aeons and demoting them from gods to archons, subordinate to his conception of the Treasury of Light and the Godhead.

### 6.5.2 The Invisible God and the Triple Powered Ones

In *2 Jeu* this slight to the Sethian trinity is immediately followed by the appearance in the thirteenth aeon of the “great invisible God” and the “great virgin spirit” (*2 Jeu* 134). This may be a conflation of the Invisible Spirit of the Sethian primal triad into two figures, as it was sometimes referred to as the invisible, virginal Spirit.<sup>118</sup> Here there is no trinity; instead there are “24 emanations of the invisible God.” This combination is closer to that which is found in the later Jeuian texts, although the 24 emanations are not explicitly Sethian. The thirteenth aeon remains the domain of the great invisible god throughout the rest of the texts, usually in conjunction with the three triple-powered gods. The triple-powered ones in their *2 Jeu* context will be discussed presently; for the ruling entities of the thirteenth aeon here it is sufficient to observe that again in contrast to their Sethian counterpart, this position at the pinnacle of the material aeons, the place of the left, is the highest place they achieve in the Jeuian system. In fact, the 24 emanations of the invisible god are envious of the disciples for their knowledge of the mysteries and wish to hold them back, returning to a sense of opposition that was lacking in aeons six through twelve. The thirteenth aeon and its inhabitants, including its Sethian refugees, have an ambivalent status on the border of the realm of the left—again, a far cry from their Sethian equivalents.

The Triple-Powered One plays a complicated role in the Sethian texts. It appears primarily in the ascent-focused treatises, *Zostrianos*, the *Three Steles of Seth*, *Allogenes* and *Marsanes*. It is chiefly associated with the Invisible Spirit or the Barbelo, and regardless of its nature, it is always close to the Invisible Spirit. Thus in *Allogenes* “there appeared an eternal Life, the Invisible and Triple-powered Spirit” (*Allogenes* 66,32-34); while in *Marsanes* “the activity of that one (the Invisible

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<sup>118</sup> See *ApJohn* II 14,4-5; *GosEg* III 44,11-12; 49,23-25; 53,16-17; 65,10-12.

Spirit) is the Triple-powered One” (*Marsanes* 7,16-17). It frequently represents a set of Platonic powers, such as Existence-Vitality-Mentality.<sup>119</sup> The Jeuian texts, however, lack any concern with Platonic metaphysics, and the Triple-Powered One becomes three separate triple-powered entities, whose “triple powers” remain unspecified. In *2 Jeu* alone are the triple-powered ones located apart from the invisible god, placed above that entity in the Midst (**MECOC**). Here they are superior to the great invisible god and the Barbelo, poised to ultimately gain entry to the Kingdom of Light by virtue of their belief in the mysteries of the Treasury of Light. They are the only non-human entities that will be privy to the final mystery, thus setting them apart from all of the lower aeonic beings, including those of high Sethian origin now relegated to the aeonic regions.<sup>120</sup>

If their privileged position in *2 Jeu* was meant to afford the triple-powered ones of the Sethian hierarchy some merit, this honor is not shared in the rest of the Jeuian tradition. In *4PSa* they have assumed their more standard place alongside the great invisible one in an unspecified area above the twelve aeons and below the Midst (**MECOC**)—apparently the thirteenth aeon.<sup>121</sup> The great invisible one and two of the triple-powered ones provide powers for three of the five planets. The invisible one and one of the triple-powered ones are associated with the two malefic planets, and the other with Mercury, the neutral planet. The third triple-powered one plays no role in this text; although not named here, it is most likely Authades, “Arrogance,” the great evil force of *1/2PS*. It should be noted that the other two triple-powered ones have “magical” names, and are thoroughly dissociated from any concepts of Platonic reality. One of them, however, maintains a unique status: the one called (Β)ΔΙΝΧΩΩΩΧ is associated with neutrality in *4PSa* (356), and with charge of souls who have not received the mysteries but who lived righteous lives in

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<sup>119</sup> J.D. Turner discusses the nature and relationships of the entities in the Platonizing Sethian treatises at some length; see *Sethian Gnosticism*, 499-556; on the Triple-Powered One see especially 512-531.

<sup>120</sup> *2 Jeu* 136: “...for those three archons are inside all the aeons, and they which are outside all the treasuries are superior to all the gods which are in all the aeons...”

<sup>121</sup> The archons of Jabraoth, who have taken the triple-powered ones’ places as those entities rewarded for believing in the mysteries, are moved from the twelve aeons to a purified place “between the places of those of the Midst (**MECOC**) and between the places of the Invisible God.” (*4PSa* 356)

4PSb 382 (and although not specifically named, by inference in 3PS 262 – “one of the great triple powers—these among which there is a great one”).

The other triple-powered one appearing in 4PSa has a nondescript role, negative purely by association with the planet Mars, and as stated above, the final triple-powered one represents the head of all evil in *IPS*, full of greed, pride, and arrogance. That he is not mentioned until the latest texts does not rule out these associations; it is likely that a version of the myth of Pistis Sophia was extant at this earlier state of textual tradition, but not presented in the text at hand. In fact, Pistis Sophia takes the place of the third triple-power in the allocation of powers to the planets—her devotion grants her association with the benefic planet Venus, thus surpassing her triple-powered tormentor.

This discussion departs from these figures’ original association in the Sethian hierarchy. The point is, their usual proximity to the invisible god reflects their origin in a Sethian context, where the singular Triple-Powered One is either an aspect of or near to the Invisible Spirit. While the multiplication of one figure into three may be due to a misunderstanding on an author’s part, the texts still present a deliberate skewing of the Sethian hierarchy. The invisible god and the triple-powered ones are relegated to the thirteenth aeon, and their powers tied with the celestial bodies—far from the Platonic ideals they once represented. The Jeuian mythology goes so far as to demonize one of the triple-powers, miring it in lust for power and blind materiality. This is another example of the Jeuian authors deliberately subordinating the Sethian mythos to their own view of cosmic powers and origins—a nod to the Sethians’ influence, but a decidedly degrading interpretation.

### 6.5.3 The Barbelo

The Barbelo in terms of the original Sethian Father-Mother-Son trinity has already been partially discussed above. In the texts after 2 *Jeu* she appears in the thirteenth aeon, replacing the great virgin spirit as the more typical consort of the Invisible god/Spirit.<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> The Barbelo was also sometimes referred to as a virgin, perhaps adding to the confusion and the contributing to this substitution; see *TrimProt* 38,14; *GosEg* III 42,12-13; 62,1; IV 52,4; 73,11-12; *StelesSeth* 121,21; *Zost* [36,23]; 63,6-7; 83,11; 87,10; 129,11; *Marsanes* 4,11; 8,29; 9,2; *Allogenes* 59,6-7.

In *4PSa*, the first hints at Barbelo's larger role appear. After performing a ritual over the disciples such that they have a vision of the light on high, afterward they see in Jesus fire, water, wine and blood. Of these, the first two derive from the Treasury of Light, while the latter two are from "the place of the Barbelo." Furthermore, while the water, fire and wine exist to purify the sins of the world, the blood is "a sign concerning the body of mankind" that Jesus received (*4PSa* 368). This appears to be an early version of the construction of Jesus' incarnation that appears in *1/2PS*, wherein he receives elements of spirit, power, and material body—the latter of which comes from the Barbelo (*IPS* 122; *2PS* 128-129). In both cases, the material body of the incarnation derives from the Barbelo, who dwells in the material thirteenth aeon.

She is also the mother of Pistis Sophia (*4PSa* 356), who in *1/2PS* is one of the 24 invisible emanations that "the great invisible forefather with the two great triple-powered ones" emanated (*IPS* 43). In *2 Jeu* as well, the 24 emanations are tied to the great invisible god alone (*2 Jeu* 134), as the triple-powered ones possess a higher status.<sup>123</sup> This, then, is the first suggestion of the Barbelo's role in the generation of the emanations. The confusion about her relationship with the 24 is further reflected in one of Pistis Sophia's repentances in *IPS*, as she laments that "I have become a stranger to my brothers, the invisible ones, and also to the great emanations of the Barbelo" (*IPS* 48). This suggests a generative role for the Barbelo, but one distinct from the 24 invisible emanations that belong to the invisible god and his triple-powered minions alone. The reason for this later reluctance to associate the Barbelo with the 24 invisible emanations—which this author considers to be generally ignorant beings—but the desire to associate her with the Pistis Sophia who believes in the higher light, as well as her role in providing material for Jesus' earthly incarnation, can perhaps be explained through the concept of her function going back to early Sethian notions of a descending Savior.

In the Sethian descent-pattern treatises, the Barbelo, as Mother of all, is at least indirectly involved in Sophia's emanation. She is the mother of the Self-begotten, who in turn produces the aeons, including Sophia (*ApJohn* III 11,4-12,15;

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<sup>123</sup> Contrary to C. Schmidt, who names the Barbelo as the source of the 24 invisible emanations (*Pistis Sophia: Ein gnostisches Originalwerk*, 71).

BG 32,5-34,7; II 7,16-8,20). J.D. Turner notes that while “Sophia becomes the cause of cosmogonic deficiency...on the transcendent level, the higher Mother (Pronoia, Protennoia, Barbelo) must now undertake the restoration of this deficiency. She accomplishes this by causing direct representations of herself to appear on the earthly, human plane.”<sup>124</sup> The final manifestation often takes the form of a masculine figure such as Seth or Christ.<sup>125</sup> In the *Gospel of the Egyptians*, the Savior’s manifestation takes place through a body prepared “through the virgin,” most likely the Barbelo (*GosEg* III 63,10-14; IV 74,24-30). This body is also “Logos-begotten,” and its material nature is not clarified, perhaps in fitting with the higher nature accorded to its provider as well as its bearer. Thus, although the Invisible Spirit is in these texts the highest being, the Barbelo is both involved in Sophia’s emanation as Mother and works to repair the deficiency, including the preparation of a Savior-body in some instances.

In the Jeuian texts overall, the whole of the Sethian hierarchy is demoted to the material aeons. However, in the *Pistis Sophia* a number of theological and soteriological developments take place. The group adopts a version of the Sophia redemption myth, with (Pistis) Sophia remaining as the falling and saved element; and in addition, with increased Gospel influence, interpretation of Jesus’ incarnation becomes more important.<sup>126</sup> In both instances, the Barbelo retains her prior role, despite a greatly reduced prestige overall due to her new material nature. She is presented as mother of Pistis Sophia, and she provides a body for the descending Savior. This body is material, in accordance with the Barbelo’s new material nature and as explanation of a material incarnation; this is in contrast with earlier versions wherein she has a higher nature and the materiality of the Savior’s body is ambiguous.

<sup>124</sup> J.D. Turner, *Sethian Gnosticism*, 754.

<sup>125</sup> J.D. Turner, *Sethian Gnosticism*, 754. There are variations on this theme between texts, but the necessity of divine descent for salvation is consistent. The Nag Hammadi “descent” treatises are comprised of *ApJohn*, *TrimProt*, *Melch*, *ApocAd*, *GosEg*, *HypArch*.

<sup>126</sup> The discussion of his incarnation in *4PSa* (368-369) appears to rely on more esoteric materials from a combination of Matthew and John (the descent of the dove, provision of living water, wine as blood of the covenant for forgiveness of sins, the spear wound producing blood and water). The lone unique reference from Luke (12:49; “I have come to cast fire upon the earth”) serves to explain the purifying fire Jesus brings, and does not necessarily signify the author’s greater knowledge of the gospel. In fact, this passage is the only place in *4PSa* to show significant NT influence, and may have been taken from a separate tradition. See Section 6.7 below.

Through these connections with the Savior and the lone believing emanation of the thirteenth aeon, she becomes in a way elevated above the invisible god/spirit, which in Sethian thought was the original, perfect principle, but which in Jeuian terms is only a representation of matter (*2 Jeu* 133; *4PSa* 373; *1PS* 122; *2PS* 128). It is unlikely that the authors, with their low view of the Sethian divine entities overall, would have attributed such positive qualities and associations to the Barbelo without having retained it from their earlier sources. Furthermore, the fact that despite these elements, in *4PSa* she is still set to be destroyed along with the invisible god and all three triple powered gods when the superior name is recited suggests that the author still considers her nature to be material equivalent to those other entities, and thus she is not afforded special status in the face of the divine mysteries (*4PSa* 373). Her special attributes must be holdovers from an older tradition, and as the physical body needed for Jesus could not derive from the higher, non-material regions, the author saw no reason to change its source.

#### 6.5.4 Jaldabaoth

Jaldabaoth is the misshapen, ignorant creation of the fallen Sophia in the Sethian system. As a demonized version of the Platonic demiurge, he is responsible for the creation of fate and the planets, as well as the material world and humanity. The Jeuian texts lack detailed discussion of the creation of the cosmos or the evil entities in proximity to it, and much of Jaldabaoth's accomplishments in terms of fate and the enslavement of souls are attributed to Sabaoth, the Adamas.<sup>127</sup> However, Jaldabaoth continues to appear, and may suggest a modicum of Sethian influence.

He appears first in *2 Jeu* in the third aeon, followed in the fourth aeon by Samaelo. These two names, along with the third name Sakla(s), are all used to refer to Jaldabaoth in certain Sethian texts (*ApJohn* II 11,18; *TrimProt* [39,27]; *HypArch* 87,3; 94,25; 95,7-8). Much as the triple-powered ones are multiplied in the Jeuian texts, the author may have mistaken Samael as a separate figure rather than as

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<sup>127</sup> Although both "Sabaoth" and "Adamas" appear in various versions of Sethian mythology, they frequently take on a more positive role, and thus the evil "Sabaoth, the Adamas" in the Jeuian texts apparently derives from a different tradition. Sabaoth the Good in the Jeuian works is described as the offspring of Jeu and is consistently a resident of the realms of light, and thus is also not equivalent to the Sethian Sabaoth, who originates from Jaldabaoth but later repents. See also Sections 4.3 and 4.5.

another name for Jaldabaoth. Furthermore, these names seem to have been appended to an existing schema of archons, sticking out dramatically among the list of unfamiliar mystery names such as  $\chi\omicron\upsilon\gamma\eta\chi\epsilon\omega\chi$  and  $\zeta\omega\zeta\epsilon\alpha\zeta$ . It is likely no coincidence that these names have been added in the first five aeons, those below the “little Midst” that are associated with the west/left and fear of the mysteries. It is possible that these two figures were added at the same time as the Sethian trinity, as discussed above. Demoted from the position of arrogant world creator, they are slotted in amongst the already numerous lower archons set to bar the path of the uninitiated during ascent.

In *4PSb* and *3PS*, Jaldabaoth plays the role of the head of Chaos, where he punishes wicked souls along with his 49 demons. Jaldabaoth’s realms are also called Chaos elsewhere (*HypArch* 93,31; 96,11; *TrimProt* 39,21-27), and while in the *Apocryphon of John* the Chaos consists of the five sublunar realms for which he creates rulers (*ApJohn* III 17,19; BG 41,15), he is more frequently tied closer to the seven planetary realms and their denizens.<sup>128</sup> The Chaos in *4PSb/3PS* has a somewhat ambiguous location given the multiplicity of punishment/underworld realms present in those two texts, but it is certainly located below the twelve aeons or fate-sphere. The 49 demons associated with him suggest a connection with the seven planets, with an equal number of demons per planet and him as their head. However, the traditional Greek conceptions of the planets still play a role in *4PSb*. It is possible the author deliberately does not mention the planetary connection so as to provide him a role as a negative being in his system without conflicting with the current interpretation of the planets. It should also be noted that his role here as punisher is not reminiscent of the Sethian accounts.

Finally, in *1/2PS*, he dwells in Chaos and is formed from the matter of Sophia; however, his role is so distorted as to be essentially divorced from his

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<sup>128</sup> See Irenaeus *AdvHaer* I.30.5; Origen *Cels* VI.31; *ApJohn* III 17,20-18,13; II 11,26-12,6; BG 41,16-42,15; *OrigWorld* 101,24-102,2. Note that in *OrigWorld*, which has close ties to *HypArch* but is not itself considered Sethian, the seven heavens over which Jaldabaoth rules are called Chaos (102,2). This text also features 49 chaotic demons (107,1), suggesting the authors of *4PSb* and *3PS* may have been familiar with its account—interestingly, these are also the two Jeudian texts that do not feature the higher Sethian entities or the thirteenth aeon. See also T. Rasimus, *Paradise Reconsidered*, 104, for a chart outlining the seven archons and Jaldabaoth’s position across textual bounds. Although his inclusion of *2 Jeu* in the list is dubious, the presentation of the other texts is most helpful.

Sethian precursor. Authades produces a lion-faced power to torment Sophia,<sup>129</sup> and it is after this power consumes her light that her matter is cast aside and becomes Jaldabaoth; however, Jaldabaoth does nothing, and it is the lion-faced power of Authades who continues to persecute her. His presence in the tale appears to be solely to meet the criteria of an outside source the author is incorporating: the “classic” Sophia-myth states Jaldabaoth is formed in Sophia’s folly. Although Jaldabaoth is presented with his traditional lion-faced description,<sup>130</sup> he is far overshadowed by the arrogant Authades and the pious Pistis Sophia.<sup>131</sup> Jaldabaoth is thus perhaps a more tenuous Sethian connection, given the few characteristics definitely traceable to Sethian tradition. However, given that the Sethian figures incorporated appear to be those that were best known, the fact that his name and lion-faced description is secondarily included despite very little concrete information given about him suggests it was consciously added to the tradition in light of the importance attributed to this figure. Again, his inclusion involves a demotion: rather than the creator of the world and fate, ruler of the archons, here he is given very little power. Primarily relegated to a realm of punishment, he is granted power over certain souls for a limited period despite having no role in their life or conception, and in the latest phase he is himself answerable to a more powerful material entity. Again, this would seem to be explicable through a cosmological system and conception of materiality already being in place, and a position being artificially created for this figure to account for his prominence in a competing theological system.

### 6.5.5 Components of the Human in 3PS

Aside from these mythic figures, there is important evidence of influence from the traditions found in the core Sethian text *Apocryphon of John* in relation to the

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<sup>129</sup> Notably her name is only Sophia, not Pistis Sophia, throughout this chapter (*IPS*45-46, ch. 31), supporting the idea that its contents have been borrowed from a separate source.

<sup>130</sup> For a discussion on Jaldabaoth/the creator and archontic theriomorphism, see T. Rasimus, *Paradise Reconsidered*, 106-128. See also H.M. Jackson, *The Lion Becomes Man: The Gnostic Leontomorphic Creator and the Platonic Tradition* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1985), and his discussion of the *Pistis Sophia*, 26-34.

<sup>131</sup> In *ApJohn* Authades is an epithet for Jaldabaoth (BG 46,1; II 13,27; see also *HypArch* 90,29; 92,27; 94,17); here Jaldabaoth is partly the product of Authades the wicked triple-powered one. Although they share certain characteristics, the differences of both role and origin are too numerous to assume a mere split into two entities.

construction of the human being that appears quite strikingly in *3PS*. Prior to *3PS*, the soul is the only element apparently present in the human being. While in *4PSa* and *b* there is much discussion of human souls being punished and cast back into the world according to their sins, in *3PS* the term “counterfeit spirit” (**ΑΝΤΙΜΙΜΟΝ ΜΙΤΝΑ**) appears as a catalyst of sin,<sup>132</sup> in conjunction with the term “power” representing an element from the realm of Light. These terms are key in the theory of humanity’s formation and struggle in *ApJohn*, and although there are strong differences in their nature and mythological background in *3PS*, their appearance and the way they are used suggests familiarity with some version of this text.<sup>133</sup>

The term **ΑΝΤΙΜΙΜΟΝ ΜΙΤΝΑ** is used in the short recension of *ApJohn* (with alternate Coptic terms for ἀντίμιμον in the long recension). It derives from the wicked archons, formed out of their memory of the true spirit that had descended, and drives men to desire and intercourse. The power (**ΟΜ** in BG, **ΔΥΝΑΜΙΣ** in II/III) and soul appear to be interchangeable terms (*ApJohn* III 34,13-14; BG 67,12; however in the long recension it is separate from the soul, II 26,16-17). Every man possesses it, for without it, one would be unable to stand (*ApJohn* III 34,7; BG 67,4-7; II 26,12-14). Either the spirit or counterfeit spirit is then drawn into the person, making him strong in the former case and leading him astray in the latter (*ApJohn* III 34,10-18; BG 67,7-18; II 26,15-22). The one the spirit enters will be saved and find repose, while the one the counterfeit spirit enters will be reincarnated until they acquire knowledge.

In *3PS*, the basic components that form each human are the power (**ΟΜ**) which derives from the Savior, without which the soul cannot stand (*3PS* 336); the soul that is outside the power, formed from the dregs of the matter of the archons (*3PS* 334); and the counterfeit spirit that is outside both of these, formed from the

<sup>132</sup> In *4PSa* in particular sins are brought about by the archons of the way of the Midst, each of which rules over and causes a different type of sin. This makes the contrast of *3PS*’ theory of the counterfeit spirit deriving from the archons of the Heimarmene all the more striking.

<sup>133</sup> See also the discussion in A. Böhlig, “Zum Antimimon Pneuma in den koptische-gnostischen Texten,” *Mysterion und Wahrheit: Gesammelte Beiträge zur spätantiken Religionsgeschichte* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1968), 162-174. He discusses *ApJohn* and *3PS* as both being Gnostic, but believes *3PS* by virtue of being later than the former has simply systematized and de-historicized the formation of the human and increased the importance of mystery-piety over eschatology, not acknowledging the great differences in myth and overall language between the texts.

cup of forgetfulness of the seed of evil (*3PS* 334; compare *ApJohn* II 25,7; IV 39,4-5). Thus the power and the soul are distinct elements to this author, with the power being the equivalent of the higher spirit in the *ApJohn* tradition. These elements are furthermore *sealed* together; in particular, the counterfeit spirit is sealed to the soul (*3PS* 286, 336).<sup>134</sup> At birth, all three components are small, but the additional element of the destiny, which is bound to the soul but not a part of the main unit, is large (*3PS* 281-282, 345). Rather than spirit strengthening or counterfeit spirit weakening the soul, each element grows through consuming the food of the world, which also contains elements of power, soul, and evil/desires (*3PS* 282). Ultimately, the only way for a soul to be saved is to receive the mysteries of light and to recite them when it comes forth from the body, thus breaking the seals that bound the counterfeit spirit to it (*3PS* 286-287). While the spirit plays the key role in saving the soul in *ApJohn*, its equivalent in *3PS*, the power, does very little. In fact, the use of the term “counterfeit” or “imitation” spirit stands out as borrowed from an outside source, as there is no “spirit” in the Jeuian system for the archons to imitate.<sup>135</sup>

The set of terminology used in *3PS*—counterfeit spirit, soul, and power—suggests the influence of the human formation theory found in *ApJohn*. The “**ΑΝΤΙΜΙΜΟΝ ΜΤΙΝΑ**” in particular appears to be a technical term, which is not found outside of these texts. However, the way these elements are put together, the method by which they grow, and the ultimate mode of salvation for the human soul all reflect a tradition unrelated to that found in *ApJohn*. It appears that once again, a prominent theme has been taken from a Sethian setting and imported into Jeuian theory, altered and subordinated to the Jeuian authors’ soteriological system. While in *ApJohn* the one who is not led astray and instead flees from evil is saved, in *3PS* the one who is righteous and never sins is still not admitted to the kingdom of light without receiving the mysteries (*3PS* 262-264). The technical terminology of *ApJohn* is

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<sup>134</sup> Another possible parallel in the creation process is the formation of the individual members of the human body by 365 archontic powers or ministers (*ApJohn* II 15,29-19,3; IV 24,22-29,5; *3PS* 342; note that in the short recension of *ApJohn*, the number of angels is 360).

<sup>135</sup> Note that in *1/2PS* the Spirit becomes an important element, but these are the latest texts and reflect the influence of a changing religious climate, which included a more standard tripartite division of spirit, soul-power and matter (see Section 6.6.1). The bulk of the extant Jeuian texts do not give spirit a role in human composition or salvation, if it is mentioned at all.

included without an appreciation for its prior role, and the Jeuian mysteries remain the sole mode of salvation.

### 6.5.6 Summary of Sethian Traces

That Sethian traces are to be found in the *Books of Jeu*, at least, should come as no surprise, given that the *Untitled Text* in the same codex has long been considered Sethian itself. Clearly whoever compiled to codex had contact with both groups. H.-M. Schenke considered the Sethians to be a sizable community surviving and developing over a long period of time. He points out, “Sethian mythic concepts and ideas could easily spread beyond the limits of the group and thus, for example, gain entry into writings of quite a different origin, into scriptures of other Gnostic communities...”<sup>136</sup> This appears to have occurred in the case of the *Books of Jeu* and the *Pistis Sophia*. The traces that are found are versions of some of the most prominent figures from the Sethian theogony, but they are altered to fit the authors’ own system: no pride of place is given to these beings, despite their original roles.

Clearly elements of the Sethian myths were considered forces to be reckoned with, and are thus placed within the Jeuians’ scheme of the universe. Chief among these are the Sethian first principles, which are displaced to merely the material realm. Although they are generally considered neutral (with the exception of the evil third triple-powered one, and the piety of all three triple-powers in the initial stages), they are inconsequential in the face of the Jeuian higher principles and mysteries, and are doomed to ultimate destruction. Perhaps the most obvious sign that they have been transplanted from a more typical Sethian tradition is the role of the Barbelo, who maintains links with both Pistis Sophia and the Savior/the earthly Jesus. Given her present position these connections make little sense without the knowledge of her original role as primal Mother and descending savior. Even if not intended as deliberately subversive, the inclusion of these elements constitutes a radical reinterpretation of Sethian tradition.

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<sup>136</sup>*The Phenomenon of Gnostic Sethianism*, 595.

## 6.6 THE VALENTINIANS

When the *Pistis Sophia* and the *Books of Jeu* first came to light, they were essentially the only documents available of a “Gnostic” bent not filtered through the distorting lens of the heresiologists. As a result, many scholars were eager to detect signs of one of the groups of which they possessed some knowledge through these works of the Church Fathers. Valentinus and his followers, as the most prominent of the heretics denounced in the early days of the Church, constituted the most desirable group from which to obtain more concrete evidence—and based on heresiological evidence of their widespread nature, perhaps the most likely group from which materials might surface. Many scholars did indeed attribute the *Pistis Sophia* at the very least to his school, if not the hand of Valentinus himself. Some found in the material evidence that the heresiologists were correct in accusing him of teaching wild and nonsensical mythos; others thought it to be a genuinely deep and insightful tractate depicting his system, even if it was a bit obtuse.<sup>137</sup> With the discovery of the Nag Hammadi library and its large number of other original documents that can be classified as “Valentinian,” these views of the texts have dissipated. Of the characteristics that can be considered uniquely Valentinian in nature, again only minor traces can be detected, and those in greatly altered form: the makeup of Jesus’ body from elements derived from non-hylic entities; the idea that Jesus/the Savior acts to redeem (Pistis) Sophia and retrieve her from exile upon his post-resurrection ascent, and the mode of (Pistis) Sophia’s fall. All of these elements appear only in *I/2PS*, the latest texts of the corpus.

### 6.6.1 The Composition of the Savior’s Body

Although the number and order of elements that combine to form Jesus’ body in the world vary slightly between Valentinian texts, the idea that his incarnation is composed entirely of substances beyond this world is consistent. The combinations serve to illustrate the Savior’s mode of operation in the world, or the nature of those he descends to save. Thus, in texts with a concept of mutual participation of the Savior—wherein he himself requires the redemption that he brings to humanity by

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<sup>137</sup> For discussion of some of these scholars’ views, see Section 1.4.2.

virtue of his descent—he carries with him from beginning to end the spiritual body to effect its redemption; whereas in texts assuming an automatically saved spiritual element, the Savior descends upon the psychic Christ at baptism and departs again at the crucifixion without suffering passion himself.<sup>138</sup> The main components are generally as follows: 1) the spirit/spiritual seed of Sophia; 2) the psychic form or element from the Demiurge; and 3) a tangible, but still not tainted, psychic substance-body from the *oikonomia*; in certain versions there is also 4) the Spirit or Savior which descends upon Jesus at baptism.

Irenaeus gives an explanation of the three types:

There are, then, three kinds: the material—which they call “left”—must of necessity, they say, perish, because it cannot receive any outpouring of imperishability. The psychic—which they also term “right”—stands midway between the spiritual and the material, and consequently passes to whichever side it is inclined. The spiritual was sent forth in order that, being linked with the psychic, it might be formed and educated in company with it...From Achamoth he [the Savior] acquired the spiritual, from the Demiurge he put on the psychic Christ, from the *oikonomia* he was endowed with a body that had psychic substance, but was so constructed by ineffable art that it was visible, tangible, and capable of suffering. (*AdvHaer* I.6.1 [from E. Thomassen, *The Spiritual Seed*, 59])

The *Pistis Sophia* appears to have adopted this idea, but to have modified it and stripped it of its original soteriological function. There is a lengthy exegetical section on Ps. 85:10-11: “Mercy and truth have met one another, and righteousness and peace have kissed one another. Truth has sprouted from the earth and righteousness has looked from heaven” (*IPS* 119-125; *2PS* 127-129). After an initial interpretation in light of the myth of Sophia’s redemption, which was the focus of the text to this point, Mary (the mother of Jesus), Mary (Magdalene), and John each give an interpretation which expounds upon Jesus’ incarnational form.

Aside from the different combinations and explanations that each figure gives, the overall building blocks are essentially the same: 1) the Spirit from the height/the First Mystery; 2) a power (or soul) from Sabaoth the Good; and 3) matter (or a power) of the Barbelo. The origins of each of these beings, based on the cosmological ordering of the text at this point, are from the highest reaches or the spaces of the First Mystery; the place of the right (Sabaoth); and the place of the left (the Barbelo).

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<sup>138</sup> E. Thomassen discusses the composition and formation of the Savior’s body and its ties to modes of soteriology across the various texts in detail in Part I of *The Spiritual Seed: The Church of the Valentinians* (Leiden: Brill, 2006).

This is fully in keeping with the *types* of the components listed by Irenaeus and others, if a few things are kept in mind. First, in this text, in addition to having no role in the formation of the Demiurge or the world, the Pistis Sophia is at no point a spiritual being; she dwells in the thirteenth aeon (in the place of the left), and while she strives for the light, she is not *of* the light, and she produces no spiritual offspring. Thus, a spiritual element cannot be obtained from her. This is replaced by the spiritual essence of the First Mystery, who is the highest being in existence (aside from the Ineffable One, whose relationship with the First Mystery is not fully explained). This spiritual element, furthermore, only comes down upon Jesus at his baptism (2PS 123), and while in one interpretation it in passing serves to baptize the psychic element from Sabaoth (2PS 128), it lacks the suggestion that this relates to the type of beings eligible for salvation. Rather, it appears to have been adopted from the version of the myth the author had at hand without great consideration of soteriological implications.

Second, the formation of the world is not discussed, nor are the origin or actions of the Demiurge presented. It is clear, however, that this author feels the world is a negative place ruled by evil archons who exist to torment humanity—a decidedly non-Valentinian viewpoint—and thus its formation would not be associated with someone from the “right.” The psychic element, then, derives from Sabaoth the Good, who explicitly dwells in the place of the right.

The final element, the physical aspect of the body, is the trickiest to explain. In the Valentinian sources, Jesus required a physical body, but was still supposed to remain separated from the material that was inevitably doomed to destruction; thus, his tangible body was “woven...out of invisible, psychic substance, and, by the power of a divine preparation, it came into the world of sense” (*Excerpta Ex Theodoto* 59.4). In the *Pistis Sophia*, there is no explicit tripartition of elements, and thus no need to dance around the taint of material as a whole by adding an additional psychic substance. The Barbelo comes from the thirteenth aeon: the highest point of the place of the left. It is beyond the base materiality of the lower twelve aeons, but it is still firmly in the category of the material left. The author appears to draw on the connection of the tangible psychic body with the psychic nature found in the earlier Valentinian sources, as in John’s interpretation the matter of the Barbelo is always

tied directly to the power or soul derived from Sabaoth. Furthermore, the Barbelo is associated with Pistis Sophia, whether or not immediately as her mother. Thus, although it is not a direct part of Pistis Sophia herself, Jesus does bring down an element from her original place—it just happens to be the lowest element, not the highest. In this way, Jesus' body is formed from elements of spirit, soul and tangible matter, or spirit, right and left.

It should further be noted that while the initial purpose of the explanation of the composition of the Savior's body was to discuss whom he had come to save and in what manner, in the context of the *Pistis Sophia* these ideas are entirely absent. There is no discussion of Jesus' actions on earth or his passion. Although the Spirit is said to come upon Jesus at his baptism, this idea is mentioned in passing, and is divorced from notions about its relationship to the salvific potential of humanity. His purpose on earth is solely to bring the mysteries to mankind; the idea of his bringing forgiveness through baptism is related solely to the power of Sabaoth,<sup>139</sup> while the mysteries from the Spirit bring true potential to reach the heights. Although his ascension eleven years after his resurrection does serve to reduce the power of the archons and the accuracy of divination and astral magic, the mode of salvation is still to be found in right living and the receipt of mysteries, not through the incarnation and suffering of either a spiritual or psychic Savior. Thus, the entire discussion of his bodily makeup derives from a perceived need for these elements to be present upon the borrowing of a foreign myth, as will be further demonstrated below.

### 6.6.2 The Ascent of the Savior and (Pistis) Sophia's Redemption

The necessity of Jesus' descent to and ascent from the world to effect Sophia's ultimate reintegration into the pleroma is another Valentinian concept. In theory, it brings an otherwise peripherally Christian myth firmly into a Christian context: salvation and perfection cannot occur without the incarnation of the Savior on earth and the awakening/purification of the spiritual elements in humanity that it instigates.

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<sup>139</sup> *IPS* 123-124: "It is this [the power of Sabaoth the Good] which baptised and forgave the race of mankind and made them to be at peace with the Sons of the Light." Also in *IPS* 122, the "power which was entrusted to [Jesus'] material body" baptized the race of mankind. However, compare earlier in that same interpretation, where it is the Spirit of the First Mystery that forgives the sins of the whole world.

Valentinian systems favor two main encounters between Christ/the Savior and the fallen Sophia: an initial encounter when Christ is either produced by Sophia or sent forth from the pleroma to ease her situation, and when perfection of the seed or offspring is achieved and she can return to the pleroma. In either case, a version of Sophia is left with a sense of abandonment upon Christ's initial departure, her passions increase,<sup>140</sup> and the descent of the Savior, Christ, or the Joint Fruit of the Pleroma is necessary to help her return to the pleroma in the end.<sup>141</sup> Although in the discussion of the Savior's body it is accepted that he takes a spiritual element from Sophia, it is not clear how this element is imparted, and no reference is made to any change in Sophia's mental or emotional state or her overall position. As we have already seen, however, the Savior's descent into the material world does effect a change in the salvific potential of at least some portion of humanity, whether it be the spirituals, the psychics, or both.

In *IPS*, Pistis Sophia is drained of her light-power upon her descent into Chaos. The two-part restoration has here been extended into a *three*-part series of visits by Jesus and Pistis Sophia's gradual movement upward. It appears that initially there were only two visitations, but that it was extended to accommodate Jesus' ascension as key for her final restoration. As the story stands, Pistis Sophia recites thirteen repentances and a number of songs of praise to the Light. Jesus/the First Mystery (who looks without) visits her first at the midpoint of her repentances, next upon the completion of the thirteenth repentance, and finally at the end of "three times" when Jesus ascends through the cosmic realms and takes away the power of the archons. It appears that in the initial version, Pistis Sophia should have been restored upon the completion of the thirteenth repentance: one for each aeon she traversed on her descent in pursuit of the false light. Jesus' first visitation after her seventh repentance serves only to lessen her strife somewhat: although he has *not* received a command from the First Mystery (who looks within), he acts out of his own compassion to move her to a part of Chaos that is "a little wider," which reduces

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<sup>140</sup> For discussion of the role of emotions in the Valentinian myth of Sophia, see I. Dunderberg, *Beyond Gnosticism: Myth, Lifestyle, and Society in the School of Valentinus* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), Ch. 6, "Myth and the Therapy of Emotions," 95-118.

<sup>141</sup> See Irenaeus, *AdvHaer.* I.7.1; 8.4; Hippolytus, *Haer.* VI.31; although in *TriTrac*, the Savior's initial appearance results in an emission of joy that forms the spiritual element (91,33-95,17).

the torments of the archons. She does not realize who it is that has helped her, and thus does not suffer the increase of passions associated with Christ's visit and departure in the Valentinian myth. She continues with her pious repenting, and upon the completion of the thirteenth, "at that hour the ordinance was completed of all the afflictions which had been ordained for the Pistis Sophia, because of the completion of the First Mystery...the time came that she should be saved from the Chaos and brought forth from all the darknesses" (*IPS* 118). At the command of the First Mystery, Jesus makes his second appearance, and Pistis Sophia's own light power that had been stolen by the archons is fully restored (*2PS* 131). This would be the logical point to end the story: the symbolic number of repentances have been recited, the command of the First Mystery to bring her forth from darkness has come, and her light-power is fully restored.

The saga continues, however, artificially lengthened by the stipulation that despite the previous statement that the ordinance of her afflictions was completed, the Father, the First Mystery (who looks within) did not yet command that the evil archons should yet be fully stripped of their power (*2PS* 168).<sup>142</sup> This partial restoration now introduces the abandonment theme found in the Valentinian myth—which otherwise has no obvious role to play here, as she has had all of her light-power restored, and she lacks the deficiency of her counterparts in the other stories. The abandonment does not result in the formation of passions or other beings; she simply waits for the time she can return to her place, continues praying to and praising the light, and when the time comes, is once again tormented by the archons. This extension accommodates the mythic need of Jesus' post-resurrection ascent for Pistis Sophia's salvation, which is otherwise unnecessary as she was not involved in the creation of the matter or humanity that the Savior must descend to save in the older myths.

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<sup>142</sup> It should be noted that this apparent change of heart appears in *2PS*, while the statement that the ordinance was completed is in *IPS*. The seam between the two halves of the story is further visible in that the style of interpretation of Pistis Sophia's prayers is different: in *IPS*, they are largely interpreted by verbatim Psalms, whereas in *2PS*, in addition to the Psalms the disciples frequently give a great deal of point-by-point explanation.

### 6.6.3 The Fall of (Pistis) Sophia

The theory that parts of the Pistis Sophia myth are taken from other sources is further supported by the section detailing her fall. The initial problem is that Pistis Sophia looks to the height, sees the light of the Treasury of Light, and desires to go there. Therefore she ceases performing her own mystery in the thirteenth aeon, and instead sings praises to the height, thus inciting the rage and jealousy of the evil Authades who lives in the thirteenth aeon and desires to rule that place. As a result, he emanated a lion-faced being and a variety of other emanations, and “he sent them to the places below, to the parts of the Chaos, so that they *should pursue the Pistis Sophia there* (ΕΥΕΘΩΡ̄ ΕΤΠΙCΤΙC CΟΦΙΑ Μ̄ΜΑΥ) and take her power from her, because she thought to go to the height which is above them all...” (IPS 44-45, emphasis mine)

After this passage, there is a shift: Pistis Sophia is suddenly called only Sophia.<sup>143</sup> She is indeed persecuted by Authades’ emanations, but she is not *pursued* below. Instead, she finally looks below and sees the lion-faced being, which is suddenly described as a “light power.” As a result she desires this light, and she thinks to herself, “I will go to that place without my partner, and take the light, and create of it for myself aeons of light, so that I shall be able to go to the Light of Lights which is in the highest height” (IPS 45-46). She voluntarily moves down into the Chaos, and she is immediately surrounded by the evil emanations who take away her own light-powers. As soon as she is in this situation, she is once again referred to as Pistis Sophia, and her repentances begin.

Pistis Sophia’s initial desire for the light is apparently sinless, and it is indeed sanctioned by the ordinance of the First Mystery (IPS 43). Authades’ initial plan is to *chase* her into Chaos. However, there is a sudden shift such that her desire is no longer pure, but misguided, and she plans to create without her partner

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<sup>143</sup> There are other places in the text where she is called Sophia only, but generally only as one-off instances or in pairs. In this section she is called only Sophia five consecutive times, from the beginning of the section suggesting she engages in sin until the beginning of her repentances. The other exception is at the very end of the Pistis Sophia myth, where she is consistently called only Sophia in the interpretation of her final praise-hymn upon restoration (2PS 181-184, or all of chapter 82), and also a few times in the preceding chapter giving the hymn itself. As this section highlights Jesus’ role performing wonders among mankind as well as Pistis Sophia’s restoration, it is likely this section also reflects the interpolating tradition.

(*CYNZYΓOC*). This is a procreative act that has neither earlier basis—no reference is made to other partners or their creating together; nor is there the idea of the Father or Ineffable One creating on his own, so as to encourage her to imitate him—nor does it have a result in the present story, as she does not ultimately attempt to create anything and fail. Rather, she simply wanders her own way into Chaos, and immediately begins repenting as her light-power is stolen. The section discussing her will to descend appears to be an insertion from another tradition, further flagged by the shortening of the name to Sophia. The nature of the repentances themselves is more in fitting with a fall that is pre-ordained and not the fault of the speaker, focusing on her great faith and the oppression she experiences much more than asking forgiveness for actual transgressions.

#### **6.6.4 Summary of Valentinian Traces in the Pistis Sophia Myth**

A number of signs suggest secondary additions to a pre-existing Pistis Sophia myth that supposed a sinless descent into Chaos and her automatic return to her place upon completion of a fixed set of prayers or levels of repentance. The discussion of the tripartite nature of Jesus' body inserted into an otherwise continuous block of interpretations of Scripture relating to Pistis Sophia; the artificial lengthening of Pistis Sophia's sojourn below to make Jesus' ascent from the world a part of her restoration; and the sudden change of name and announcement of Sophia's sin that plays a role in her fall but which has no preamble nor relation to the following text, all speak of outside textual influence of a Valentinian nature. But why would the author choose to graft these themes, in divergent forms, onto the story, when other key elements of the Valentinian myth—the creation of man and the world, the Savior's role in redeeming mankind through his actions on earth, and the presupposition of Sophia's spiritual nature originating from the highest heights—are conspicuously absent?

The core belief system of the community from which this author originates consists of a series of ever-heightening mysteries. To be worthy of these mysteries, one had to live righteously—*3* and *4PSb* in particular go on at some length about things that should be renounced or avoided, how one should behave, and descriptions of the punishments awaiting sinners of particular types. Jesus always played a strong

role within the group's writings as a divine teacher, but relatively little attention was paid in earlier texts to mainstream Christian scripture. In *3PS*, there is evidence that the group is being persecuted because of their beliefs; although Mary says that many persecute them "for the sake of [the Savior's] name," it is unclear whether the persecution would have been due to their claims to Christianity or to their other doctrines (*3PS* 277).

By the time of *1/2PS* and its rewriting of the Sophia myth, it is apparent that associating the group's teachings with more widely spread or mainstream Christian scriptural texts had become a major concern. They are the latest of the texts, and other influences are clearly showing themselves. A call is being made to apostolic authority for their teaching, as well as adoption of an esoteric interpretation of the annunciation story. The association of Psalms and Odes of Solomon with the utterances of Pistis Sophia that takes up the bulk of *1/2PS* (46-184) further shows the efforts being made to legitimize the background of their teaching. If this group was located in a place where Valentinian teaching had a strong following, especially if that following was recently introduced or growing, efforts to bring aspects of their mythology into the fold would be equally important—as with all of the traditions discussed in this chapter, giving it their own twist and without compromising their own overarching principle that right living and receipt of mysteries were the true keys to the Kingdom of Light. The ideas that Sophia sins (as she is not a true spiritual being by their reckoning) and can only be recovered by Jesus/the Savior can be incorporated without compromising their ideological backbone. Giving greater importance to Jesus' earthly history—the efficacy of his baptism and passion for mankind—or moving Pistis Sophia's position beyond her place in the left with the 24 emanations, would *not* be in keeping with that backbone, and thus are glossed over.

## 6.7 MAINSTREAM CHRISTIANITY

Having looked at the influence of certain early non-mainstream Christianities in the Jeuian texts, one might wonder at the interaction of this group with what became the orthodox Church. The inclusion of Jesus and his disciples from the earliest to the latest texts might suggest that they developed under Christian influence from the beginning. However, this is very slight evidence indeed, and only serves to show

that Jesus was known as a bringer of divine knowledge and mysteries to his followers, and that he was thought of by some to be a divine figure descended to bring this knowledge. These are themes found in non-mainstream Christianity much more than in mainstream Christian thought. Ideas of the role of his tenure in the world as being efficacious are entirely lacking until *I/2PS*, and even there it is apparently a secondary addition to the group's existing myth. It is possible that the authors' knowledge of Jesus came entirely from non-mainstream sources such as the Sethians, and later the Valentinians.

NT (and indeed OT) allusions are minimal in the *Books of Jeu*,<sup>144</sup> but become increasingly numerous as one progresses through from *4* to *3* to *I/2PS*.<sup>145</sup> The overwhelming presence of Egyptian themes and Greco-Roman astrological and magical concepts in the earliest of the texts has been discussed above. It seems more likely that Jesus' role as a divine revealer of mysteries was incorporated by this group without direct access to Christian or Jewish scriptures or knowledge of either mainstream or non-mainstream Christian ritual practice, and that only later did the group encounter other practicing Christians with their myths, rituals and scriptures. These scriptures were gradually adopted, presumably showing their growing influence in the cultural milieu of the group. However, all Christian scriptures were not incorporated equally: apart from the Psalms that dominate the *Pistis Sophia* myth, quotations and allusions stem overwhelmingly from the gospel of Matthew.<sup>146</sup> The text itself singles out Matthew, Philip and Thomas as those charged to record all of the words and actions of Jesus (*IPS* 71)—which certainly suggests that the traditional fourfold gospel of mainstream Christianity was either unknown to these authors, or that they were not considered the true representation of Jesus and his life and works. Beyond Matthew, whose gospel is represented in four of the five *Pistis Sophia* texts (excepting the fragmentary *4PSb*), a few NT references are scattered throughout the *Pistis Sophia*. Perhaps most noteworthy are a small number of clear

<sup>144</sup> Note that the introduction as posited by Schmidt is replete with NT allusions, but that this is not a part of the *Books of Jeu* themselves; see Section 2.1.8.

<sup>145</sup> On the use of the New (and Old) Testament in the *Pistis Sophia*, see A. von Harnack, *Über das gnostische Buch Pistis-Sophia* (Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung, 1891), 2-49.

<sup>146</sup> On the prevailing use of Matthew in the earliest Christian writings, see É. Massaux, *Influence de l'Évangile de saint Matthieu sur la littérature chrétienne avant saint Irénée* (Louvain: Publications Universitaires de Louvain, 1950), particularly 420-455 on evidence from various pre-Irenaeus "Gnostic" groups prior to the discovery of the Nag Hammadi library.

references to John in *4PSa* in the discussion of baptism (Jn. 4.10; 14; 19:34; *4PSa* 367-369), and in *3PS*, Lk. 12:49-52 is known, also regarding baptism (*3PS* 299-301; see also *4PSa* 368)—however, these Lukan allusions have parallels in the *Gospel of Thomas* (sayings 10, 16), suggesting they were available beyond the use of that gospel.<sup>147</sup> Also noteworthy is the striking absence of references to Paul and his writings—only one clear quotation is given (*3PS* 293-294, cites Rom. 13:7-8). Thus, even if the Jeuian group or authors did have access to the collection of texts that became the NT canon, they certainly did not view all of its contents equally.

It seems highly likely that the group possessed a different collection of texts from those of mainstream Christianity. As noted above, Matthew, Philip and Thomas are considered to be the recorders of Jesus' deeds and words, and indeed Matthean allusions are the most prevalent in the texts. The gospels of Philip and Thomas as have been preserved do not show obvious connections to the ideas found in the Jeuian texts; it is probable they possessed different versions that contained other traditions. Indeed, the "Gospel of Philip" mentioned by Epiphanius (*Pan* 26.13.2) discusses the ascent of the soul past the archons, and would seem to have closer thematic ties with the Jeuian group than the text with that title found in Nag Hammadi. Later, the Manichaeans were said to use both a Gospel of Philip and a Gospel of Thomas (Timothy of Constantinople, *PG* 86.1.21C; Ps.-Leontius of Byzantium, *PG* 86.1.1213C); considering the other connections that have been demonstrated between the Jeuian and Manichaean systems, this may not be coincidence. Given that significant scriptural allusions do not appear until *4PSa*, when signs of interaction with the Sethians are already prevalent, it is possible that the Jeuian authors received the bulk of their Christian materials from non-mainstream movements. The lack of OT references might also be attributable to this: if the group from whom they received their materials had a negative view of the OT, then they would be unlikely to possess copies of it for reading or reflection. The heavy use of Psalms in *1/2PS* appears to stem from a later time when validation for the group's beliefs was being sought through interpretation of canonical texts and the

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<sup>147</sup> *3PS* also uses Lk. 12:47-48, 13:6-9, and 16:9; *IPS* uses themes from Lk. 1 and 2, as well as a reference to Lk. 22:28-30. However, all other Lukan allusions also have parallels in Matthew. Compare to Matthew, which has potential allusions to 21 out of 28 chapters throughout all of the texts.

attribution of such interpretations to the disciples. However, given the evidence for Valentinian influence at that stage, it is possible that the important view of these texts stemmed from interacting with them and their “canon” or collection of texts rather than a more mainstream source. Such groups also claimed apostolic authority for their teachings, so it would be a recognized mechanism for theological validation.

Returning to the theme of baptism in the texts, it is apparent that baptismal language regarding the water of life, fire, and Holy Spirit found in Matthew 3:11<sup>148</sup> was known to this group, and that the technical term “baptism” was used in purificatory or initiatory contexts by the time *2 Jeu* was written. However, the contents of the rituals themselves show minimal ties to any known form of Christian baptism, mainstream or non-mainstream.<sup>149</sup> There is no immersion in water (or indeed the presence of any water at all, aside from the transformation of the wine in the first rite of “the water of life of the seven virgins of the light”). Although there is fragrant incense that is used to draw an elaborate seal on the forehead at the end of the ritual, there is no kingly or pre-burial anointing of the head or body, or sealing of the sense organs. Although linen garments are specified, there is no symbolic stripping and donning of new robes. Those being baptized do not give a renunciation of evil or a profession of faith, or indeed say anything at all. The inclusion of bread and wine also may seem to have eucharistic undertones, but although they are referred to as present and part of the offering, there are no associated prayers and no attention is given to their significance or consumption. Nowhere in the texts is association given between Jesus’ earthly body or salvific power and a ritual meal, so the inclusion of these elements likely lacked such connotations for the author. In short, all associations with rebirth, Jesus’ own baptism or anointing in either this

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<sup>148</sup> Although the terminology is also found in Luke 3:16, given the strong Matthean preference in the texts as a whole, the reference most likely derives from the latter.

<sup>149</sup> On the diversity of practice in early Christian baptism, see P.F. Bradshaw, *Reconstructing Early Christian Worship* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2009), 55-97; P.F. Bradshaw, *The Search for the Origins of Christian Worship: Sources and Methods for the Study of Early Liturgy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 144-170. On potential significance of the Sethian or “classic Gnostic” rite of the five seals, see J.-M. Sevrin, *Le dossier baptismale Séthien: Études sur la sacramentaire gnostique* (Québec: University of Laval Press, 1986), 247-294; A.H.B. Logan, *The Gnostics: Identifying an Early Christian Cult* (London: T&T Clark, 2006), 79; A.H.B. Logan, “The Mystery of the Five Seals: Gnostic Initiation Reconsidered,” in *Vigiliae Christianae* 51 (1997), 188-206. On non-mainstream esoteric Christian ritual more generally, see J.D. Turner, “Ritual in Gnosticism,” in J.D. Turner and R. Majercik, eds., *Gnosticism and Later Platonism: Themes, Figures and Texts* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2000), 83-139.

world or the divine realm, or prayers to Jesus or a Trinitarian deity group, are completely missing. Despite these differences, it is interesting to note that these texts present Jesus as the one performing the baptisms, as Matthew suggests he will do, but which never occurs in the canonical gospels. It would thus appear that the author knew this part of the Matthean tradition and some of the terminology involved, but that he had no idea of, or agreement with, the symbolism or nature of more mainstream Christian rituals.

Perhaps the strongest evidence for early Jewish-Christian presence in the texts is the name Jeu (ΙΕΟΥ) given to the heavenly demiurge. The name likely reflects a version of the Tetragrammaton, YHWH.<sup>150</sup> The process of divine emanation is a chain: Jesus calls upon the name of his Father, so he will move Jeu to emanate; thus Jeu brings forth the heads of the Treasuries of Light (*I Jeu* 50). The connection of Jesus with Jeu/YHWH in a creative capacity (with the Father involved in an indirect manner, forming a trinity of divine beings) might speak for a Christian context. F.C. Burkitt also proposes that the term “true god” used to describe Jeu in *I Jeu* is itself derived from the OT.<sup>151</sup> Additionally, the plethora of high-ranking beings bearing the Tetragrammaton in their names, the pattern found throughout *I Jeu*, is also found in *3 Enoch* for important angels.<sup>152</sup> In that text, Enoch/Metatron as a secondary power or “lesser YHWH” is also made ruler over seventy princes, although he does not himself bring them forth, and they do not bear the divine name (*3 En* 48(C):9). H. Odeberg suggests that the *Pistis Sophia* texts also may show familiarity with the Enochic tradition—not least because they attribute the *Books of Jeu* to Enoch.<sup>153</sup> Certainly *3PS* seems to refer to such tradition in relation to the “Books of Jeu” (*3PS* 349), and *IPS* makes reference to knowledge of magic brought by the “transgressing angels” (*IPS* 25, 27, 29), which suggests themes found in *I Enoch* (7-8). On these points one must observe, however, that the *Pistis Sophia* texts

<sup>150</sup> G.R.S. Mead, *Fragments of a Faith Forgotten* (1905; reprint: New York: University Books, 1960), 534; F.C. Burkitt, *Church and Gnosis*, 86.

<sup>151</sup> F.C. Burkitt, *Church and Gnosis*, 86; refers to Ps. 30:6.

<sup>152</sup> See n.4 above.

<sup>153</sup> H. Odeberg, *3 Enoch or the Hebrew Book of Enoch* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1928), Appendix II, 188-192. Some other possible connections with Enochic tradition have been discussed in Section 6.2.5. Odeberg’s connections of Jeu, the two Jao-beings, and the little Sabaoth as systematized manifestations of the roles of Metatron conflate these multiple beings and do not appreciate the diversity between the various texts and the variety of influences that are present.

are later than the *Books of Jeu*, and stem from a time when a variety of non-mainstream Jewish-Christian ideas were present, as has been demonstrated above; *I Jeu* bears more resemblance to the Egyptian *Book of the Dead* than to the Enochic or Hekhalot ascent texts. It is notable that *Jeu* is responsible only for the organization of the visible divine realms; he does not play a clear role in the creation of the world or humanity as YHWH does. This gives it distance from possible mainstream Christian or Jewish influence. Furthermore, the Enochic texts were not considered canonical in the widespread Jewish *or* Christian traditions.

Thus, there is little evidence clearly pointing to influence from mainstream Christian sources. While interaction may have been possible, the adoption of texts or concepts from non-mainstream Christian sectors—which would have shared certain texts and reverence for certain figures with mainstream Christianity—seems most likely, especially given the evidence already presented for transmission of ideas from these types of groups. Outside of specific textual allusions, mainstream Christian notions of rituals such as baptism or the eucharist appear only through non-mainstream lenses, and with apparently non-Christian roots. The role of Jesus himself is significant almost solely as a bringer of mysteries post-resurrection, and his earthly life and crucifixion are rarely mentioned, let alone accorded importance. The use of the names of Jesus' followers to validate the group's views also might reflect the increasing presence or influence of non-mainstream Christianity, which itself made claims to apostolic authority for validity. While there is certainly a demonstrable increase in the use of canonical texts from the earliest to the latest content—in the final texts particularly in the form of Psalms used for mythological allegory—these elements could just as easily have come from non-mainstream sources. Valentinianism in particular was quite close to mainstream Christianity in terms of its outward practices and utilization of texts that became canonical, and given the secondary Valentinian elements detectable in the *Pistis Sophia* myth with which the Psalms are associated, such influence is perhaps more likely than an encounter with mainstream Christianity.

## 6.8 CONCLUSIONS

A wide variety of religious influences can be detected in the *Books of Jeu* and the *Pistis Sophia*, some stronger and more widespread than others. From its essentially Egyptian origins, the effects of Greco-Roman astrological and magical culture, Manichaean ideas of light purification and material creation, Sethian mythological reinterpretation or polemic, and Valentinian notions of the fall of Sophia and the Savior's ascent all make their way into these Jeuian pages. The stars move from the pinnacle of existence to the tool of the cosmic tyrants; figures of power from other traditions are either given new roles in the light realms or demoted as they are secondarily incorporated; and Jesus' incarnation receives some added significance after his history primarily as a revealer of mysteries. It is clear that these ideas were considered significant enough by the authors to require some explanation in the context of the Jeuian tradition. Without an understanding of the nature and incorporation of these elements, much of the texts remain a mysterious, even nonsensical, mishmash, as many scholars have perceived them.

Ultimately these influences remain primarily a secondary veneer. The syncretistic tendencies of the group for the most part simply add layers to an existing belief substructure. The original significance of the outside concepts incorporated is often lost as they are fitted into the existing structure. While the group or authors clearly made an active effort to explain or incorporate traditions that were seen as either important or potential threats, the keys to real truth and salvation remained firmly in the power of the mysteries of light—such as the twin saviors, the three amens, or the seven voices—which made up their central core. The details of these are not preserved in the remaining texts or fragments, and were likely considered too important to be written down.

## CHAPTER 7

### CONCLUSIONS

*The Books of Jeu* and the *Pistis Sophia*, not fitting in with any of the main pagan, mainstream Christian, or non-mainstream esoteric Christian groups known to scholarship through heresiological evidence, have long been ignored by scholarship or relegated to passing footnotes. As was demonstrated in the introduction, even amongst the little work that has discussed these texts at any length, they have been most often belittled as incoherent products of ignorant bumpkins with little value, either in and of themselves or for the study of the development of Christianity. This thesis set out to examine these Coptic esoteric Christian texts, to determine whether a consistent system might be found within them in their own right. By critically reading the texts in the chronological order proposed in this thesis—from earliest to latest, *1 Jeu*, *2 Jeu*, *4PSa*, *4PSb*, *3PS*, and finally *1* and *2PS*—a coherent theogonic and cosmological ideology has been demonstrated, with their evolution over the period of their composition and collection becoming apparent. It has been argued that these texts belonged to a distinct religious group writing and practicing in approximately third to fourth century Egypt, with their own complex and evolving system of cosmology, baptismal or initiation rituals, liturgical prayers, mythological speculation, and religious and ethical prescriptions and proscriptions. As this research has shown, their texts and practices deserve to be studied in their own right.

Against arguments that these texts may represent simply literary products by individual authors, not meant for use in worship or religious practice by a larger community, it was demonstrated in Ch. 2 that evidence strongly points to community use. Unlike certain, more literary Hekhalot or Jewish-Christian ascent texts, their contents do not present a story for contemplation, but rather they give explicit instructions without narrative embellishment for ritual, prayer and ascent that are clearly meant for reproduction by the group's followers. They are presented in an earthly, group context. Jesus tells the disciples, "to all men who come before you and believe in you and hear your words and do what is worthy of the mysteries of the light, give to them the mysteries of the light and do not conceal them from them" (*3PS* 280). Thus these mysteries must be passed on and spread to as many people

who are willing to believe and live by the group's precepts. Furthermore, there is precedent for these types of practices in known religious circles. There is also the suggestion within the texts that this group was persecuted for its beliefs, demonstrating a sense of community among its practitioners. This was a group that was very concerned with mission and community, as well as right living and practice.

The codices were compiled at some point after the texts' original composition, and the texts as we have them are themselves compilations from other sources. This was shown in Chs. 3 and 4, building in part on C. Schmidt and G.R.S. Mead's earlier analyses, through the exploration of the development of cosmology and key figures. Occasionally the compiler has preserved multiple, slightly differing accounts of the same outline or event within the same text, as with the lists of mysteries in *2 Jeu* and *1/2PS*, or the descriptions of Jesus' ascent through the hostile archontic realms in *IPS*. It is thus apparent that beyond the texts that are preserved today, a larger number of texts or traditions existed originally. However, despite the slight variations in these accounts, or even apparently larger shifts between texts, a remarkable consistency underlies the core of all of the texts. It was established in Ch. 3 that between *1 Jeu* and *1* and *2PS*—those texts with the largest temporal gap and apparent variation in cosmological outlook—in fact, the core of the mysteries needed for salvation and their outline is essentially the same, but clothed in different language. The mysteries of the Treasury of Light in the first texts are the mysteries of the First Mystery and the Ineffable in the last.

The reason for the changes in terminology and the veiling of the role or nature of certain figures and concepts is explicable through an analysis of the way outside religious themes and ideas are adopted or presented in the texts. Ch. 6 showed that the group that created these texts arose in an Egyptian context, with strong astrological leanings. Early on they had encounters with Sethians, whose theology they considered inferior or erroneous, but threatening enough to require response. Thus, the names of the Sethian high trinity were incorporated in the outline of the material realms to show their inferiority, and their heads of evil were made into minor demons surpassed with ease. They apparently also had interactions with Manichaean views that were more positive, with Manichaean language of light

collection from the archons also appearing early in the *Pistis Sophia* texts. Only later do notions that might be considered Valentinian appear, such as certain speculation on the composition of the Savior's body and the fall and redemption of Sophia. However, as was demonstrated, these ideas were adopted without consideration of their wider theological implications, and the underlying soteriology remained the same. It appears that in the group's final stages, a form of Valentinianism had become a strong force in their cultural milieu, so attempts were made to incorporate some of their language on the surface to maintain a competitive edge in the religious climate. The increasingly specific calls to Scripture and apostolic authority may also stem from such non-mainstream esoteric Christian influence.

It remains now to say some words on the nature of the group that produced these texts, here called the Jeuians after their allocation of the role of cosmocrator to the being called  $\text{ΙΕΟΥ}$ . Speculation about cosmology dominates much of these texts: the mysteries providing the keys to ascend through the cosmos were of utmost importance to this group, so knowledge of the cosmic outline was also vital. They acknowledged essentially three main divisions to the universe: the place of the left, or the material realms including the stars, planets, and sublunar realms; the place of the right, or the Treasury or Kingdom of Light; and the Midst, or the intermediate realm between the two. There is some variation in the specifics of this outline between texts, but these basic subsets appear to remain essentially the same. Contrary to the teachings of some early non-mainstream esoteric Christian groups, in the early stages of the Jeuian texts, the visible stars are considered the ultimate destination of the soul, reflecting their Egyptian background. Although in the later texts a more negative view of the starry realms is adopted, the structure of the divine abodes where the initiate ascends after death remains the same. It is because of this shift that Jeu's position appears to be in flux: as the one who organized the visible cosmos, he is initially portrayed as second only to the unapproachable God and Jesus, while later this identical role of cosmic organization is degraded. As noted above, however, despite changes in language used to refer to the highest realms, their structure and contents appear to remain essentially the same from beginning to end.

This group believed there was only one way to achieve salvation: the mysteries of light that give access through the various cosmic realms to ascend to the

height. These mysteries were what Jesus came into the world to deliver, and only this group could provide them. Prior to receipt of the mysteries, however, one had to demonstrate belief and dedication to the group's precepts through a lengthy initial period of living according to their strict moral code. After a sufficient period, a complex series of baptisms or purification rites were required, which were administered to groups of initiates at a time. These involved incense offerings, seals, prayer, and ritual meals of bread and wine for the initiates. Hymns and group prayers were also a key part of their practice, with several of these recorded for liturgical use. After being thus purified, group members were taught a series of magical names, numbers and seals for use in postmortem ascension, which may or may not have been meditatively practiced in life as well. As discussed in Ch. 5, these mystical passwords and diagrams were classified into different types, and are recorded in great detail in *1* and *2 Jeu*. Although they are lacking in the *Pistis Sophia* texts, their use is passively referenced and still assumed.

The later *Pistis Sophia* texts in particular appear to be introductory: they present a beginner's outline to the universe, and incorporate stories and veiled language that would be expected in such texts. The more advanced initiate is guided to the *Books of Jeu* to receive the mysteries of the inheritances of light, where this information is presented plainly. There were different levels of group membership: neophytes proving themselves through adherence to the group's rules; initiates eligible for baptism; and more advanced members who had access to deeper knowledge and increasingly lofty mysteries. Transgressing the ethical and moral rules of the group at any stage before or after receiving these mysteries did not automatically cause one to be cast out: the system had provisions to allow for second chances, both in this life and the next. People who received the mysteries but transgressed could receive higher mysteries to wipe out past sin, and the mystery of the Ineffable could forgive any wrong. For those who lived righteously but did not find the mysteries, it was believed they would be reincarnated into a wise body that would certainly find them. For those who lived in wickedness, after a period of intense punishment, they, too, would be reincarnated and given a chance to find the light. These characteristics serve to demonstrate that these texts are the product of a group with a defined structure and system of beliefs and practices.

Having presented an overview of the system lying behind the *Books of Jeu* and the *Pistis Sophia*, a number of avenues remain for further research. A thorough analysis of the rituals described in great detail in *2 Jeu* and *4PSa* was not possible within the scope of this thesis, and indeed they deserve a treatment of their own. They present a unique glimpse of the multifaceted system of symbols used by the group in their initiations, as well as their creative use of well-known magical ritual technologies. Furthermore, although the use of the Psalms and Odes of Solomon in the myth of Pistis Sophia's fall and redemption has received some scholarly attention, the framing story also deserves a new in-depth analysis in light of the obvious interpolations and outside influences. Traces of the original story remain, presenting an image of a persecuted figure who can be redeemed purely through the power of prayer, repentance, and recognition of the true mysteries or light, without original sin or the need of the Savior's incarnation to restore the heavenly fullness. Beyond these suggestions, a great deal remains to be gleaned from further analysis of this body of texts. Hopefully, this thesis will stimulate further scholarly conversation on these texts and the system of ideas that lies behind them.

The codices remaining today were likely compiled well after the composition of the original texts, by scribes who perhaps were not members of the group to which they belonged. Despite this, the *Books of Jeu* and the *Pistis Sophia* in their current form still present a relatively sizable body of information about a separate, unique group with a distinct system of beliefs and practices. This thesis has demonstrated that they feature a largely consistent cast of divine figures and cosmological theory, and where deviations occur, possible explanations within a wider cultural context have been shown. Throughout all of the texts, receipt of the mysteries of light combined with adherence to a strict moral code remained the only way to attain a positive afterlife. Despite the superficial changes or additions stemming from interactions with surrounding religious and cultural phenomena over time, these processes seem to have maintained their basic form. In light of this overview of these texts' structure and contents, perhaps they may be no longer regarded as purely a confused mishmash, and rather become better appreciated as important historical, religious documents emerging from the dynamic religious climate of the first centuries of the Common Era.



## APPENDIX

### RANKS OF THE TREASURY OF LIGHT (2 *JEU* 119-125): FULL LIST

This is the longest of lists of ranks in the Treasury of Light found in any of the texts, and it did not entirely fit in Table 3.3 in either size or overall contents. The first part of the list was included in the table because it demonstrates that the main ranks found in all of the lists are present. However, the majority of entries on this list are unique within the *Books of Jeu*. It is interesting that this list is the only place to mention the Great Sabaoth and the Great Jao in the whole of the *Books of Jeu*, despite their important roles in the *Pistis Sophia*. The list likely represents a deviant tradition, similar to that found in the list of knowledge of the Mystery of the Ineffable (Table 3.2); in fact, although they are not apparently directly related, the two share some elements that are not found elsewhere in the texts. The list is included here for reference and completeness.

- 9 Watchers of ToL
- 3 Amens
- Child of the Child
- Great Sabaoth (of ToL)
- Great Jao the Good (of ToL)
- 7 Amens
- 5 Trees/ Unmoved Trees
- 7 Voices
- Incomprehensible Ones
- Endless Ones
- Pre-hyper Incomprehensible Ones
- Pre-hyper Endless Ones
- Unfiled Ones
- Pre-hyper Unfiled Ones
- Unmoved Ones
- Hyper-Unmoved Ones
- Fatherless Ones
- Pre-fatherless Ones
- 5 Incisions
- 3 Spaces
- 5 Helpers of ToL
- Triple-spirited Ones
- Triple-powered Ones (of great king of ToL)
- First Ordinance
- Inheritance
- Silence + Rest
- Veils (before king of ToL)
- Great Man/King of ToL/Jeu
- Place surrounding ToL (+ Jeu again)
- Gates of 2<sup>nd</sup> ToL + Watchers
- Triple-powered ones (names given)
- 12<sup>th</sup> Rank of 12<sup>th</sup> Great Emanation (of true God)
- True God
- Unapproachable God (unreachable)



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