Philo and the Valentinians
Protology, Cosmogony, and Anthropology

Risto Auvinen

Academic dissertation to be publicly discussed, by due permission of the Faculty of Theology at the University of Helsinki in the Main Building, Auditorium XII, on the 4th of February 2017 at 10 a.m.
ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to compare philosophical and exegetical traditions in the writings of Philo of Alexandria and in the Valentinian sources. Although Valentinus’ fragments contain some Philonic themes, the closest parallels with Philo come from “section C” (chapters 43.2-65) in the *Excerpts from Theodotus* by Clement of Alexandria, which parallels teachings of Ptolemy’s disciples attested in Irenaeus’ Valentinian account in Iren. *Haer.* 1.1-7. I will argue in this study that Valentinian theology in these sources cannot be properly understood without recourse to Philo’s inventions in the allegorical exegesis of the Book of Genesis. On the one hand, the Valentinians elaborated the allegories attested in Philo’s writings in the light of the myth of Sophia. On the other hand, the Valentinian theologians reformulated the preceding Gnostic myth in the light of teachings that they found in Philo’s writings.

The Valentinian protological model system developed on the grounds of a Platonizing interpretation of the prologue of the Gospel of John. The Valentinian teachers twisted the semantic and logical structure of the prologue of John’s gospel in a way which indicates that they also knew some of Philo’s protological innovations. In the Valentinian accounts, Wisdom has manifold associations, which are related to the dyadic and monadic aspects of the divine world. These associations are found in an initial stage in Philo’s texts. Philo and Valentinians were also dependent on the ancient theory of *diakrisis* according to which cosmic matter was divided into four cosmic elements. Taking into account all these protological and cosmological parallels, it is reasonable to suggest that the Valentinian teachers were working in the allegorical tradition in which many of Philo’s interpretations were adopted, rejected and reformed.

In anthropology, Philo and Valentinian teachers were dependent on the Middle Platonic anthropological theories, which formed the philosophical background for the allegorical interpretations of Gen. 1:26-27 and Gen. 2:7. The closest parallels with Philo are found in the anthropological interpretations of Genesis, which form the basis for soteriology and ethics. The allegory of Israel and the allegory of Cain, Abel and Seth attested in the Valentinian sources were derived from Philo’s works.

On the grounds of this study, it is reasonable to suggest that there was a historical relationship between Philo and the Valentinians. The relation was restricted, however, to one group of Valentinians whose teachings go back to the school of Ptolemy in Alexandria and Rome. This study shows that it is probable that some Valentinian teachers belonged to the circle of Alexandrian Christian Platonists who saw Philo’s works as valuable and preserved them after the revolt before they became the property of the Alexandrian Catechetical School, that is, at the end of the second century.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to take the opportunity to thank my supervisor, Professor Ismo Dunderberg for his encouragement during the writing of my dissertation. I learned from him that positive and open discussion achieves more than harsh criticism. I would also like to thank Professor Antti Marjanen and my colleagues in Gnostic Studies Dr. Minna Heimola, Dr. Päivi Vähäkangas, Dr. Ulla Tervahauta, Dr. Outi Lehtipuu, Ivan Miroshnikov and Alin Suciu who were all members of the project "Gnosticism and the Formation of Christianity" in the Department of Biblical Studies, University of Helsinki. I began my research as a doctoral student in 2008. The dissertation has been written during 2014 - 2016. During that time, I was also working full time as a Lutheran parish priest. I would like to thank my wife Ursula for her patience, love and support that she gave me during the long periods of writing my thesis. I hope that all the holidays and weekends that I spent writing or reading ancient philosophy were not wasted! Finally, I want to thank Professor Gregory E. Sterling and Dr. Tuomas Rasimus for their valuable and important comments during the pre-examination of my work.

Kohmansalo, October 2016

Risto Auvinen
CONTENTS

1 INTRODUCTION ........................................................................................................................................ 7
  1.1 The aim of this study .......................................................................................................................... 7
  1.2 The Valentinian tradition and Sethian Gnosticism ....................................................................... 9
  1.3 Philo of Alexandria and the Valentinian tradition ...................................................................... 14
  1.4 Methodological Considerations ................................................................................................. 19
  1.5 Outline of this study .................................................................................................................... 22

2 SOURCE CRITICAL CONSIDERATIONS – THE VALENTINIAN PRIMARY SOURCE IN CLEMENT’S EXCERPTS OF THEODOTUS AND ITS RELEVANCE TO THIS STUDY .................................................................................................................. 25
  2.1 The Valentinian source in Exc. Theod. 43.2-65 .......................................................................... 31
    2.1.1 General remarks ................................................................................................................... 31
    2.1.2 The relation between Exc. C and Iren. Haer. 1.1-7 ....................................................... 34
  2.2 Conclusions .................................................................................................................................... 37

3 THE FOUNDATIONS OF ALLEGORICAL INTERPRETATION IN PHILO AND AMONG THE VALENTINIANS ........................................................................................................................................ 39
  3.1 The Jewish revolt in Egypt and its implications for the Jewish and Christian traditions of Alexandria ........................................................................................................................................ 39
  3.2 The founding of the School of Valentinus .................................................................................. 44
    3.2.1 The school of Valentinus as a Christianized Middle Platonic cult ........................................... 45
    3.2.2 Valentinian tradition and rituals – Early Christian theurgy vs. religio mentis .................... 51
  3.3 Allegorical Readers of Alexandria ................................................................................................. 54
    3.3.1 Allegorical interpretation of Ex.13:2 in Philo’s Her. 117-119 and Iren. Haer. 1.3.4 ............ 63
    3.3.2 A moderate allegorical teaching in Ptolemy’s Letter to Flora ............................................. 66
  3.4 Conclusions .................................................................................................................................... 71

4 PROTOLOGY: THE CREATION OF THE INTELLIGIBLE COSMOS .................................................... 73
  4.1 Philo of Alexandria, Valentinian teachers and the transcendental monotheism ................. 73
  4.2 The outline of the Valentinian myth ............................................................................................. 80
  4.3 The origin of Valentinian protology ............................................................................................. 85
  4.4 The Philonic interpretation of the prologue of the Gospel of John ........................................... 93
  4.5 Philo’s interpretation of day one and traditions of cosmic creation in Opif. 29-35 .............. 100
  4.6 Conclusions ................................................................................................................................... 105

5 THE CREATION OF MATTER AND THE WISDOM OF GOD .......................................................... 107
  5.1 The philosophical background of the creation of matter ......................................................... 107
  5.2 The creation of matter in the writings of Philo ........................................................................ 111
  5.3 The creation of matter in the Valentinian sources .................................................................. 116
1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The aim of this study

The aim of this study is to compare philosophical and exegetical traditions in the writings of Philo of Alexandria and in Valentinian sources. I will compare these writings systematically in the light of the Valentinian system of thought, which contains protological, cosmological and anthropological dimensions. The affinities between Philo and Valentinian theology can be found in all these themes. I will argue in this study that Valentinian theology drew upon Philo’s and cannot be properly understood without recourse to his inventions in the allegorical exegesis of the Book of Genesis. Although the origin of Gnosticism is not the main concern of this study, the comparison of the Valentinian accounts with various Hellenistic Jewish and Platonic sources will shed new light in the study on the origins and development of the ancient Gnostic traditions.

Philo (ca. 20 BCE – 50 CE) was the most prolific author of Hellenistic Judaism, specifically in Alexandria, which was the Diaspora’s main center. Belonging to a wealthy Jewish family with close ties to rulers of Judea and Rome Philo had exceptional opportunities to engage literary activity. Philo’s family belonged to wealthy aristocracy and he inherited the multiple citizenship from his father being a citizen of the Jewish politeuma of Alexandria, the Greek city of Alexandria, and Rome. Although Philo received

---

1 The Jews of Alexandria had a long history as citizens of Alexandria with legal autonomy, although their privileged status began to weaken during the Roman administration. During the reign of Claudius, the participation of the Jews in gymnasia was restricted. It is possible that Philo had some judicial status in the Jewish council of elders of Alexandria, because he was a member of the legation to Galicula in 38 CE. The pogroms against Jews were reported by Philo in his writings Against Flaccus and The Legation to Gaius. Philo’s brother Caius Julius Alexander was an ethnarch (or alabarch) of Alexandria, and he had close relations with both Agrippa I, the grandson of Herod the Great, and to the Julio-Claudian dynasty in Rome. Josephus informs us that Alexander’s fortune was enormous and he donated nine gates in Jerusalem “overlaid with massive plates of silver and gold.” Alexander had two sons. The younger son, Marcus Julius Alexander, was married to Berenice, the daughter of Agrippa I. The older son, Tiberius Julius Alexander, abandoned the Jewish religion. He was procurator of Judea in 45 CE and prefect of Egypt under Nero. During the siege of Jerusalem in 70 CE he commanded the Roman troops. Cf. David Winston, Philo of Alexandria. The Contemplative Life, The Giants, and Selections (Translation and Introduction by David Winston; New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1981), 1-7; Samuel Sandmel, Philo of Alexandria. An Introduction (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), 3-16. For the historical background of the pogroms against Jews in Alexandria cf. Pieter Willem van der Horst, Philo’s Flaccus: The First Pogrom (Translation and commentary by Pieter Willem van der Horst; Philo of Alexandria Commentary Series, V. 2; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2005), 18-37.
a standard Greek education and advanced training in rhetoric and philosophy, he was committed to the observance of Jewish ritual laws and religious festivals.

Philo’s social background might have directed him towards business and politics, but he had a remarkable role in politics only at the end of his life when he was the leader of the Jewish delegation to Caligula in 39-40 CE. Philo’s main interests were focused on the philosophical life. It is possible that Philo occasionally withdrew into solitude and spent some time among the community of Jewish intellectuals living on the shores of Lake Mareotis. Jean Daniélou has pointed out that Philo’s intellectual activity was two-sided: “part of his activity is directed to believing Jews. It has an esoteric character. It is carried on within the community. On the other hand, Philo’s activity has an apologetic component. He is careful to present the Jewish faith to Greeks so as to make it acceptable.” But originally, Philo was an interpreter of the Scripture. He was not, however, an isolated exegete but an exegete within specific hermeneutic tradition, which he preserved and commented in his writings. Without the preservation of Philo’s philosophical and exegetical writings our knowledge about Hellenistic Judaism would be far more limited. The social setting of Philo’s school is not clear, but the most reasonable suggestion is that Philo owned a private school where he taught philosophically orientated spiritual exegesis. The survival of Philo’s works after his death and during the turbulent years of the Jewish revolt in 115-117 CE is still an enigma for modern scholarship. Although Clement of Alexandria was the first ancient author who began quoting Philo by name at the end of the second century, the history of the preservation of Philo’s works before Clement is not known.

The Valentinian tradition was one of the most influential religious-philosophical exegetical traditions in Early Christianity. The foundation of the school of Valentinus goes back to Valentinus, who was influential during mid-second century Alexandria and Rome. His teachings are preserved only in some fragments in the patristic sources. We know that Valentinus wrote homilies, letters, and psalms, which were used in the communities of the later Valentinian disciples. The disciples of Valentinus continued the school tradition of Valentinus, and it was vehemently attacked by Irenaeus in his multivolume work *Against Heresies* at the end of the second century. According to the patristic evidence, the school of Valentinus was a reformation of the preceding Gnostic tradition, although their relationship is a matter of scholarly dispute.

---


All those who have read Philo’s writings together with the Valentinian texts have noticed parallel allegorical interpretations and biblical themes between these texts. The consensus is that both Philo and Valentinian belonged to the Alexandrian exegetical tradition, which intended to integrate the Platonic worldview with the revelation of the Bible through the allegorical method of interpretation. Despite the apparent thematic continuity of thought between Philo and the Valentinian sources, there is no scholarly consensus whether Valentinian teachers had direct access to Philo’s writings. I argue in this study that the Valentinian tradition formed a distinct school of thought in early Christianity in which the preceding Gnostic teachings including the myth of Sophia were refined in the light of Hellenistic Jewish allegorical teachings attested in Philo’s works.

1.2 The Valentinian tradition and Sethian Gnosticism

The definition of Gnosticism is a highly disputed issue in modern scholarship. Since the international colloquium held in Messina, Italy, in 1966, no scholarly consensus has been reached regarding the essence and origin of Gnosticism. The study of the Nag Hammadi Gnostic writings has shown that the narrow definition of the term “Gnosticism” as a second-century dualist and deterministic Christian heresy based on the myth of Sophia is not suitable to depict all the texts of the Nag Hammadi Library. It is also noted that the term “Gnostic” does not appear as the self-designated name in the writings of the Nag Hammadi Library, but it is given as a group designation by second-century patristic authors. Therefore, there have been proposals that we should forgo using the term “Gnosticism” because it is a dubious category which is based on the late second-century discourse of orthodoxy and heresy. As soon as we talk about Gnosticism we decide to talk about something “other” and apart from original and “pure” Christianity, i.e. something that is not a part of our religious and cultural tradition. Karen King has pointed out that in that way “a rhetorical term has been confused with a historical entity.”

---

4 The Messina colloquium proposed that the term “Gnosticism” should refer specifically to a certain group of systems of the second century CE described by the patristic authors. The Messina proposal maintains that “Gnosticism” is a system of thought, which contains the idea of “the 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.” Gnostic cosmology is based on the double movement of “devolution and reintegration.” This world has its basis in a crisis within the divine realm. The term “gnosis” is given a broad definition as “knowledge of the divine mysteries reserved for an elite.” Cf. Ugo Bianchi (ed.), Le origini dello gnosticismo Colloquio di Messina 13-18 Aprile 1966 (Studies in the History of Religions; Leiden: Brill, 1967).

In his essay “Prolegomena to the Study of Ancient Gnosticism” (1995) Bentley Layton intended to define the category of Gnostic texts, rather than the essence or origin of Gnosticism. Layton argues that the definition of the category of Gnostic writings should be based on the direct testimonials of ancient authors. Layton’s starting point is Irenaeus’s summary of the Gnostic teaching in Iren. *Hær.* 1.29-30, which parallels the *Secret Book According to John* in the Nag Hammadi Library. In addition, Porphyry mentions three books found in the Nag Hammadi Library (*Zostrianos, the Foreigner* and the *Book of Zoroaster*), which were discussed in Plotinus’ seminar in Rome between 262-270 CE. Layton proposes that on the grounds of the content of these books, the bulk of Gnostic writings can be expanded to all other writings, which contain a similar kind of cosmography, philosophical creation myth and cast of characters (e.g. the *Hypostasis of the Archons*, the *Trimorphic Protennoia*, the *Three Steles of Seth* and *Marsanes*). Hence, Layton coins the term Gnostic or “Classic Gnostic” to signify what Hans-Martin Schenke and most other scholars called the Sethian Gnostic system. According to Pearson, Sethian Gnosticism consists of the following elements: “a focus on Seth as a Savior figure and spiritual ancestor of the Gnostic elect; a primal divine triad of an ineffable Father, a Mother called Barbelo, and Son referred to as Autogenes; four emanated luminaries named Harmozel, Oroaiel, Daveithe, and Eleleth and other superterrestrial beings related to them; a salvation history thought of as three descents of the Savior, or three

"Gnostic" or "hairesis" are replaced by other terms which are less loaded with theological meaning, such as "sect" or "splinter group." Also, these terms are based on the same discourse of orthodoxy and heresy. Cf. Ismo Dunderberg, *Beyond Gnosticism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008, 18-19. For a summary of the scholarly discussion concerning Gnosticism, see also Antti Marjanen (ed.) *Was There a Gnostic Religion?* (The Finnish Exegetical Society in Helsinki; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht), 2005.

critical periods marked by flood, fire, and final judgement; and rituals of baptism and ascent.”

Layton maintains that the Valentinians should be kept apart “as a distinct mutation or reformed offshoot” of these original Gnostics. He assumes, however, that some Sethian texts may have influenced on Valentinus’s followers but they elaborated these Gnostic traditions remarkably. Layton’s solution was adopted by David Dawson, who describes Valentinus as a reformer of the Sethian myth in the Apocryphon of John and in the Hypostasis of the Archons. Ismo Dunderberg also suggests that Valentinus may have adopted the creation myth of Adam from Sethian sources, although he elaborated these teachings in the light of Hellenistic Jewish models attested in the Book of Wisdom.

Christoph Markschies has argued, however, that Valentinus’s teachings were independent of mythological Gnostic traditions, but his followers may have been representatives of the Gnostic “mythological heresy.” This would mean that there was a drastic chasm between the teachings of Valentinus and those disciples who may have adopted some Gnostic influences from Sethian sources. Markschies’s radical solution, which makes a distinction between Valentinus’s teaching and the systems of his followers, is not commonly accepted. Although Valentinus’s fragments do not contain any explicit reference to the fall and restoration of Sophia, there is nothing in them which would make Valentinus’s teachings incompatible with the teachings of his followers. It is not credible either that Valentinus’s followers would have distorted the teachings of the foster-father of their school in such a radical manner. It is more likely that Valentinus also taught some kind of protological myth of Sophia, although it may have differed in detail from the preceding Gnostic myth and the systems of the later Valentinian theologians.

Dunderberg points out that “the significance of Markschies’s study no longer lies so much in its conclusion that Valentinus was not Gnostic as it does in the way Markschies carefully located Valentinus in the intellectual milieu of second century Alexandria, colored by Platonism and Hellenistic literature.”

---

9 Dunderberg, Beyond Gnosticism, 51, 104. Dunderberg says, however, that despite common motifs, there is no positive evidence that Valentinus used the story of Adam’s creation in the Apocryphon of John.
10 Irenaeus describes in Iren. Haer. 1.11.1 a version of Sophia myth, which goes back to Valentinus himself. Also, Tertullian says that Valentinus taught some kind of protological myth, although this myth differed from the later Valentinian systems (Adv. Val. 4.3).
Karen King has proposed that the myth of Sophia’s fall and restoration can be seen as “a logical result of the inter-textual reading of Platonic cosmology, Genesis and Wisdom literature.” Also Birger Pearson suggests that the Gnostic worldview is dependent upon Platonism, although the Platonist elements have been reinterpreted in a non-Platonic direction in the light of apocalyptically oriented Judaism. Both Gnosticism and the Jewish apocalypses emphasized a special kind of knowledge revealed from high. While the latter focused on the coming end of the visible cosmos and the beginning of the new world order ruled by the saints, the former stressed merely the return of the individual soul to its divine origin. However, we do not have any evidence of the Sophia myth outside of Christian literature. This would mean that the inter-textual reading of these sources was actualized within the Christian tradition, possibly in Alexandria. Although the fall of heavenly Wisdom could be explained in the light of Platonic archetypes, Sophia’s redemption by the Savior is barely conceivable apart from Christian tradition. It seems that the Gnostics inherited the apocalyptic world view from the Pauline Christianity and Johannine theology.

It is noticeable that there is not merely one account that can be called the Gnostic Wisdom myth, but a number of accounts which differ significantly from each other. Irenaeus informs us that in addition to the Valentinian sources, an account of Sophia’s fall and restoration forms the basis for the cosmological model in Ophite, Barbeloite, and Sethian accounts. Alastair

---

11 Dunderberg, Beyond Gnosticism, 20. Dunderberg maintains that Markschie’s view forms a solid basis for all subsequent study of Valentinus’s theology, even though he does not agree in all cases with Markschie’s radical view.


15 Stead states that the idea of the fallen heavenly Sophia, as Universal Soul, may have its archetype in the Platonic idea of the fall of the individual soul before its incarnation. Although the fall of Sophia could have been derived from Platonic archetypes, the idea of redemption of Sophia is hardly derivable from the Platonic tradition or the Hellenistic-Jewish Wisdom traditions. Cf. Christoph. G. Stead, “The Valentinian Myth of Sophia,” Journal of Theological Studies 20 (1969), 101.

16 Iren. Haer. 1.29-30.
Logan in *Gnostic Truth and Christian Heresy* proposes that the Valentinian school of thought reformed the preceding Gnostic myth of Sophia, but the myth in question may have differed from its later “Sethianization.” Logan suggests that the intellectual basis of the Gnostic myth lies in Platonic-Pythagorean theology, which was applied to the interpretation of Genesis and the Prologue to John’s Gospel by some innovative Christian theologians. Logan summarizes his analysis of the origin of Gnosticism:

*The world-view of these Gnostics is undoubtedly Platonic. It reflects the attempt to derive the Many from the One, and to explain the visible universe as the work of a lower god, the Demiurge, emanated from the transcendent One beyond being, in terms of the inexplicable self-revelation and unfolding of the supreme God as Father, Mother and Son ... but as the fundamental concept of the self-revelation of the divine triad suggests, it is essentially a Christian scheme. It reflects Christian ideas and ways of interpreting the Old Testament in the light of the message of Paul and John.*

In this study, the Gnostic movement is located in mid-second-century Alexandria, which served as an urban milieu for innovative Christian theologians who incorporated Hellenistic-Jewish exegetical patterns and Neo-Pythagorean transcendental monism into the interpretation of the purely Christian message. John Turner has pointed out, however, that “Gnosticism is not phenomenologically reduced to Platonism, nor is Platonism reduced to Gnosticism, but each tends to be treated as an index to a single way of construing the world and interpreting its received symbols and traditions, be they of mythical or of philosophical character.”

I suggest that we do not have any historical reason to doubt that there was a group of early Platonizing Christian teachers who were called “Gnostics” by outsiders and who may have used that name as a term of self-designation. The Gnostics were in the first place Platonists and their teachings represent, not so much “Christianity gone wild,” but “Platonism gone wild,” as Arthur D. Nock has pointed out. Although some Gnostic myth of Sophia antedated both Valentinian and Sethian versions, it is not excluded that these traditions interacted with each other later on. With regard to this study, it is crucial to notice that the Gnostic theologians, whether Sethians or Valentinians, were dependent not only on the Middle Platonic philosophy but also on Hellenistic...
Jewish traditions of Genesis-exegesis, which may have included some works of Philo. However, the main task of this study is to compare the allegorical and philosophical parallels between Valentinian sources and Philo. Therefore, the parallels with Sethian and other Gnostic texts is discussed in passing and I have concentrated on those cases where the Philonic parallels explain the differences between Valentinian and Sethian theologians. In those cases the Valentinian exegetes downplayed the Gnostic mythopoiesis and refined the distinctively Gnostic motifs, such as the denigration of the God of the Old Testament.

1.3 Philo of Alexandria and the Valentinian tradition

In an article “Philo of Alexandria and Gnosticism,” Robert McL. Wilson outlines two options concerning Philo’s relation to ancient Gnosticism which are presented in the scholarship. On the one hand, Philo is regarded as part of the Gnostic movement. On the other hand, Philo is seen as a precursor of the later Gnostic hairesis. Wilson prefers the second option and maintains that Philo is not a Gnostic in the strict sense of the term, but his writings contain some affinities with Gnosticism, although the Gnostic negation of the God of the Old Testament was alien to Philo. Also the radical dualism of the Gnostic myth, which suggests a rupture between the Ideal world and the visible cosmos, is not compatible with Philo’s moderate Platonic dualism. Rather than saying that Philo was a representative of the Gnostic hairesis, it is more reasonable to talk about Philo’s gnosis.

In his essay “Philo and Gnosticism,” Birger Pearson mainly adopted Wilson’s view. Pearson concludes that even though there are evident parallel themes in Philo and some Gnostic texts, Philo cannot be labeled a “Gnostic” or representative of the “proto-Gnostic” system either. Although Philo shared the Platonic view, which made a sharp distinction between the world of Ideas and the visible cosmos, the Creator God suspends the whole cosmos by the all-pervasive Logos and its powers. In the Gnostic system the creator God was blind, ignorant and evil, and creates in order to deceive human beings. Pearson suggests that it is impossible to derive such a hostile world view from the writings of Philo. Pearson thinks, however, that some of Philo’s antinomian Jewish opponents may have been predecessors for Gnostic theologians, although these Jewish groups cannot not be equated with the Gnostic hairesis mentioned by Irenaeus.

---


24 For the equation of the extreme allegorists of Philo with the proto-Gnostic groups, cf. M. Friedländer, Der vorchristliche jüdische Gnosticismus (Göttingen, 1989; reprint Farnborough, 1972).
It is notable that both Pearson and Wilson did not make a distinction between the systems in the Valentinian sources and the Sethian Gnostic texts. The Valentinian tradition forms a more intriguing case because the Valentinian teachers have significantly downplayed especially those “Gnostic motifs” which distinguished other Gnostic teachers from Philo. In his article “The Valentinian Myth of Sophia,” Christopher Stead maintains that “one can reconstruct most of the presuppositions of Valentinus merely by rearranging Philo’s mental furniture.”25 The main elements of the Valentinian myth of Sophia were according to Stead already “in the margins of Philo’s writings.” Later Stead elaborated his thesis in another article “In Search of Valentinus.” Stead intended to weaken the alleged contradictions between the Valentinian and the second-century Platonic tradition to prove that the Valentinian myth can be derived from Middle Platonic principles.26 He locates the Valentinian theory of aeons in the Platonic tradition according to which ideas are not only intelligible but intelligent.27 Stead argues that Philo and Valentinus have used the same Platonic themes in their biblical exegesis. Valentinus’s description of the creation of Adam is similar to Philo’s exegesis of Gen. 1:26 referring to the plurality of the creators (Opif. 72) and the “ideal man” that is associated with the Logos. Stead also found parallels between Philo and the Valentinian three-fold division of humankind in Gig. 60 (cf. also 12-15).28

Stead succeeded in proving a certain thematic and intellectual continuity between the Valentinian tradition and Philo’s writings. Bentley Layton, for his part, supposes that Valentinus’s Platonic attitude towards the Scriptures may have come to him through the study of Hellenistic Jewish interpretations of the Bible in the writings of Philo. He also suggests that the thoughts of God as the plants of paradise in the Valentinian Gospel of Truth (36.35-37.2) possibly draws upon the allegorical interpretation of Gen. 2:8 by

Although the identification of Philo’s antinomian opponents with some proto-Gnostic groups is intriguing, we do not have decisive information to confirm this connection. Pearson writes: “Although much of the detail of Friedländer’s argument is open to question, he has been vindicated in his basic contention, that Gnosticism is a pre-Christian phenomenon that developed on Jewish soil.” Cf. Birger Pearson, “Friedländer Revisited: Alexandrian Judaism and Gnostic Origins,” in Studia Philonica 2, 1973, 23-39.

27 Stead refers to Chaldean Oracles fragments 37 and 81. He also mentions Xenocrates, who suggested that the ideas were numbers, and they desire unity, which means that they were not only archetypes but living beings.
Philo in *Q.G.* 1.6.29 David Dawson in *Allegorical Readers in Alexandria* places Valentinus in the same exegetical tradition as Philo, but he does not propose any direct historical relation between them.30 Valentinus may have been influenced by the same kind of allegorical framework and intellectual milieu without knowing the exact works of Philo. Francis T. Fallon also saw parallels in the categorizing of the Law of Moses in Philo’s writings and Ptolemy’s *Letter to Flora*. It is rather likely that Ptolemy’s writing reflects the use of the hermeneutical traditions of Hellenistic diaspora Judaism, which were similar to those of Philo. However, we do not have firm evidence to suggest that Ptolemy would have drawn his teachings directly from the works of Philo.31 Christoph Markschies, who made a sharp distinction between Valentinus and the Gnostic tradition, maintained that there is nothing in Valentinus’s fragments which indicate direct contacts with Philo’s works. This does not mean, however, that the contacts with Philo’s teachings were not possible, for they were even probable. Markschies proposes that Valentinus was an intellectual intermediate stage between Philo and Clement of Alexandria.32

Most recently two remarkable studies have been published concerning the Valentinian tradition. Einar Thomassen’s *The Spiritual Seed* came out in 2006 and two years later Ismo Dunderberg’s study *Beyond Gnosticism*. Thomassen presents a systematic analysis of the Valentinian school traditions, although the emphasis is mainly on the so-called eastern branch of Valentinianism. Thomassen sees one possible parallel between Valentinus’s psalm *Harvest* (Hipp. *Haer.* 6. 37:7) and Philo’s *Mos.* 2.121 concerning the “cosmic chain” of creation. Although Thomassen detects remarkably Neo-Pythagorean influences in the Valentinian sources, he stresses more the influence of the Jewish apocalyptic tradition in the

---

29 Bentley Layton, *Gnostic Scriptures* (New York: Doubleday, 1987), 217, 262. Layton suggests that Valentinus wrote the *Gospel of Truth*. This is a hypothetical assumption. Irenaeus mentions in *Iren. Haer.* 3.11.9 that the Valentinians read a book called *Veritatis Evangelium*. Although the *Gospel of Truth* in the Nag Hammadi Codex I does not contain a title for the book, it begins with the words “The gospel of truth is a joy for those who have received from the Father of truth the grace of knowing him...” Thomassen is of the opinion that *incipit* can be applied as a title, and it is unlikely that there have been two independent Gnostic works with the same title. Therefore, it is probable that the *Gospel of Truth* in the Nag Hammadi Library and the one mentioned by Irenaeus are the same works. Cf. Einar Thomassen, *The Spiritual Seed* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 146-148.


Valentinian system of thought than the Platonizing Jewish Wisdom theology attested in Philo’s writings. Dunderberg’s approach is more orientated to the social-historical analysis of the Valentinian movement. He sees aspects in Valentinus’s school that connect it with ancient philosophical school traditions and Hellenistic Jewish Wisdom theology. Valentinus’s view concerning immortality (fragment 4) was closer to Philo’s teachings than to those early Christian views which connected immortality to the expectation of Jesus’s parousia and the resurrection of the dead. Dunderberg also notices some biblical allegories in the Valentinian sources that may go back to the Jewish archetypes attested in Philo’s writings.

In Philonic studies the question whether Valentinus or his followers knew Philo’s works is discussed by David Runia in *Philo of Alexandria in Christian literature*. Runia argues that despite the apparent thematic continuity of thought between the second century Alexandrian Christian communities and Jewish communities of Philo’s time, we are unable to create a valid argument, whether they had access to Philo’s writings. It was Clement of Alexandria who broke the one hundred years of silence and referred explicitly to Philo by name. Runia remarks, however, that the closest parallels with Philo before Clement can be found with the group of Platonizing Christians of Alexandria, who made use of Greek philosophical ideas in their attempt to understand the Christian message. An early Christian document the *Teachings of Silvanus* is an example of a work in which the common elements with Philo’s thought can be listed as follows:

i) the conception of the transcendence of God, based on Platonic categories of thought
ii) the doctrine of personified Wisdom
iii) anthropology based on Platonism, but also showing Stoic features
iv) stress on the importance of virtue and the struggle against the passions, coupled with a decidedly negative attitude towards the body
v) use of the allegorical method of interpreting Scripture

33 Thomassen, *The Spiritual Seed*, 315-326; 481-482. Thomassen sees in some Valentinian documents (e.g. *Tri. Trac.* 118:14-28; *Gos. Truth* 20:6-24; *Ap. Jas* 16:8-11) an idea of the manifestation of the saints and the union with angels at the end of days. A similar theme is attested in the Jewish apocalyptic literature (cf. 1 En. 38:1; 1QS XI 7-9)
Runia considers that the Christian Gnostics of Alexandria form a separate group, which differed from other Platonic Christians. Runia says that although the Gnostics shared much in common with Philo and Hellenistic Judaism, they “introduced a radical twist” that separated them sharply from Philonic thought. This “radical twist” refers to deterministic soteriology and an anti-cosmic world view. The possession of gnosis separated humans radically into the categories of the elect and other people leading to division in the gatherings of ordinary Christians. For Philo, however, the freedom of choice was fundamental, and he also held a positive view of the cosmos, which was sustained by all-pervasive Logos. The positive view of the cosmos differed from the teachings of the Gnostics, who regarded the world as a hostile place ruled by the malevolent heavenly archons. Therefore, according to Runia it is rather unlikely that the Gnostics found anything valuable in Philo’s works for their exegesis.

Runia’s view of the school of Valentinus is stereotypical and he failed to make a distinction between Valentinianism and the Sethian Gnostics whose “radical twist” was downplayed by the Valentinian teachers. According to the findings of recent scholarship, the secretiveness of the Valentinian paideia did not differ drastically from other philosophical schools, rabbinical schools or the Hermetic tradition. Irenaeus’s information about the Valentinian myth reveals that Valentinian teachers were interested in discussing cosmological myths with “outsiders” in order to convert them. The Valentinian teachers were not only mythmakers, but ethical improvement and progression were also essential elements of the Valentinian way of life. Ismo Dunderberg has pointed out that the goal of the Valentinian myth was to show the world in a new light and to change the way the audience perceives the world and the way they act. Moreover, the view of Valentinian tradition as a deterministic and anti-cosmic religion is based on a careless reading of the Valentinian accounts in the patristic sources. Although Valentinian teachers saw the body and fleshly impulses as evil, as Philo and contemporary Platonists did, the attitude towards heavenly powers was in some Valentinian sources rather positive, because they were created as images of the aeons of the intelligible realm.

It is noticeable that all the elements, which Runia accepted in the case of the Teaching of Silvanus as proofs of continuity in Philo’s thoughts can also be found in the Valentinian sources. In addition to the elements mentioned above, the Teaching of Silvanus contains the tripartite anthropology which parallels Valentinian teaching. The division of humankind is based on three

---

37 Runia, Philo in Early Christian Literature, 126.
38 Dunderberg, Beyond Gnosticism, 191-195.
“races,” which goes back to the allegorical reading of Gen. 2:7. Pearson suggests that this view goes back to Hellenistic Jewish sources, which were “well known to Philo, if not in fact derived from him.” It is an oversimplification, however, to suggest that the Valentinian cosmic myth can be derived almost exclusively from the writings of Philo. The parallels between Philo and Valentinian teachers may be marginal exegetical similarities, without any essential contribution to the origin of the Valentinian system or the Sophia myth itself. Moreover, the Valentinian tradition was not monolithic, which means that the works of Philo may have been known only by the teachers of some specific Valentinian group.

It is also noticeable that it is not only the positive reception of Philo’s allegories, which may indicate the dependency of Valentinians on Philo, but also an explicit rejection of certain interpretations, which parallels Philo’s exegesis. The Valentinian communities were not isolated groups apart from the other early Christian communities in Rome or Alexandria, but they participated in the early Christian debate concerning the creation of the world, the Law of Moses, the locality of God or the correct interpretation of the prologue of the Gospel of John.

1.4 Methodological Considerations

In his article “Comparisons Compared: A Methodological Survey of Comparisons of Religion from ‘A Magic Dwells’ to A Magic Still Dwell” David M. Freidenreich outlines four typological approaches to the comparison of religion. These are “comparative focus on similarity,” “comparative focus on difference,” “comparative focus on genus-species relationship” and “the use of comparison to refocus.” The methodological approach in this study is a combination of the first and the fourth approaches, although the comparative study is always bilateral because it reveals both similarities and dissimilarities.

Jonathan Z. Smith has stressed that the similarities, as well as the dissimilarities, are not given, but they result from the “mental operations” of the observer. Smith points out that a comparatist is attracted to a particular

---

40 Pearson, Gnosticism, Judaism and Egyptian Christianity, 177-181. Cf. also Pearson’s introduction to the Teaching of Silvanus in The Nag Hammadi Scriptures, 2007. Pearson writes: “So it is not out of the question that the author was familiar with Gnostic writings, such as those of the Alexandrian teacher Valentinus.”


42 Jonathan Z. Smith, Drudgery Divine: On the Comparison of Early Christianities and the Religions of Late Antiquity (Jordan Lectures in Comparative Religion Series 14; London: School of
datum “by a sense of its uniqueness” remembering that he has seen “something like it” before, which needs an explanation. The comparison is a subjective experience, which can be linked to “an objective connection through some theory of influence, diffusion, borrowing, or the like.” Smith asks: “We are left with a dilemma that can be stated in the stark form: Is comparison an enterprise of magic or science?” Thus far, comparison appears to be more a matter of memory than a project for inquiry; it is more impressionistic than methodical.”

William E. Paden stresses the heuristic nature of the comparative enterprise in his article “Elements of New Comparativism.” He points out that the comparative study is heuristic because it provides instruments for further discovery. He says that “Just identifying parallel themes, concepts or pattern is not the end matter, but the starting point of investigation.” The subjective dimension in the process of comparison does not mean that it cannot be done scientifically. The mental operations should be subordinated to conceptual self-control, which means that the framework of comparison is analytically controlled, and the significant aspects of the phenomena in question are selected in a theoretically plausible way.

In this thesis, the study of similarities and dissimilarities is related to the interpretations of the biblical text or biblical theme and the use of similar kinds of allegorical schemes. The similarity may be related to a similar kind of philosophical idea, which forms the basis for the allegorical interpretation of the text. Comparative scholarship not only presents the similarities between the objects of comparison but intends to explain why they are similar, which raises the question of the historical or conceptual relationship between them. The emphasis of the historical survey can lead, however, to paralleleomania, which does not only exaggerate the similarities but “proceeds to describe source and derivation as if implying literary connection flowing in an inevitable or predetermined direction.” I suggest, however, that the opposite attitude, which can be called parallelophobia, is as pernicious for comparative study. This kind of attitude means that one exaggerates the differences between certain texts to dismiss the mutual dependency all together as if all the ancient texts and their traditions were developed in isolation without any historical dependency on each other.

---


45 The allegorical method is defined in chapter 3.

The crucial issue in comparing religious issues is the determination of how much context should be taken into account. The problem is that the more context one considers, the less similar the objects of comparison become. It should also be noticed that comparative study is not interested in religious events within absolutely similar contexts. It is the dissimilarity of the context, which makes the comparison interesting. In this study I use an approach according to which the comparison of the elements from different religious traditions is made only after examining them in their original context. This kind of scrutiny may be a rather laborious way of comparing – and reading – but this methodological approach is profitable in that it raises further questions.

As I noted above, the objects of comparison in this study are texts that contain similar kinds of interpretations of the Bible. The degree of similarity between these interpretations does not necessarily define the form of dependency. An identifiable quotation can be taken from the secondary source material, notebooks or through oral transmission without direct contact with the original text itself. In his study of *Philo of Alexandria and Early Christianity* David Runia points out that most of the 4th-century references to Philo’s texts in Christian literature were not adopted by reading Philo himself but from Christian authors such as Origen, Eusebius, and Ambrose, who incorporated quotations from Philo in their writings. On the other hand, a short reference or allusion that faintly resembles another text can be the result of a careless direct reading or it can be the outcome of the ancient scholarly technique of borrowing. This feature becomes apparent in Anniewies van den Hoek’s study, *Clement of Alexandria and his use of Philo in STROMATEIS*. She describes the quotation method of Clement of Alexandria in the following way:

> Another characteristic of his technique is the abrupt way that material borrowed from Philo jumps into his text. These discontinuities give a strange flavor to his sentences and lead to illogical turns of thought. In these various ways, therefore, Philo’s text is nearly always presented in a damaged and defective form. Repeatedly, confusion and disorder appear; words are shifted strangely, and sentences are chopped into cryptic fragments. The development of Clement’s thought would be entirely incomprehensible in these sections if Philo’s text were not at hand.

---

47 Freidenreich, “Comparison Compared,” 94-96. Freidenreich mentions Barbara Holdrege’s study (*Veda and Torah; Transcending the Textuality of Scripture*, 1996) as an example of a comparative study which used a thoroughly contextual method.

This applies not only to the readers of today but must also have held true for his own contemporaries.49

These notions should warn us not to make conclusions too easily concerning the form of dependency or historical relationship between ancient texts solely on the ground of the degree of literal similarity or dissimilarity. It is clear, however, that the degree of similarity correlates with the probability of the dependency, although the form of the dependency may remain beyond any historical study. The question concerning the historical relation is not the only concern of the comparative study. The similarities between religions or their literary traditions may also function as a “lens.” This means that the comparative analysis may produce data which can be used to refocus issues in question. Freidenreich defines this approach in the following way:

Much as a microscope offers new insights even into specimens that can be seen with the naked eye, the religious tradition being brought for the purpose of comparison serves to provide a new perspective on the tradition being examined, to raise new questions or offer a new possible way of understanding the target tradition.50

The “target tradition” in this study is the Valentinian tradition. In this study I shall provide new approaches to and perspectives on the interpretation of the Valentinian texts on the ground of parallels with Philo. The aim of this study is not only to collect parallels between the Valentinian sources and Philo’s works but to refocus the Valentinian tradition and learn from the parallel cases with Philo.

1.5 Outline of this study

Chapter 2 explores the sources of this study and the definition of the category of Valentinian literature. The terms “the school of Valentinus” or “the Valentinians” do not appear in any of the Valentinian writings in the Nag Hammadi library, but the Valentinian group designation comes from the patristic sources. The primary sources in the Nag Hammadi writings can be labeled “Valentinian” in as much as they possess the characteristics of “Valentinianism” attested in the patristic sources. Although the patristic sources do not describe the teachings of the Valentinians objectively, the category of Valentinian writings can be formed on the grounds of critical evaluation of the information attested in the patristic sources.


50 Freidenreich, “Comparisons Compared,” 91.
According to a precursory reading of the Valentinian sources, the closest exegetical and thematic parallels with Philo come from the Valentinian source that is enclosed in the unfinished eighth book of *Stromateis* by Clement of Alexandria (*Exc. Theod.* 43.2-65). It is likely that this Valentinian teaching goes back to Ptolemy and his disciples in Rome where Irenaeus got to know about it. I will present a detailed source-critical analysis of the Valentinian accounts in *Exc. Theod.* 43.2-65 and *Iren. Haer.* 1.1-7, which forms the basis for the comparison with Philo’s texts.

I will begin chapter 3 by investigating the formation of the school of Valentinus and its social-historical contexts in early second-century Alexandria. The Jewish revolt and annihilation of the Alexandrian Jewry created an urban social setting for the generation of various religious-philosophical schools, which according to the patristic authors represented the so-called Gnostic *haireseis*. I will argue that Valentinian teachers shared with Philo the same philosophical and linguistic basis for the use of the allegorical method, which was based on the theory of the corruption of language. Both Philo and the Valentinians were proponents of multiple exegesis, which means that they could interpret a certain text differently according to the intellectual level of the audience. At the end of this chapter, I will investigate two case studies, which illustrate the multidimensionality of the exegetical tradition of Philo and Valentinians.

Chapter 4 analyzes the accounts of Philo and Valentinians by comparing their protological systems. Both Philo and Valentinians can be regarded as “Biblical Middle-Platonists” who integrated Plato’s *Timaeus* with Aristotle’s metaphysics and Neo-Pythagorean principles. I show in this chapter how the Valentinian protological model system described in *Iren. Haer.* 1.1.1-3 developed on the grounds of a Platonizing interpretation of the prologue of the Gospel of John. It seems that the Valentinian exegetes were aware that John 1:1-5 was written as a Platonizing description of the creation account in Genesis, which has a parallel in Philo’s allegory of the creation during the first day of creation. It was therefore not chosen accidentally as a proof-text for protological speculations. I will show that the Valentinian exegetes twisted the narrative of John’s prologue in a way that indicates that they were familiar with the allegorical patterns used by Philo in his allegory of the creation of the intelligible cosmos.

In chapter 5, the focus shifts from the intelligible realm to the creation of the visible cosmos. Firstly, I present a short philosophical introduction to the creation of matter in the Neo-Pythagorean tradition, which formed the basis for speculations concerning the creation of matter both in Philo and in the Valentinian systems. While Philo can be associated with the school of Eudorus of Alexandria, the Valentinian view is closer to Moderatus of Gades. In the Valentinian accounts, Wisdom has manifold associations, which are related to the dyadic and monadic aspects of the divine world. I will show in this chapter that these associations are found in an initial stage in Philo’s texts. Valentinian exegetes interpreted the creation of heaven and earth (Gen.
1:1) as a separation of psychic and hylic matter on the grounds of the ancient theory of *diakrisis*. The same kind of theory concerning the division of matter according to its physical characteristics into the four cosmic elements can be found in Philo. Moreover, both Philo and the Valentinians interpreted Gen. 1:3 as denoting the creation of the essence of light, which served as the source for the visible lights of heaven.

Chapter 6 analyzes the interpretations of the creation of Adam in Gen. 1:26-27 and Gen. 2:7. Philo worked within an exegetical tradition and he evidently used some preceding allegorical teachings as the basis for his allegory of the soul and the division of humankind. Both Philo and the Valentinians were dependent on Middle Platonic anthropological theories, which formed the philosophical background for their allegories. I will argue that Valentinian teachers knew similar kinds of anthropological interpretations as Philo, although they reformulated them according to the Valentinian cosmic myth. At the end of this chapter, I will investigate two anthropological fragments of Valentinus, which are evidently influenced by Hellenistic Jewish speculations concerning the creation of Adam’s body and the structure of the human soul as a symbol of the Temple.

The discussion in chapter 7 is an expansion of the anthropological issues handled in the previous chapter. The tripartite division of humankind was one of the main features of Valentinian anthropology. Although the names of these categories may have been derived from Paul, the division itself is closer to Philo’s division of humankind on the grounds of an allegorical reading of Gen. 1:26-27 and Gen. 2:7. The tripartite division of humankind forms the basis for the allegories of Abel, Cain and Seth, as well as the allegory of Israel as a spiritual human being who sees God, which are also attested in Philo’s works. At the end, I compare the theories of the afterlife in Philo and the Valentinian sources. Valentinus maintained that the gift of immortality was present in the world since the creation of Adam, although it must be activated through the practice of philosophy and ascesis. This soteriological model parallels the Hellenistic Jewish model attested in Philo. Both the Valentinian teachers and Philo suggested that the ultimate *telos* of the human soul was the assimilation with the intelligible cosmos, which means the transformation of the soul into an angel.

In the final chapter, I will make some concluding remarks on the grounds of the comparative analysis in chapters 4-7. I will primarily answer two questions. Firstly, what kind of historical relationships can be derived on the ground of these parallels? Is it possible that some Valentinian teachers knew some works of Philo or did they get to know about these teachings indirectly e.g. through oral transmission? This historical conclusion also aims to provide some new insight into the question of the preservation of Philo’s library after his death. Secondly, I will consider what kind of contribution the parallels with Philo can make regarding the interpretation of the Valentinian texts. Do the parallels with Philo give us some new insight or focal perspective into Valentinian source material?
The source material used in this study consists of literary sources. The Valentinian writings of the Nag Hammadi Library are commonly regarded as “primary sources” compared with the “secondary sources” attested in the patristic writings. Before the finding of the Nag Hammadi scriptures in 1945, the teachings of the Valentinians were known only through the descriptions of their opponents. Research on the Valentinian writings of the Nag Hammadi Library has changed the situation remarkably. For the first time the voice of the Valentinian communities could be heard directly through their writings and documents. Dunderberg maintains that the Valentinian texts of the Nag Hammadi Library clearly show that the Valentinian teachers were not solely “mythmakers” as they are portrayed in the patristic sources, but they have something else to offer to their followers.

The division between the aforesaid “primary sources” and “secondary sources” is problematic. It is true that the Valentinian writings in the Nag Hammadi Library are primary sources, which means that they authentically describe their own belief systems and offer an inside view to the religious events. They are not, however, automatically primary sources for the religious events that were described in the patristic sources. We cannot know for sure, whether Valentinus or his followers, whose teachings are described

---

51 In this study, the primary source means a written document or its copy, which was created during the time under investigation by the representatives of a certain belief system. They offer an inside view of a particular event. The secondary sources interpret and analyze these primary sources. The secondary sources may be later descriptions or quotations, which are made by outsiders. They are one or more steps removed from the event that is under investigation.

52 Dunderberg, Beyond Gnosticism, 10.

53 For the problem of defining the category of the Valentinian source material see Michel R. Desjardins, Sin in Valentinianism (SBL Dissertation Series 108; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990), 3-12. We are confronted with Menon’s classical paradox when we try to select Valentinian writings from among the Nag Hammadi texts. Plato writes: “If you don’t know what arete is already, you can’t even look at it, because if you don’t know what it is already, then even if you look, you won’t know when you’ve found it” (Meno 80d). We have already chosen our definition in some form or another when we choose the writings which we suspect represent Valentinian teaching. This dilemma was noticed by Desjardins, who writes: “...the decision to call a work ‘Valentinian’ rests exclusively on finding similarities between its content and the patristic descriptions of that group (cf. Desjardins, Sin in Valentinianism, 5).
in the second-century patristic sources, ever held opinions about the fourth-century Nag Hammadi texts such as the Gospel of Truth or the Gospel of Philip that are commonly regarded as Valentinian.

It is evident that the patristic sources are hostile sources, and they do not describe the Valentinian teachings objectively. Irenaeus’s rhetorical strategy was to erect a social boundary against the Valentinians and make the Valentinian tradition look like a deviation from the true apostolic church.\(^5^4\) It was not only a strategy to create a “heretical church” but to create “the great church” as well. However, the correction of second-century patristic sources on the grounds of fourth-century documents is problematic. Firstly, the writings of the Nag Hammadi Library are classified as “Valentinian” in so far as one accepts the characteristics attested in the “secondary sources.” Secondly, the characteristics that distinguish the Valentinian writings of the Nag Hammadi Library from the patristic information may reflect more the social context in which they are written than the belief-systems of the second-century Valentinian teachers described by the patristic authors.

In this study, I will define the category of Valentinian writings on the grounds of critical evaluation of the information attested in the patristic sources. Although they are hostile secondary sources, we can correct the rhetorical bias through a strict reading of the text. The rhetorical slander can be detected rather easily and in some cases we have independent descriptions of the same Valentinian teaching which give some criteria for an evaluation of the reliability of the sources in question. There are also some accounts in the patristic sources that can be equated with the primary sources. Epiphanius quotes in Panarion the Valentinian Letter of Ptolemy to Flora in its entirety and the Valentinian Letter of Instruction. Although the quotations of Valentinus are only short fragments, we do not have any reason to suspect their authenticity. In this study, I will also argue that section C in the Excerpta ex Theodoto by Clement of Alexandria is comparable to the primary source text (cf. below). According to the patristic data the main criteria for a text to be classified as “Valentinian” are as follows:

i) The protological system, which includes the genealogy of the intellectual aeons or other intellectual beings from the transcendent One

ii) The fall and salvation of Sophia

iii) The notion of the Demiurge as a lower creator God, who was used as an instrument in the creation of the visible cosmos

iv) The spiritual seed of Sophia as the highest part of the human soul

v) The tripartite division of humankind into hylic, psychic and pneumatic categories

\(^5^4\) Dunderberg, Beyond Gnosticism, 8-9.
The Valentinian source need not contain all these basic premises of the Valentinian belief system. In some cases, we have a fragmentary piece of information, which contains only some allusions to the Valentinian premises. Also, the evolution of the Valentinian school tradition should be taken into account: the fragments of Valentinus do not contain the myth of Sophia and some later documents, such as the Tripartite Tractate, began to merge with the sacramental system of nascent orthodoxy. The text must, however, be compatible with all these basic Valentinian premises. In some cases, the definition is not clear, and the text in question may be a possible candidate as a Valentinian text, or it may contain some influences from the Valentinian belief system without being a Valentinian text as such. The Valentinian influences do not yet make the text “Valentinian” any more than Jewish influences make the text “Jewish.”

The Valentinian sources can be divided into two groups: the quotations of Valentinus or his followers, and the summaries of the Valentinian teaching collected from various sources. Seven fragments of Valentinus belong to the first category. They are attested in the works of Clement of Alexandria (Strom. II 36:2-4, 114:3-6, III 59:3, IV 89:1-3, 89:6-90:1, VI 52:3-53:1) and Hippolytus of Rome (Hipp. Haer. VI 37:7). Ptolemy’s the Letter to Flora is quoted in its entirety in Epiphanius’ Panarion as well as the Valentinian Letter of Instruction (“Lehrbrief”). Clement of Alexandria’s book VIII of the Stromateis contains the “fragments of Theodotus” and teachings of some other unknown Valentinians. Origen quotes the teachings of Heracleon in his commentary on John’s gospel. In the second category of sources we have descriptions of the Valentinian system in Irenaeus’s Adversus Haereses 1.1-8

55 The Authentikos Logos is a good example of the ancient text which contains many themes that recall Valentinian language and words such as “fullness,” “bridegroom” and “bridal chamber.” Some scholars include the text in the category of Valentinian texts but some others do not find evidence for that. The Authentikos Logos can be read in the light of Valentinian myth, but Valentinian myth does not motivate the main message of the text in a way which would make it Valentinian. See Ulla Tervahauta, A Story of the Soul’s Journey in the Nag Hammadi Library. A Study of the Authenticos Logos (NHC VI,3). Academic Dissertation. (University of Helsinki, 2013), 101-108. Also, the Teaching of Silvanus contains striking similarities with Valentinian theology and it may have been composed by an author who was familiar with Valentinianism. For the discussion concerning the Teaching of Silvanus cf. chapter 1.3.

56 Marksches enumerates 11 fragments of Valentinus. In addition, to the fragments mentioned above, he mentions fragments in Hipp. Ref. VI 42.2, X 13.4 and fragments in Ps. –Anthimus/Photius. I investigate only those fragments whose authenticity is indisputable. For the study of Valentinus’s fragments see Christoph Marksches, Valentinus Gnosticus? Untersuchungen zur valentinianischen Gnosis mit einem Kommentar zu den Fragmenten Valentins (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1992).

57 According to Casey, the following sections goes back to Theodotus: Exc. Theod. 1.1-2; 2-3; 17,1-21; 24,1; 25-26; 28-30,1; 31-33,1; 3-4; 33-36,1; 37-41 66-86. See Robert Casey (ed.), The Excerpta ex Theodoto of Clement of Alexandria (London: Christophers, 1935), 5.
and 11-20, Clement’s *Excerpta ex Theodoto* chapters 6-7 and 43.2-65 (so-called “section C”), Hippolytus’s *Refutatio Omnium Haereses* VI 29-36 and 41-42, Tertullian’s *Adversus Valentinianos* and Epiphanius’ *Panarion*. Tertullian also comments on Valentinian teachings in *De Anima* and *De Resurrectione*. In addition Adamantius’ *Dialogue on the True Faith in God*, which is part of Methodius’ work *On Free Will*, is possibly an authentic source of Valentinian teaching, which goes back to Valentinus himself.58 There is also a fragment of Marcellus of Ancyra “On the Holy Church,” which mentions Valentinus’s writing called “On the Three Natures.” We are unable to confirm that Valentinus wrote a book with that name. Marcellus may have thought that the Valentinian *Tripartite Tractate* was written by Valentinus himself and it is also possible that this particular Valentinian document was named “On the Three Natures.” However, Marcellus’ statement concerning Valentinus’s invention of the three persons of the Godhead may be authentic: “Valentinus the heresiarch...was the first to invent three hypostases and three persons of Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and he is discovered to have filched this from Hermes and Plato”59

According to the scholarly consensus, the following texts of the Nag Hammadi Library can be classified as Valentinian60 or they may contain apparent Valentinian influences: *The Prayer of Apostle Paul* (NHC I,1), *The Gospel of Truth* (NHC I,3), *The Tripartite Tractate* (NHC I,5), *The Treatise on the Resurrection* (NHC I,4), *The Gospel of Philip* (NHC II,3), *The First Apocalypse of James* (NHC V, 3), *The Interpretation of Knowledge* (NHC XI,1), and *A Valentinian Exposition* (NHC XI, 2). Michel Desjardins adds *The Second Apocalypse of James* (NHC V,4) and *The Letter of Peter to Philip* (VIII, 2) to this list. Some scholars regard *The Exegesis on the Soul* (NHC II,6), the *Revelation of Paul* and *Authentikos Logos* (NHC VI,3) as possible candidates for Valentinian text.61

58 Dunderberg, *Beyond Gnosticism*, 67-72. Adamantius’ *The Dialogue on the True Faith* is part of Methodius’ work *On Free Will* 2-3. Dunderberg maintains that this account has been notoriously overlooked in previous scholarship.


60 For the catalog of Valentinian Nag Hammadi writing see Dunderberg, *Beyond Gnosticism*, 10; Desjardins, *Sin in Valentinianism*, 6-7.

In this study, the teachings in the Valentinian writings are compared with the writings of Philo of Alexandria. It is commonly noted that Philo worked within an exegetical tradition. Although Philo was an innovative interpreter, his writings also offer a view of the traditions of allegorical exegesis among the Jewish exegetes of Alexandria during the first century CE. The corpus of Philo’s writings has been preserved to this day in various Greek manuscripts, sixth century Armenian translations, and some texts are extant only in Latin. The decisive point in the preservation and use of Philo’s writings was in 233 C.E. when Origen took the copies of the whole Philonic corpus with him and deposited them in the library of the Episcopal school of Caesarea. Eusebius provided a list of Philo’s works in Hist. Eccl. 2.18.1-9 and he mentions many works which have been lost. We can also assume that some work is missing when there is a significant lacuna in a series of Philo’s allegorical commentaries. It is therefore supposed that only two-thirds of Philo’s works have been preserved to this day.

Philo’s works are divided into three categories: the exegetical treatises, the philosophical treatises and the apologetic treatises. In this study the

---

62 C. H. Roberts argues that Origen took the whole library of Philo’s writings from Egypt to Palestine, and there seems to be a break between Origen’s departure from Alexandria and the arrival of Philo’s writings back to their Alexandrian hinterland after a decade. This view is supported by the papyrus codex found in Lower Egypt in 1889 (dated to the beginning of the 4th century) which, according to Cohn-Wendland, represents the Cesarean textual tradition in Alexandria. After Origen, the next Christian author in Alexandria, who used Philo extensively and explicitly mentioned his name, was Didymus the Blind, the leader of the Catechetical School of Alexandria during the late 4th century. Cf. C. H. Roberts, Buried Books in Antiquity, Arundell Esdaile Memorial Lecture 1962 (London: 1963), 11-15. According to Runia, the papyrus codex mentioned by Cohn-Wendland is a witness to the fact that Origen did not take all the copies of Philo with him to Palestine, but some writings of Philo were circulating during the late 3rd and early 4th century in Egypt. Runia locates Ps. Justin’s Cohortatio ad Graecos at 3rd–4th century Alexandria, which supports his theory that the writings of Philo had continuing presence in Alexandria, even though Origen took his private copies of them to Egypt. Cf. Runia, Philo in Early Christianity, 184-189.

63 For the overview of Philo’s writings cf. Sterling, “Philo,” 1065 and the chart in 1066-1067. The writings of Philo are preserved in the medieval and Byzantine manuscripts that are brought together in the critical edition of Philo’s works in Cohn, L. – Wendland, P. (and Reiter S. for vol. 6), Philonis Alexandrini opera quae supersunt, six vols. Berlin 1896-1915. The main medieval editions of Philo are Editio Princeps Turnebus (1552) in Greek and two Latin manuscripts Editio Princeps Iustianianus 1520 and Sichardus 1527. Some of his texts are known only in 6th-century Armenian translations (QG 1-4, QE 1-2, De Prov. 1-2, De Anim., two fragments of De Deo and arithmological fragments). Some Greek quotations have been preserved by Eusebius (De Prov. 2, Hypoth.). In addition, there are some other references and quotations in the exegetical Catenae of patristic writings and Greek anthologies (e.g. the Sacra Parallela of John Damascenus). Some books that are mentioned in the writings of Philo or by Eusebius are still missing in our present collection of Philo’s works (e.g. On Numbers, On Covencants, On Rewards, the Lives of Isaac and Jacob). For the textual transmission of Philo’s works during Byzantine and Medieval times see Runia, Philo in Early Christian Literature, 16-31.
comparison with the Valentinian writings is mainly based upon Philo’s exegetical writings, which can be divided into i) allegorical commentaries (21 treatises), ii) exposition of the Law (12 treatises) and iii) questions and answers on Genesis and Exodus (6 treatises). Most of the parallels with the Valentinian sources are found in the allegorical commentaries, which proceed sequentially through the text of Gen. 2:1-41:24. In the allegorical commentaries Philo introduces philosophical topics into the discussion of biblical texts, although he seems to be confident that he does not have to read Plato into Moses, but out of Moses, as Sterling has pointed out.64

On the grounds of a precursory reading of the Valentinian sources the closest exegetical parallels with Philo of Alexandria are found in Clement’s Excerpta ex Theodoto in the section 43.2-65, which forms an individual block in Clement’s account. This section has many parallel themes and interpretations with Irenaeus’s “great account” in Iren. Haer. 1.1-7.65 Exc. Theod. 6-7 also contains a protological commentary on the prologue of the Gospel of John, which has a close parallel in Iren. Haer. 1.8.5. This primitive protological account served as the basis for the Valentinian model system described in Iren. Haer. 1.1.1-3. The starting point for the comparison with Philo’s writings in this study is the allegorical interpretations of Genesis in Exc. Theod. 43.2-65. I will expand, however, my investigation to other Valentinian sources and to those Valentinian writings in the Nag Hammadi Library which are valuable for comparison purposes. In addition to Valentinus’s fragments, the Tripartite Tractate is an important document, because it is the only extant Valentinian primary source that presents the

64 Sterling, “Philo,” 1070-1072. Eusebius mentions that Philo himself gave the title Allegory of the Sacred Laws to the distinct group of texts (Hist. Eccl. 2.18.1)

Valentinian belief system and protological myth in its entirety. In addition, the Valentinian blocks in the Gospel of Philip provide interesting elements in comparison with Philo’s works especially concerning the basis for the allegorical method.

2.1 The Valentinian source in Exc. Theod. 43.2-65

The basis for the comparison with Philo in this study is “section C” (chapters 43.2-65) in the Excerpts from Theodotus by Clement of Alexandria, which is a part of the unfinished book VIII of the Stromateis. The closest exegetical parallels with Philo can be detected in this Valentinian source. The tentative list of the parallels are as follows:

- the association of biblical Wisdom with pre-cosmic matter
- the creation of light in Gen. 1:3 as an essence of the lights of the heavenly bodies
- the creation of Adam in Gen. 2:7 as a description of the earthly mind
- the use of “metaphysics of prepositions” in the description of the descendants of Adam
- the allegories of Cain, Abel and Seth and the division of humankind
- the allegory of Israel as a spiritual human being who sees God

There are apparent similarities between Clement’s Exc. Theod. 43.2-65 and Irenaeus’s Valentinian account in Adversus Haereses 1.1-7. It is commonly assumed that both accounts represent the so-called Italian school tradition of Valentinianism. Although there are evident similarities between Clement’s and Irenaeus’s accounts, there are also some remarkable differences, which are not commonly noticed. I will next present a thorough source critical investigation of these texts, which forms the basis for the comparison with Philo’s writings.

2.1.1 General remarks

The unfinished book VIII of Clement’s Stromateis contains two collections of fragmentary excerpts. The title of the first fragmentary section is ΕΚ ΤΩΝ ΘΕΟΔΟΤΟΥ ΚΑΙ ΤΗΣ ΑΝΑΤΟΛΙΚΗΣ ΚΑΛΟΥΜΕΝΗΣ ΚΑΘΟΜΕΝΗΣ ΔΙΔΑΣΚΑΛΙΑΣ ΚΑΤΑ ΤΟΥΣ ΟΥΑΛΕΝΤΙΝΟΥ ΧΡΟΝΟΥΣ ΕΠΙΤΟΜΑΙ (“Excerpts from the works of Theodotus and the so-called oriental teachings, contemporary with

---

Valentinus”). The title of the book indicates that Clement is presenting Valentinian teachings that came from the east, i.e. from Syria or Palestine. If the chronological information attested in the title is correct, it would mean that the teachings presented in the book belong to an early eastern phase of the Valentinian tradition during the lifetime of Valentinus (up until ca. 150-160 CE). Even though the chronology of Clement’s writings has been a subject of controversy, the consensus is that parts VI-VII of the *Stromateis* together with the unfinished book VIII were written after his departure from Alexandria at the beginning of the 3rd century, possibly in Jerusalem.

Clement’s excerpts contain a loose collection of teachings that are picked up from various sources. Despite the apparent literal discontinuity of the book, there is, however, a block of Valentinian teaching that forms a distinct unit compared with the other parts of the text. The reader can quite easily observe that the so-called section C in *Exc. Theod.* 43.2-65 stands out from the other parts of Clement’s work regarding literary style and content. The main differences compared to the other parts of Clement’s account are:

---

67 Book VIII of the *Stromateis* (the name of the book comes from the full title at the end of the books I, III, V and VI κατά τὴν ἀληθῆ φιλοσοφίαν γνωστικῶν ὑπομνηάτων Στρωματεύς) consists of an unfinished beginning, which investigates logical analysis based on Plato and Aristotle. The beginning of the book is followed by two sections. The title of the first is “Excerpts from Theodotus…” and the second is named *Eclogae propheticae*, which presents Clement as a biblical commentator, who sees a prophetic trend running through the Scriptures. There has been some doubt concerning the authenticity of book VIII because it lacks a title and the name of the author (ΚΛΗΜΕΝΤΟΣ ΣΤΡΩΜΑΤΕΩΝ). Also, the Byzantine patriarch Photios has seen the manuscript of the *Stromateis* in which the book VIII was missing. Christoph Markschies has proposed that whether Clement was truly the author of the present text should be examined once again. See Christoph Markschies “Valentinian Gnosticism: Toward Anatomy of the School,” in *The Nag Hammadi Library After Fifty Years* (ed. J. Turner & Anne McGuire; Leiden: Brill, 1997), 401-438. It is noteworthy that the name of the author does not appear in book VI or VII which evidently bear all the marks of Clement as their author. The consensus is, however, that the author of book VIII is Clement, although the material used in the fragmentary section comes from various sources. It is also possible that some part of the fragments have been included in the unfinished book later by the some redactor of Clement’s writings. See John Ferguson, *Clement of Alexandria* (New York: Twayne Publisher, 1974), 154-161; Ibid, *Clement of Alexandria Stromateis: Books One to Three* (Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1991), 3-16.


69 For the sources of Clement’s excerpts see Casey, *The Excerpta ex Theodoto*, 5-16.
1. The group names “hylics” (ὦλικοί), “psychics” (ψυχικοί) and “pneumatics” (πνευματικοί) are only used in section 43.2-65, whereas the group designation “the called” (ἡ κλῆσις), “the elect” (ἡ ἐκλογή), “dispersed seed” (τὸ διαφέρον σπέρμα) and the speculation concerning the “name” (τὸ ὄνομα), are used only in other part of the excerpts.

2. The incoherent and fragmentary structure of Excerpta ex Theodoto changes in 43.2-65 to a coherent narrative proceeding logically from protology and cosmology to the anthropological, soteriological and eschatological dimensions of Valentinian myth.

3. Section 43.2-65 does not contain any of Clement’s critical comments or citation formulas such as “Theodotus says” (ὡς φησιν ὁ θεόδοτος), “he says” (φησί), “they say” (φασί), “according to the Valentinians” (κατὰ τοὺς Οὐαλεντινιανούς), “the Valentinians say” (οἱ Οὐαλεντινιανοὶ λέγουσιν), “followers of Valentinus say” (οἱ ἀπὸ Οὐαλεντίνου λέγουσιν), which frequently appear in other parts of the text before and after this section.

It is also noticeable that the section 43.2-65 interrupts the discussion concerning the incarnation of the dispersed seed in 41.1-4 that is continued in 66 by an allegorical interpretation of the words of Jesus in the Gospel of Egyptians concerning the birth of the previously reckoned seed. The reader could thus easily jump straight from chapter 41 to 66 without perusing the section 43.2-65, which interrupts not only the thematic coherence of the excerpts but also the literal “disunity” of the text. If section 43.2-65 is left out from Clement’s book, it makes more sense to see it as a private “notebook,” where Clement discusses and comments on the teachings of Theodotus and other Valentinian groups and presents his own teachings.70

70 Notebooks were common phenomena in Antiquity. Plutarch and Galen composed memorandum (τὰ ὑπομνήματα) and Pliny the Younger described how his uncle Pliny the Elder made notes and excerpts from books that were read aloud to him. The purpose of a notebook could be different. Private notebooks were made by authors before composing the final version of the book. Notes may serve as memory aids for lectures or rituals or magical practices. On some occasions, a notebook may contain a description (ἀπὸ φωνῆς), which means that the notes were made according to auditory teaching. There were also “well-edited” notebooks which were used for pedagogical instruction or philosophical contemplation. Clement’s Stromateis can be regarded as a “well-edited” notebook, which collects material from various sources. The term τὰ ὑπομνήματα (“memorials”) appears in the full title of the books in the Stromateis: κατὰ τὴν ἀληθῆ φιλοσοφίαν γνωστικῶν ὑπομνήματων Στρωματεύς. Cf. Annewies van den Hoek, “Techniques of Quotation in Clement of Alexandria. A View of Ancient Literary Working Methods,” in VC 50 (1996), 238, note 18. The Gospel of Philip in the Nag Hammadi Library can also be defined as a notebook which may have been used in ritual practices. See Martha Turner, The Gospel of
It seems that section 43.2-65 forms an independent Valentinian block in the middle of Clement’s notes. It is also highly plausible to suggest that the section in Exc. Theod 43.2-65 is not Clement’s own description of the Valentinian system, but represents an extant copy of the primary source text itself. I assume that Clement’s book existed originally without section 43.2-65, which was later included in the unfinished book VIII of the Stromateis. Whether it was Clement who may have later included this independent block in its present stage or some later redactor of Clement’s unfinished book VIII, we do not know for sure. In my opinion, the latter option is more probable because it is hard to find any reason for the inclusion of section 43.2-65 by Clement himself. I will refer in this study to this particular section of Clement’s Excerpta ex Theodoto as Exc. C.

2.1.2 The relation between Exc. C and Iren. Haer. 1.1-7
Irenaeus’s great account in Iren. Haer. 1.1-7 has been put together from various Valentinian sources.71 He says at the beginning of his work that he “came across the commentaries of, as they claim, the disciples of Valentinus.” Irenaeus calls these people “the disciples of Ptolemy, an offshoot of the Valentinian School.”72 Irenaeus may have also used earlier heresiological works, especially Justin’s Syntagma, which is now lost.73 The parallels between Iren. Haer. 1.1-7 and Exc. C vary from the exact word-to-word similarities to more general parallel ideas concerning Valentinian myth. It is noticeable that Irenaeus’s account follows the same thematic and chronological logical sequence as Exc. C.

The Valentinian account in Exc. C begins in interrupted fashion by describing the generation of the Savior as an “angel of the Pleroma” and his descent to suffering Sophia.74 It is reasonable to suggest, however, that Exc. C originally contained some protological narrative, although we cannot say for sure whether it was similar to the one presented by Irenaeus in Iren. Haer. 1.1.1-3.75 However, we do not have decisive evidence to suggest that the
protological account in Exc. C would have been remarkably different from the one attested in Irenaeus’s account. Although the accounts in Exc. C and Irenaeus contain many parallel themes and interpretations, there are also some crucial differences. These discrepancies can be listed as follows:

i) Sophia is not called “Achamoth” in Exc. C as it is in Irenaeus’s account (Iren. Haer. 1.4.1). Both versions seem to represent, however, a system with “two Sophias.”

ii) Exc. C does not mention the psychic essence as an outcome of Sophia’s conversion. Although Exc. C mentions the psychic essence (e.g. in Exc. Theod. 47.3), there is no explanation of its pre-cosmic origin as there is in Irenaeus (Iren. Haer. 1.4.1).

iii) In Exc. C the Demiurge was created by Sophia as an image of the Father of All (Exc. Theod. 47.2-3), but Irenaeus maintains that the Demiurge was an image of the Only-Begotten Son (Iren. Haer. 1.5.1).

iv) In Irenaeus’s account, the seeds of Sophia are created as images of the angels of the Savior (Iren. Haer. 1.4.5). In Exc. C the angels are mediators of the seeds, but not their archetypes (Exc. Theod. 53.3).

Ogdoad before entering with Sophia and accompanying angels into the Pleroma. This indicates that the author of Exc. C was familiar with the same kind of protological terminology as is attested in Iren. Haer. 1.1-3.

76 It is commonly noticed that there are two versions of the Sophia myth in Irenaeus’s book, which are called version A (Iren. Haer. 1.2.2) and version B (Iren. Haer. 1.2.3). Version B is also described by Hippolytus (Hipp. Ref. 30.6-9). The main difference between these versions concerns the reason for Sophia’s pernicious action. In version A Sophia wanted to comprehend the greatness of the Father, whereas in version B Sophia tried to imitate the Father by creating something of her own. The difference between these versions is also related to another question, whether the Father of All produces the aeons together with his female consort, or whether he is solitary and produces Pleroma by himself. Also, the outcome of Sophia’s action is different: in version A, it is the personified “intention” of Sophia who was expelled from Pleroma and transformed into the lower Sophia figure called Achamoth, whereas in version B it is the formless offspring of Sophia who was cast out from the divine realm. The Valentinian myths of Sophia can also be divided into two groups on the ground of the destiny of Sophia herself. There are systems which consist of one Sophia and systems with two Sophia figures. In the former systems, it is Sophia herself who is excluded from the Pleroma and who produces her Son, i.e. Christ, there. Eventually, the Son of Sophia abandons his mother and ascends to the Pleroma as an adopted Son of the aeons. This view is attested in Tri.Trac., Val.Ex., Exc. Theod. 32.3-33.2, and Iren. Haer. 1.11.1. In the latter version with two Sophias, it is the amorphous offspring of Sophia or her Intention which are expelled from the Pleroma, not Sophia herself. This means that Sophia is split into higher and lower Sophias, which is described in Iren. Haer. 1.2.2; Hipp. Ref. 30.6-9; Exc. Theod. 43.2-65. We can conclude, thus, that versions A and B described above are subcategories of the system with two Sophias. Cf. Stead, “The Valentinian Myth”, 77-78, 84-85; Thomassen, The Spiritual Seed, 248-261; Dunderberg, Beyond Gnosticism, 98-99.
v) The spiritual seed is inserted in Irenaeus’s account into Adam’s soul through the instrumentality of the Demiurge (Iren. Haer. 1.5.6), whereas in Exc. C the seed is inserted directly into Adam’s soul by Sophia (Exc. Theod. 53.2).

vi) Irenaeus’s account lacks all the proof texts taken from Gen. 1:1-3 that are mentioned in Exc. C (Exc. Theod. 47.1-48.1).

vii) Sophia is not identified with biblical Wisdom in Irenaeus’s account as it is in Exc. C (Exc. Theod. 47.1).

The most reasonable explanation for these discrepancies is that Irenaeus was dependent on the reworked version of Exc. C. It seems, however, that at least in some cases the modifications to the source material were made by Irenaeus himself. He detached some passages from their logical context. For example, the teachings concerning the incarnation and the suffering of the Savior were inserted into the polemical discussion in Iren. Haer. 1.1.6, which contains material from different sources. Also, the idea of the threefold division of humanity represented by Cain, Abel and Seth is not handled in the anthropological context, as it is in Exc. C, but at the end of the account Iren. Haer. 1.7.5. It is not credible that any Valentinian author would have reworked the source material by deleting all biblical proof texts which were related to the allegory of Gen. 1:1-3 in Exc. C. The most credible solution is that it was Irenaeus himself who omitted these biblical references to combine these teachings with material from other sources.

There are, however, some elements in Irenaeus’s account, which indicate that Exc. C was elaborated before Irenaeus got to know of it. The reworking of the source becomes evident in the comparison between Exc. Theod. 46.1-2 and Iren. Haer. 1.4.5, which describe the separation of the emotions of Sophia and the creation of pre-cosmic matter by the Savior. The parallel terms in these accounts are in bold, and the thesis concerning the origin of the psychic essence that is missing in Exc. C is marked in grey.

77 Einar Thomassen has pointed out that the apparent differences between these documents indicate that they are more likely to be based on two independent re-workings of the same Valentinian source, rather than a common source. See Thomassen, The Spiritual Seed, 62, 258. I agree with Thomassen, but I consider Clement’s account in Exc. Theod. 43.2-65 to be an exact copy of the source text which was reworked by the disciples of Ptolemy.

78 If we assume that Exc. Theod. 43.2-65 was actually Clement’s own description of the Valentinian system, it would be unlikely that Clement would have been dependent on Irenaeus’s account. It is not reasonable to suggest that Clement would have borrowed the description of the Valentinian myth from Irenaeus’s account and invented all the scriptural proof texts, which are lacking in Irenaeus’s account.
Although there are some minor terminological differences between these passages, the main teaching is the same: the Savior healed the emotions of Sophia by transforming them into unstructured matter. The common terms and the structure of the passage are close enough to argue that Irenaeus’s sources were dependent on the teaching attested in Exc. C. Irenaeus’s account contains, however, the theory concerning the origin of the psychic essence that is based on Sophia’s will to turn back (ἐπιστροφῆς ἐμπαθῆ), which is lacking in Exc. C. It is not credible that Irenaeus would have invented the theory of the origin of the psychic essence, which he integrated into the text as part of the description of the Valentinian source. It is noticeable that the theory of the origin of the psychic essences is also attested in Iren. Haer. 1.4.1 and 1.5.1. The “two essences” and the separation of the psychic essence of the hylic matter is also mentioned in Exc. C (cf. Exc. Theod. 47.1-3). However, the psychic essence is not associated with Sophia’s will to turn back but is simply presupposed as a luminous essence out of which the essences of the angels and the heavenly lights were made. The most probable explanation is that the theory of the origin of psychic essence was already in the source material, which was used by Irenaeus in Iren. Haer. 1.4.5.

2.2 Conclusions

The analysis of Exc. Theod. 43.2-65 (= Exc. C) suggests that it forms a distinct unit in Clement’s Excerpta ex Theodoto. This block of Valentinian teaching does not contain any of Clement’s source critical markers or his comments on Valentinian teaching. We have good reason to believe that Exc. C is not Clement’s description of the Valentinian myth, but it is the exact copy of the primary source itself. I suggest that it was some later redactor of Clement’s unfinished book VIII of the Stromateis who included the text in the middle of Clement’s fragments from Theodotus. It is then, the oldest
surviving exposition of Valentinian myth and it must predate the account of Irenaeus in Iren. *Haer.* 1.1-7, because Irenaeus evidently knew a somewhat elaborated version of it, which was made by the disciples of Ptolemy in Rome.

Although the title of the *Excerpta ex Theodoto* refers to the eastern origin of the source material, it is likely that *Exc. C* goes back to the Valentinian traditions of Alexandria. The other material in Clement’s excerpts may go back to the eastern traditions which Clement got to know during his stay in Palestine or Syria where he may have met Theodotus and some other Valentinian teachers. We do not have enough information to confirm the author of *Exc. C*. The fact that the disciples of Ptolemy preserved and elaborated teachings attested in *Exc. C* indicates that the best candidate would be Ptolemy himself. Although Hippolytus locates Ptolemy in Rome, it is possible that he came to Rome from Alexandria where he got to know Philo’s allegorical teachings.

In the following chapter, I will show that there are also some other remarkable parallels with Philo which go back to Ptolemy. Ptolemy’s *Letter to Flora* contains teachings concerning the division of Mosaic Law and allegorical interpretations of the cultic commandments that are parallel with Philo. Iren. *Haer.* 1.8.5 (par. *Exc. Theod.* 6-7) includes Ptolemys’ protological commentary on the prologue of the Gospel of John, which contains many themes and hermeneutical patterns, which are attested in Philo’s protological accounts. We can conclude, thus, that the Valentinian texts that contain the closest parallels with Philo go back in one way or another to Ptolemy or his disciples. I suggest that particularly these Valentinian teachers were interested in the allegorical interpretations of Genesis and Neo-Pythagorean transcendental monism, which go back to the traditions of the Hellenistic Judaism of Alexandria and the exegetical traditions attested in the writings of Philo of Alexandria.
3 THE FOUNDATIONS OF ALLEGORICAL INTERPRETATION IN PHILO AND AMONG THE VALENTINIANs

In this chapter, I will locate the formation of the school of Valentinus in its religious-historical context in the aftermath of the Jewish revolt in 115-117 CE in Alexandria. According to patristic information, Valentinus was influential in Alexandria in mid-second-century Alexandria where he founded a school of his own. Irenaeus reports that Valentinus adopted the principles of his teaching from the so-called Gnostic school of thought (γνωστική ἀἵρησις). He complained that the Gnostics (γνωστικοί) “sprung up out of the ground like mushrooms” and their teachings deviated from from the rule of faith of the apostolic church. I will show in the following chapters that the Valentinian teachers reformed and refined the preceding Gnostic traditions in the light of Hellenistic Jewish allegories attested in the works of Philo. The Valentinian allegorical interpretation differed from the Gnostic mythopoiesis in that it was based more closely on biblical texts, which were given a philosophically articulated meaning. The Gnostic myth was instead “constructed with an attitude of absolute sovereignty over the biblical text, to the point of explicitly refuting it.” Philo and the Valentinian teachers were also proponents of multiple exegesis, which means that the text in question may have different levels of interpretation depending on the audience. In an initial stage, the communities of Valentinian teachers can be equated with the schools of popular philosophers, although later the Valentinian tradition became more like a church-movement.

3.1 The Jewish revolt in Egypt and its implications for the Jewish and Christian traditions of Alexandria

The political, social, and economic structure of first-century Egypt differed from all other regions of the Greco-Roman world. While Alexandria, the major city, was the leading cultural center and the second-largest city of the Roman Empire, the rest of the country was mostly rural. The contrast between Alexandria and the Egyptian hinterland was sharpened by differences in language and education. The Greek-speaking population, including the Jewish politeuma, was centered in Alexandria, but the native population of the rural areas spoke several Egyptian dialects and was mostly

79 Iren. Haer. 1.11.1
80 Iren. Haer. 1.10.1-3; 1.29.1.
81 Pearson, “Philo and Gnosticism,” 338.
illiterate.82 First-century Alexandria provided an urban setting for the revival of Neo-Pythagoreanism and the formation of various Middle Platonic traditions. The writings of Philo indicate that these philosophical traditions shaped the intellectual milieu of Alexandrian Judaism and the mindset of Philo himself. However, Philo’s Against Flaccus and The Legation to Gaius inform us also about long-standing tensions among the Jewish and Greek population of Alexandria and the harsh anti-semitic attitudes of Roman authorities in the first decades of the Common Era.83 It is notable that although Philo could interpret the Mosaic Law and the worship in the Temple of Jerusalem allegorically as denoting the spiritual ascent of the soul, he did not reject the idea of a political Israel as the best commonwealth for all humankind.84 Philo taught the ultimate redemption of the Jewish people and the restoration of all humankind, although it was not based on the military might of the Messiah but on three supreme virtues of God’s holy ones, namely dignity, serenity, and benevolence.85 Although these elements of the Jewish faith were seen as suspicious, they caused admiration and curiosity as well. It is likely that some of Philo’s texts were directed to the non-Jews who were interested in the Jewish way of life and who had taken “a journey to a better home, from idle fables to the clear vision of truth.”86

It is commonly suggested that the traditions of early Christianity were brought to Egypt by the Jewish missionaries from Jerusalem when persecution caused the dispersion of the Greek-speaking Jews. It is stated in Acts 11 that some of them travelled to Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch spreading the gospel among the Jews and Greek-speaking Gentiles. In Alexandria these early Christian communities were not organized as a distinct community, but were assimilated with the Jewish politeuma of Alexandria up until the Jewish revolt in 115 CE.87 The Apollos episode in Acts

83 For the historical background of the pogroms against Jews in Alexandria cf. Pieter Willem van der Horst, Philo’s Flaccus: The First Pogrom (Translation and commentary by Pieter Willem van der Horst; Philo of Alexandria Commentary Series, V. 2; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2005), 18-37.
84 Wolfson, Philo II, 374-395.
85 Praem. 163-172. Cf. Winston, Logos, 55-58. Pearson suggests that although Philo’s works contain end-time exceptions (Virt. 75; Mos. 2.44, Opif. 79-81), he was clearly a proponent of “realized eschatology.” Cf. Pearson, Gnosticism and Christianity, 82-87.
presents some evidence that the earliest Christianity in Alexandria was not perfectly compatible with the Pauline mission. Apollos, who was educated in his hometown in Alexandria, only knew initially about the way of the Lord and the baptism of John, being taught the way of the Lord more fully in Ephesus by the Pauline missionaries.\textsuperscript{88} Although the historical reliability of this information is not certain, it seems that the author of the Acts was aware that the Pauline mission in Syria and Asia Minor was not perfectly compatible with the earlier Christian traditions in Alexandria. Eusebius reports that the ascetic community of the Therapeutae mentioned by Philo consisted of proto-orthodox Christian monks converted by Apostle Mark. Although this information is evidently not authentic, it may contain some information about the earliest Christian communities in Alexandria, who lived a contemplative life in a similar way as the Jewish philosophers mentioned by Philo in \textit{De Vita Contemplativa}.\textsuperscript{89} In the beginning of the second century, the teachings of Paul were combined in Alexandria with Platonizing Judaism and Middle Platonic metaphysics in a way which paved way for the predominantly Gnostic Christianity.

The destruction of the Temple of Jerusalem during the first Jewish war (66-73 CE) sharpened the anti-Roman attitudes among the Jews in the Diaspora which is documented in many apocalyptic and prophetic texts during that time. The Jews updated the Sibyline Oracles to serve anti-Roman propaganda in the Diaspora. The Fifth Sibylline book (lines 414-27) refers in its Danielic oracle to the blessed man from the skies who will burn up the cities of the enemy and rebuild the Temple.\textsuperscript{90} Thus, the first Jewish war formed the religious and political background for the Jewish rebellion in Egypt in 115-117 CE, which had a remarkable effect on the social and religious milieu of Alexandria. Eusebius informs that at first the turbulence was separatist strife (\textit{stasis}) between Jews and Greek neighbours, but in the next year \textit{stasis} escalated into war (\textit{polemos}).\textsuperscript{91} The focus in this study is not so

\textsuperscript{88} C. W. Griggs, \textit{Early Egyptian Christianity: From its Origins to 451 CE} (Leiden: Brill, 1990), 16-17. The Codex Bezae (D) adds to the manuscript the words “he has been instructed in his hometown” (κατηχημένος ἐν τῇ πατρίδι).


\textsuperscript{91} The events of the Jewish revolt in Egypt are documented in the various sources. The most extensive report is attested by the church historian Eusebius of Caesarea (\textit{Ecc. Hist.} 4:2.1-2), but also, Dio Cassius (\textit{Roman History}, Epitome of Book 68:32.1-2) and Appian of Alexandria (\textit{Civil Wars} 2:90.380 and Frg. 19) preserved some descriptions of the revolt. For descriptions of the revolt cf. Josef
much on the background of the revolt in Egypt but its implications to the religious and social conditions of Alexandria. During the revolt, the Jewish community of Alexandria was practically destroyed, and it was only towards the end of the 3rd century when the Jewish community began to recover.\(^9^2\) The devastation of the city itself was also extremely great. Several papyri inform that Hadrian had to launch a rebuilding program and reconstruct Alexandria “demolished by the Jews.”\(^9^3\) Josef Modrzejevski summarizes the effects of the revolt upon the Egyptian Jewry as follows:\(^9^4\)

*Under these conditions, the Jewish community in Egypt had practically no chance of recovery. The rare survivors, stunned by the harsh verdict of imperial justice, had become totally impoverished. Deprived of their homes and their lands, they could no longer form a nucleus for a possible reconstruction. The accounts of Roman provincial administration in Egypt throw a cold light on the tragic balance sheet of the revolt. In Alexandria and all the rest of the country, the days of Hellenized Jewry had come to an end.*

After the revolt the traditions of Hellenistic Judaism continued within the Gentile Christian communities of Alexandria.\(^9^5\) The preservation and use of Philo’s writings by the second-century Christian teachers of Alexandria indicate that the relationship between the Christian communities and

---

\(^9^2\) Christopher Haas, *Alexandria in Late Antiquity. Topography and Social Conflict* (Baltimore and London: 1997), 99-109. It is possible that a small amount of Jews were able to remain in the city. Cf. Horbury, *Jewish War*, 228, 233-234.

\(^9^3\) Hadrian’s rebuilding program is attested in several papyri (P.Oxy. 7.1045; BGU 1084; SB 7239, 7561) and in the Syriac *Notitia Urbis Alexandrinarum*. There is also an inscription found in one of the bathhouses of Cyrene commemorates how the city was rebuilt after the *tumulto Iudaico*. It is possible that a quarter in Alexandria which was built after the revolt around a temple dedicated to an imperial cult (an inscription dated to 170 CE) can be located in the same place in northeast Alexandria where the Jews were supposed to live before the revolt. See Haas, *Alexandria in Late Antiquity*, 407-408, note 32; Alon Gedaliah, *The Jews in Their Land in the Talmudic Age: 70-640 C.E* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), 382-404.

\(^9^4\) Modrzejevski, *The Jews of Egypt*, 222. Many papyri inform us that the land and property owned by the Jews were confiscated according to the Roman law of *confiscatio bonarum*. See, Modrzejevski, *The Jews of Egypt*, 214-222.

Alexandrian Jewry must have been close even before the revolt. The repression of Alexandrian Jewry formed an arena for the innovative early Christian intellectuals. These first Gnostics were educated and innovative Christian Platonists, who learned the skill of theologizing and allegorizing from the Jewish Platonists of Alexandria.

It is an oversimplification, however, to suppose that the development of Early Christianity in Alexandria would have been solely Gnostic in character. The Epistle of Barnabas, which can be located in second century Alexandria, continued the Jewish apocalyptic tendencies and reflects the existence of other Christian groups, not only Platonizing Gnostics, but ascetically-orientated Christians as well. Although the Barnabas’s letter contains harsh anti-Jewish polemic, its author had a thorough acquaintance with Hellenistic Jewish exegetical traditions. Thus, the Christianity in Alexandrian was not purely “gnostic” but there existed all the varieties of Jewish and Jewish Christian traditions and they were continued among the Gentile Christian communities of Alexandria.

It is true, however, that Gnostic Christians dominated the intellectual life in Alexandria after the revolt in 115-117 CE. The Gnostic traditions spread from Alexandria also to other regions of the Empire, which led to harsh attack from the prominent teachers of nascent orthodoxy. Irenaeus wrote his multivolume book attacking Gnostic heresies, but the main target of his criticism was the school of Valentinus. Irenaeus’s book also circulated in Alexandria, which implies that the “heresy-hunting” of the nascent orthodoxy was not restricted merely to Rome, but spread to Alexandria as well. At the end of the second century, the Catechetical School was founded in Alexandria, and Demetrius was nominated Bishop of Alexandria which

---

96 For the relation of the Jewish revolt to the origin of Gnosticism see Smith, No Longer Jews, 244-252. Smith argues that Judaism, Christianity and Platonism were all needed – in that order - for the generation of Gnosticism. Smith derived the origin of Gnosticism from Judaism. The crucial point for the birth of Gnosticism was the disappointment of the Jews after their Messianic expectations failed. In my opinion, it is not reasonable to suggest that the disappointment of the Jews would have been the “big bang” of Gnostic thought. The first Gnostics were educated Christian Platonists, who learned the skill of theology from the Hellenistic Jewish Platonists.

97 It has been assumed since Walter Bauer’s study that the earliest Christianity in Egypt was “gnostic” in character and it was formed in opposition to the nascent orthodoxy. Cf. Walter Bauer, Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity (transl. and ed. by R. A. Kraft and G. Krodel; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971), 44-60.

98 Runia, Philo in Early Christian Literature, 90-93. See also Koester, Introduction, 280-282.


100 Papyrus P.Oxy.405 (dated around about 200 CE in Egypt) contains a part of the Greek text of Irenaeus’s Adversus Haereses. C. H. Roberts considers it to be “evidence of the immediate circulation of Irenaeus’s attack on Gnosticism among the Egyptian churches and yet another witness to the close relationship subsisting between the Church of Alexandria and the West.” See C. H. Roberts, “Early Christianity in Egypt: Three Notes,” JEA 40 (1954), 94; Griggs, Early Egyptian Christianity, 33.
caused the foundation of a more centralized church organization in Egypt and the suppression of the preceding Gnostic school traditions.

3.2 The founding of the School of Valentinus

Valentinus may have been born about 100-110 CE. His birthplace is based on the “rumors” heard by Epiphanius according to which Valentinus was born in the Egyptian Delta, at Phrebonis. Valentinus received a Greek education in the metropolis of Alexandria (Epiph. Pan. 31.2:2-3), where he may also have converted to Christianity. Clement of Alexandria tells us that Valentinus was a pupil of a Christian teacher called Theudas, who had himself been the disciple of Paul (Strom. VII. 106:4). Although we the historicity of Theudas is questionable, he may have come to Alexandria from Corinth, where he became familiar with the Pauline Christianity through Apollos or perhaps Paul himself. In the Valentinian sources, the Apostle Paul represents a sort of super-sage similar to Moses in Philo’s writings: Paul is simply called “the Apostle,” or “the Apostle of Resurrection” or “Parakletos.”

Irenaeus reports that Valentinus came to Rome during the time of Bishop Hyginus, and he remained in the city until the time of Anictetus (Iren. Haer. 3.4.3). Tertullian situates Valentinus’s stay in Rome during the reign of Antonius Pius (Praescr. 30:2). This means that the activity of Valentinus in Rome falls between the years 136-160 CE, and he was already in Rome when Justin mentioned Valentinians in his list of heresies (Dial. 35:6). Epiphanius reports that Valentinus preached first in Alexandria before he came to Rome, which would mean that he founded his school in Alexandria not long after the end of the Jewish revolt (Epiph. Pan. 7:1-2). It is commonly suggested that Valentinus knew Basilides, who was another Christian philosopher in Alexandria during that time.

Valentinus acquired some gifted disciples in Rome, whose teachings are reported by the patristic authors. One of the most prominent Valentinian

---

101 Cf. e.g. Exc. Theod. 22.1, 23.3-4.
103 Justin’s reaction was not based on the authority of ecclesiastical officials but was more likely his personal opinion. During the time of Valentinus’s activity, there was not yet any centralized church organization in Rome. Einar Thomassen, “Orthodoxy and Heresy in Second-Century Rome,” in HTW 97 (2004), 241-256; Dunderberg, “The Valentinian teachers,” 168-169; Thomassen, The Spiritual Seed, 421.
104 Layton, The Gnostic Scriptures, 417-419. Basilides’ system is attested in Iren. Haer. 1.24.3-7. Fragments of Basilides’ teaching are also found in the writings of Clement of Alexandria and Origen.
105 The Valentinian school movement expanded quite rapidly to the eastern part of the Empire and to western Gaul. Tertullian mentions Axionicus as a follower of Valentinus and places him in Antioch.
teachers was Ptolemy, who represented the so-called “Italian” school of Valentinianism. (Hipp. *Haer.* 6.35.6). Irenaeus got to know the teachings of Ptolemy’s disciples in Rome, which formed the basis for Irenaeus’s description of the protological model system (Iren. *Haer.* 1. pref., 1.1.1-3). Another famous Valentinian was Heracleon but contrary to Hippolytus’s report he can more likely be located in Alexandria since Origen knew his commentary on the Gospel of John during his career in Alexandria. It is possible, however, that at some point of time Heracleon taught also in Rome.\(^{106}\) It is evident that the importance of Alexandria as the center of the Valentinian School remained strong even though the school expanded to the eastern and western part of the Roman Empire. Most fragments of Valentinus’s teachings are preserved in the writings of Clement of Alexandria. It is also possible that Valentinus went back to his home city after he left Rome.\(^{107}\)

### 3.2.1 The school of Valentinus as a Christianized Middle Platonic cult

Irenaeus mentions that Valentinus approved of the principles of “Gnostic heresy” (γνωστικὴ αἵρησις) and founded a school (διδασκαλεῖον).\(^{108}\) It is not clear whether the term “Gnostic” was ever used as a designation of a school of thought by the disciples of Valentinus themselves, or whether it was a rhetorical stigma given by the church fathers and professional philosophers (Val. 4:3; cf. also Hipp. *Haer.* 6.35.7). In the list of heresies of Ephrem Syrus (*Contra Hereses* XXII,2) the “Quqites” are chronologically placed after the Valentinians, which means that the Valentinians had reached Syria by end of the second century. Jacob the Edessa says that the “Quqites” proceeded from the Valentinians. In some Syrian sources, Valentinus is considered to be the spiritual foster father of Bardesanes (ca. 154-223 CE). The influence of Valentinus on Bardesanes is also mentioned by Eusebius (*Hist. Ecc.* 6.30:3), who says that Bardesanes began as a Valentinian but later condemned the Valentinians. There is only one existing work of Bardesanes, which contains nothing distinctly Valentinians, as Einar Thomassen has pointed out (Thomassen, *The Spiritual Seed*, 503). Although the historical reliability of these sources is uncertain, it is plausible to think that the Valentinian movement had reached the eastern part of Syria by the beginning of the 3rd century. See Han J. W. Drijvers, “Quq and the Quqites” in *East of Antioch. Studies in Early Syriac Christianity* (ed. H. Drijvers; London: Variorum Reprints, 1984), 108-111.


\(^{107}\) Dunderberg “Valentinian Teachers,” 160. Epiphanius reports that Valentinus finally left Rome, traveled to Cyprus and there went mad (Epiph. *Pan.* 31.7.2). Although this information lacks historical reliability, it is not farfetched to suggest that Valentinus left Rome at some point in his career and possibly returned to his home country.

\(^{108}\) Iren. *Haer.* 1.11.1.
to the group of Christian Platonists. The term *hairesis*, however, had a long history as a designation for a philosophical school of thought.

John Glucker has argued in his study *Antiochus and the Late Academy* that from the 2nd century BCE onwards the term αἵρησις refers to philosophical schools of thought or persuasion. The technical terms for institutionalized philosophical schools were σχολή, διατριβή or διδασκαλεῖον, whereas the term αἵρησις denotes a school of thought in a more abstract and general manner. The difference between αἵρησις and σχολή is, thus, that αἵρησις designates philosophical opinions or doctrines held by some group of people, whereas σχολή is a locally institutionalized philosophical association with an identifiable membership.109 The Neo-Platonic philosopher Elias wrote in his commentary on Aristotle’s *Categories* that αἵρησις is “the opinion of educated men, agreeing among themselves and disagreeing with others.”110

For example, the four great Hellenistic schools (Platonic, Peripatetic, Stoic, and Epicurean) represented *haireseis*, and there were many “sub-haireseis” in these schools of thought that originated from divisions of opinions.

David Runia has listed some characteristics of Greco-Roman *haireseis*. Firstly, there was in each *hairesis* a founder figure (πατὴρ τοῦ λόγου). Secondly, the *haireseis* had a body of distinctive doctrines (δόγματα) attributed to their founder. Thirdly, *haireseis* were concentrated on the creative exegesis of their founder’s writings. Fourthly, each *hairesis* had its

109 John Glucker, *Antiochus and the Late Academy* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1978), 174-192, esp. 181-182. In addition to the “classical” philosophical *haireseis*, the term *hairesis* was also related to other ancient associations as well, e.g. to the ancient medical schools. The institutionalization of the Alexandrian medical *hairesis* of Herophilus happened some two hundred and fifty years after the founding of *hairesis* and when it was then called διδασκαλεῖον. Cf. Heinrich von Staden, “Hairesis and Heresy: The Case of the *haireseis* iatrikai,” in *Jewish and Christian Self-Definition* (ed. Ben E. Myer and E. P. Sanders; Self-Definition in the Greco-Roman World; Vol. 3; London: SCM Press, 1982), 76-100. Layton has argued that the term *hairesis* “primarily denotes a member of a distinct social group or professional school of thought, not a kind of doctrine...their literary artifacts can be called Gnostic only in a secondary way, by reference to the name of the ancient group.” See Layton, “The Prolegomena to the Study of Ancient Gnosticism,” 334-350. In fact, according to Glucker’s analysis the situation is just the opposite: the term *hairesis* denotes in the first place a doctrine or doctrinal identity, not a socially identifiable group of people, and only secondarily refers to a group identity. In the context of the second-century intellectual milieu the term *hairesis* is always understood as a designation of certain opinion, without any qualification of group -identity. This means that a person might have been called a representative of Platonic *hairesis* without being a member of any Platonic school.

110 Opus cited in Glucker, *Antiochus*, 181. Glucker suggests that the definition of *hairesis* presented by Elias goes back to Proclus. Philo of Alexandria defines the practitioners of *haireseis* in a strikingly similar manner in the fragment of *Questiones in Exodum*: “Here is clear proof, namely the disagreements and discords and doctrinal difference of the practitioners of each *hairesis* who refute each other and are refuted in turn” (translated by Davia Runia in “Philo of Alexandria and the Greek *Hairesis*-model,” 126).
succession (διαδοχή) of teachers, whose authority went back to the beginning of the movement. Fifthly, the membership in each hairesis was based on loyalty or affiliation. The membership of a hairesis involved a publicly recognized commitment to a particular school of thought.\textsuperscript{111}

The Greek hairesis-model was also adopted in describing the Hellenistic Jewish traditions. Josephus described the Pharisees, the Sadducees and the Essenes as representing the three persuasions of Judaism (φιλοσοφία or αἱρέσεις). He compared the Pharisees with the Stoics and the Essenes with the Pythagoreans. The Jewish group led by Judas Galilean was not according to Josephus a hairesis in a real sense because Judas was not a philosopher but a sophist who started a hairesis of his own. Although Josephus says that he had himself joined the Pharisees, this does not necessarily mean joining the institutionalized group of Pharisees, but that he may have shared certain Pharisaic doctrines.\textsuperscript{112}

In New Testament writings, the word hairesis is used both as a neutral designation of an opinion and pejoratively as a synonym for a false belief. Luke mentions the haireseis of the Nazarenes, Sadducees and Pharisees as three belief-systems or sects within Judaism.\textsuperscript{113} In Luke’s Acts, there are also the famous words of Paul: προγιώσκοντές με ἄνωθεν, ἐὰν θέλωσιν μαρτυρεῖν, ὅτι κατὰ τὴν ἀκριβεστάτην αἵρεσιν τῆς ἡμετέρας θρησκείας ἔζησα Φαρισαῖος.\textsuperscript{114} In Paul’s letter to the Corinthians, the term hairesis is referred to as an opinion: there must be different “opinions” within the Christian congregation since the faithfulness of believers is tested by them.\textsuperscript{115} Although Paul did not restrict the meaning of the term hairesis solely to false teaching, in the Pastoral Epistles hairesis is used pejoratively as group designation of false teachers (ψευδοδιδάσκαλοι) or erroneous human beings (αἱρετικοὶ ἀνθρωποι).\textsuperscript{116}

According to Glucker’s analysis, the shift from the hairesis-model to the school model means a shift from the level of abstract opinions to an institutionalized and localized school setting. While Gnostic hairesis refers to a philosophical school of thought, a distinct Gnostic school represents a socially identifiable group of members. Clement of Alexandria reports (Strom. 4.71.1) that Heracleon, a student of Valentinus himself, comes from Valentinus’s school (τῆς Οὐαλεντίνου σχολῆς). Hippolytus mentions (Hipp. Haer. 6.42.2) those who are “from the school of Valentinus” (οἱ ἀπὸ τῆς

\textsuperscript{111} Cf. David Runia, “Philo of Alexandria and Greek Hairesis-Model,” VC 53 (1999), 119-120.


\textsuperscript{113} Acts 5.17, 15.5, 24.5, 24.14, 28.22

\textsuperscript{114} Acts 26.5. “They have known for a long time, if they are willing to testify, that according to the strictest party of our religion I have lived as a Pharisee.”

\textsuperscript{115} 1 Cor 11:19. In Gal 5:20 hairesis is mentioned in the list of works of the flesh in the sense of a “sect.”

\textsuperscript{116} 2.Pt. 2:1; Tit. 3:10
THE FOUNDATIONS OF ALLEGORICAL INTERPRETATION IN PHILO AND AMONG THE VALENTINIANS

Οὐαλεντίνου σχολῆς and reports on two schools (διδασκαλία) among the Valentinians themselves (Hipp. Haer. 6.35.5). Tertullian mentions the “two Valentinian schools” (schola) in an analogy with the philosophical schools of Plato and Epicurus (Val. 11.2, 33.1). Irenaeus has met some people who regarded themselves as disciples of Valentinus: ὁς αὐτοὶ λέγουσιν Ὁυαλεντίνου μαθητῶν (Iren. Haer. 1, pref. 2) who can be identified with the disciples around Ptolemy: οἱ δὲ περὶ τὸν Πτολεμαῖον ἐμπειρότεροι (Iren. Haer. 1.21.1).

Although the term hairesis can depict various kinds of ancient associations, according to patristic information the Valentinian-Gnostic hairesis was predominantly a philosophical persuasion. Irenaeus accused the Valentinians of deriving the theory of the emanations of Pleroma from Pythagoras (Iren. Haer. 1.1.1). Hippolytus said that Valentinian Gnostics were disciples of Pythagoras and Plato (Hipp. Ref. 24). Tertullian argued that the best way to refute Valentinian teachers was to refute Plato, who was their teacher (Tert. De Anima XXII). The Neoplatonic teachers condemned the Gnostics for deviating from authentic Platonism. Plotinus maintains in En. II. 9 that these teachers have built up the school of thought of their own (ἡ ἑαυτῶν ἀξίωσις) from Greek philosophy and Plato. Porphyry argued in Vita Plotini 16 that the Gnostics were inauthentic Platonists, who have parted ways from the ancient philosophical tradition (ἐκ τῆς παλαιᾶς φιλοσοφίας ἀνηγμένοι). Origen declares in Contra Celsum 5.61 that there are some Christians who called themselves Gnostics in a similar manner as the Epicureans called themselves “philosophers.”

There has been some doubt about the authenticity of the information attested in the patristic sources that the Gnostic hairesis can be compared with the philosophical persuasion. Barbara Aland has pointed out that the role of philosophy in Gnostic schools was rather artificial. She maintains that Gnostic hairesis was not philosophy, not even corrupted philosophy, but “a religion of revelation and redemption.” Einar Thomassen has also argued that the school of Valentinus was not a “school” comparable to the philosophical schools, but a representative of Christian ecclesia. According to Thomassen, “the vision of a salvation process that unfolds in time and history does not derive from Greek philosophy, but from the heritage of Judeo-Christian soteriology.” Thomassen maintains that “school terminology” belongs to the same rhetorical tool box of heresiologists as “hairesis terminology.”

117 Thomassen, The Spiritual Seed, 17-22. Markschies points out that since Aristoteles and Teophrastus the word μαθητής has been used in Greek literature (but not exclusively) to refer to students of philosophers or to members of the same philosophical school of thought. Cf. Markschies, “Valentinian Gnosticism,” 420, 404.


I suggest, however, that the main premises of the Valentinian system of thought did not solely come from early Christian beliefs but from the transcendental Platonism which was integrated with the Johannine and Pauline theology. The Valentinian Gnostic myth become conceivable only as a part of Platonic-Pythagorean world view. It is also noticeable that Gnostics were not only rejected by some early Christian teachers but also by teachers of the philosophical schools. Gnosticism not only caused conflict within early Christian communities but among the philosophical schools as well. The Gnostic movement was not merely part of an inner-Christian debate.

The school of Valentinus can be regarded as a representative of Greco-Roman hairēsis. Valentinus was the founding figure (πατὴρ τοῦ λόγου) of the Platonic school tradition whose succession (διαδοχή) went back to Paul via Theudas. There were distinctively doctrines (δόγματα), such as the theory of the structure of the intelligible world, the tripartite division of humankind and the therapy of emotions, which made Valentinian Gnosticism discernible from the other Platonic schools and congregations of the nascent orthodoxy as well. In addition, Valentinus’s disciples continued and elaborated the teachings of their foster father. The psalms and homilies composed by Valentinus were used in the worship of the Valentinian communities.

The social theory of religious groups employed by R. Stark and W. Bainbridge can help us describe the social setting of the Valentinian school of thought. According to this model religious communities can be defined as “cult-movements” or “sect-movements” which have deviated from their parent body, i.e. the mother religion. While the sect splinters from the parent body to re-establish the old, authentic and purged religion, the cult is the beginning of a new religion, based on a new revelation or new insight which changes the original tradition. The sects and cults also differed from the parent body regarding tension towards the values of society. While sects and cults have higher tension towards the values and moral rules of the social environment, the parent body has low tension towards common moral values or might even represent the sociocultural environment in toto.

The rhetorical strategy of the patristic teachers was to demonstrate that the Valentinian movement was a cult which had deviated from its parent body, i.e. the Church. The Valentinian teachings broke the apostolic faith though innovations and fables that were derived from Greco-Roman

---

120 Strom. VII.105.5.
121 Tert. Carn. 17.1.
philosophy and myths. The problem is, however, that during the second-century a “church” did not exist, which could have served as a “parent body” for the school of Valentinus or any other Christian group. There was no church from which the school of Valentinus could have splintered. This means that the teachers of the nascent orthodoxy not only created the “heretic” but the “church” as well.124

I suggest, then, that the school of Valentinus was a deviation from the the Platonic-Pythagorean hairesis, which served as its intellectual parent body. Although the social context of the school of Valentinus was the Christian ecclesia, the Valentinian teachers did not intend to revitalize the doctrines of the nascent orthodoxy, but the Platonic philosophy in the light of the new revelation of Christ. In this study, the school of Valentinus is compared with a Christianized cult within the Platonic-Pythagorean parent body. Valentinian teachers were Middle Platonic intellectuals, a fairly rich and privileged elite who had been converted to Christianity and provided their students with guidance towards the right way of life as non-Christian philosophers did.125

Bentley Layton has proposed that “the Valentinian movement had the character of a philosophical school or network of schools, rather than a distinct religious sect.”126 Christoph Markschies has also argued that the school of Valentinus is comparable with the ancient philosophical schools. It is not clear, however, whether the Valentinian teachers were more like popular or professional philosophers. Markschies refers to the study made by Johannes Hahn according to which the phenomenon of forming a “school” was not restricted to professional philosophical schools only. Also, popular philosophers, like the Platonist Maximus of Tyre, who taught in Rome during the time of Valentinus, offered regular lectures, while students took notes and engaged in discussion. Questions about what life one ought to live played an important role. Markschies states that the difference between popular and


125 Lampe, From Paul to Valentinus, 292-315, esp. 299-313

professional philosophers lay mainly in the degree of formal-logical argumentation in the philosophical curriculum.  

I suggest that the Valentinian teachers can be equated with the Greco-Roman popular philosophers who had both a Neo-Pythagorean and Christian orientation. Although some theologically well-written Valentinian documents, such as Ptolemy’s the *Letter to Flora* or Valentinus’s psalm, bear all the marks of philosophical competence, the colorful myth of Sophia does not belong to the same level of philosophical sophistication, although it may have had – as Markschies has stated - its own philosophical quality and charm in the Valentinian *paideia*.  

3.2.2 Valentinian tradition and rituals − Early Christian theurgy vs. *religio mentis*

During the first three centuries CE Platonism increasingly attained the forms of religion. The realms of philosophical schools and religious cults began to merge, although this development reached its peak in the writings of late Neoplatonic teachers. Gregory Shaw has pointed out that the attitude towards rituals varied in the Platonic tradition. There was a tendency to combine *theologia* (god-talk) and *theurgia* (god-work) and place rituals at the center of philosophical *paideia*. Plato himself was claimed to have participated in the Egyptian or Chaldean mysteries, and his writings were sometimes regarded as a *propaideia* to these deeper mysteries. There were also some other Platonists who completely rejected ritual practices. Porphyry advised the philosopher to forgo ritual activities because the philosopher is the savior of himself. The rituals may serve merely as *propaideia* for philosophical wisdom.  

Shaw maintains that the different attitudes towards rituals were based on a more fundamental difference concerning the degree of the descent of the soul in the body. Those Platonists who valued rituals maintained that the soul has been fully incarnated into the body. The material elements of rituals

---


130 Plato maintains that the deeper mysteries cannot be achieved through written documents. This was the reason why Plato did not write them down himself (*Letter VII of Plato*, 341c-d). Some Platonists took Plato’s various references to the Oriental or Egyptian mysteries (*Statesman* 290c-e, *Timaeus* 21, *Phaedrus* 275b, *Laws* 819b, *Philebus* 18b) as references to these deeper mysteries which are necessary for the illumination of the mind.  

131 *De. Abst.* II, 49.2.
provide a necessary tool for the liberation of the soul from the body. Those, who rejected the rituals were of the opinion that the highest part of the soul did not incarnate, but only its image. Therefore, its perfection was not dependent on rituals, but the undescended soul served as a “savior” of the individual soul.132

It is rather likely that the division among the Platonists about the role of rituals also had an influence on Valentinian teachers and their attitude towards Christian rituals. Hippolytus maintained that the division into the “eastern” and the “Italian” branch of Valentinianism reflected different views concerning the body of the Savior (Hipp. Ref. 35.5-7). While the Italian school taught that the Savior had both a spiritual and psychic body, the eastern school maintained that the body of the Savior was spiritual. I suggest, however, that behind the Christological division a more essential disagreement concerning the degree of the incarnation of the soul may have existed.133 The Italian school taught that the spiritual seed did not incarnate in the flesh, but only in the psychic soul. The eastern view, on the other hand, maintained, that the spiritual seed incarnated absolutely in fleshly existence. It was depicted as a formless aborted fetus (cf. Exc. Theod. 68).

This division of opinions had an impact on the degree of the incarnation of the Savior and the role of rituals as well. If the spiritual seed was incarnated fully in the flesh, this meant that the Savior must also adopt the same bodily existence to be able to save them. As a result, the eastern view held a more positive view towards rituals because the soul was trapped in the body and it could not be released without material sacraments. In the Italian school the rituals were seen merely as a propaideia for the deeper mysteries, which were given through intellectual enlightenment. These differences may explain the division of the Valentinian traditions into the “school movement” and the “cult movement.”134

The ritual practices of the Valentinian School are discussed in Irenaeus’s testimonies concerning the prophetical society of the Marcosians (Iren. Haer. 1.13-22 cf. also Hipp. Ref. 6:41). The Marcosians made a distinction between the psychic aspect of Jesus’s baptism (ascending to the water) and spiritual redemption (descending of the Spirit) which they called ἀπολύτρωσις. The former mediates the forgiveness of sins, but the latter represents a conjugal union, a sort of spiritual marriage, with the powers of

---


133 Anthropological issues are handled in detail in chapter 6.

134 Dunderberg, Beyond Gnosticism, 3. Dunderberg points out that the terminology that Irenaeus uses for his opponents implies that there were two branches within ancient Valentinianism, one tending toward as separate cult movement and one tending toward a school movement.
the Pleroma. There were also some teachers in the sect of Marcus who abandoned the ritual practices altogether. The spiritual seed did not have any participation in material creation, and therefore, its reception and formation could not be channelled through ritual practices. Rituals were only images of spiritual reality, and the use of them was a trivial matter. They were seen merely as signs of spiritual reality and propaideia for the transformation of the self through knowledge.\textsuperscript{135}

The Valentinian Exposition, which is one of the Valentinian writings of the Nag Hammadi Library, differs from the Marcosian community concerning the attitude towards baptism. It contains five Liturgical Readings (one on anointing, two on baptism and one on the Eucharist) as a kind of appendix to the main document. \textit{On Bap. B} 41.21 and 42.39 refer to the “first baptism,” which has been interpreted in the light of Irenaeus’s testimony concerning the distinction between ordinary church practice and the second spiritual rite of redemption.\textsuperscript{136} Thomassen maintains, however, that there is nothing incomplete or psychic about the first baptism mentioned in that document. In this tradition, the “bridal chamber” was not a separate rite apart from baptism and anointing, but it refers to the invisible nature of baptism itself.\textsuperscript{137} Antti Marjanen also suggests that the first baptism mentioned in the liturgical readings of the \textit{Valentinian Exposition} transforms the status of the participant from material existence to the spiritual. Therefore, this particular document has a very optimistic view concerning the transformative power of baptism, which differed from the view attested in Iren. \textit{Haer. 1.21}.\textsuperscript{138}

It is not contrary to reason to suggest that the different attitudes among Valentinian teachers were an outcome of different anthropological views in the Middle Platonic tradition. The Valentinian writings of the Nag Hammadi Library represent mainly the view, which saw in the cultic rituals

\textsuperscript{135} In addition to the conventional Christian rituals (baptism, anointing, the Eucharist), the Valentinians may have had a distinct ritual (the use of water, oil and invocations) as a sign of conjugal union with the spiritual reality and redemption. It is possible that the ritual of redemption was a mortuary rite. For the evidence of the Valentinian deathbed ritual cf. H. Gregory Snyder, “The Discovery and Interpretation of the Flavia Sopho Inscription: New Results” in \textit{VC} 68 (2014), 1-59. Dunderberg, \textit{Beyond Gnosticism}, 113-117. Thomassen suggests that the deathbed ritual was not a distinct ritual of redemption, but a sort of baptismal anamnesis for the dying person. See Thomassen, \textit{The Spiritual Seed}, 350-353.


\textsuperscript{137} Thomassen, \textit{The Spiritual Seed}, 355, 357-376.

transformative power. In these texts, the early Christian rituals are converted into Platonic theurgy and are means to spiritual redemption. The Valentinian tradition that is preserved in the account of the patristic authors mainly belongs to the Italian tradition (esp. Iren. Haer. 1.1-8 and Exc. C). In this tradition, the spiritual part of the human soul was not incarnated in the flesh but only within psychic soul, which means that the role of ritual practices was not essential to the process of the transformation of the self, but were seen merely as propaideia without any transformative power. In all cases, however, the Valentinian teachers understood the Christian rituals in the light of Valentinian protological myth. Irenaeus complained that the Valentinians speak the same language as other members of the church, but they thought differently.

The Valentinian sources used in this study mainly belong to the Italian school of Valentinianism. The closest parallel with this tradition is the religio mentis of the philosophical Hermetica. Garth Fowden describes how the charismatic teachers of the Hermetic school of thought were surrounded by disciples who sought philosophical understanding of the divine realm and longed for a personal illumination through the study of religious texts, instruction, question and answer, prayer, the singing of hymns and the enjoyment of other sorts of close fellowship between master and pupils. The ritual practices were propaideia for the intellectual enlightenment which was achieved through education and gnosis. The Canon Muratori, which is perhaps the oldest Early Christian list of canonical texts among the Roman congregation at the end of the second century, mentions a liber psalmorum by Valentinus, which is explicitly excluded from the canonical texts. It is rather likely that this information is authentic and Valentinus wrote psalms, which were used in worship in the Valentinian gatherings. This recalls the role of singing in the community of the Jewish philosophers and their nocturnal choral practices, which Philo describes in detail in De Vita Contemplativa (83-89).

3.3 Allegorical Readers of Alexandria

The Valentinian teachers were early Christian Platonists who were keen on religious texts, not only the ones that were read by early Christian communities, but also those, which were studied by the Jewish Platonists of

---

139 Iren. Haer. 3.15.4; 4.33.3.
140 Iren. Haer. 1. praef.
141 Fowden, The Egyptian Hermes, 95-115.
Alexandria. Valentinus himself maintained that there was much valuable teaching in the non-Christian books (ἐν ταῖς δημοσίαις βίβλοις) in addition to those that were written in the church (γεγραμμένα ἐν τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ). The Valentinian teachers adopted the allegorical method from the preceding Jewish Platonists of Alexandria and Hellenistic philosophers. Valentinian did not only reform the purely Gnostic motifs in the Sophia myth but also the tendency of mythopoiesis by integrating the cosmic myth more closely to the textual basis of the Bible. A good example of Valentinian reformation of the Gnostic myth is the creation of the first human being in which the purely Gnostic motifs of fear and jealousy of the creator angels have faded away. In Valentinus's fragment the angels possessed some tenets of the preceding myth, but in the later Valentinian anthropology the angels are not malevolent archons but co-creators and archetypes of the soul of Adam.

The allegorical method was discussed in rhetorical textbooks by the Hellenistic philosophers. An allegory was defined as “to mean something other than one says.” The famous rhetorician Quintilian maintained that “continuous metaphor makes an allegory, which was related to the personification of abstract qualities.” The origin of the allegorical exegesis of Greco-Roman myths was not in Plato, but in Aristotle, who said that the lover of myths is the lover of wisdom, for myth is composed of wonder, and the experience of wonder is the root of philosophy. Aristotle also maintains that the ancient myths are metaphysical, i.e. they contain hidden philosophical truths. Aristotle regarded the figure of Zeus as a symbol of the Prime Mover who challenged all the other gods. Zeus hung down from heaven a golden chain, which gods would grab and pull their way, but Zeus was able to pull them up to him. Thus, the metaphysical doctrine of the Prime Mover was hidden in the myth. Also the Stoics were famous for their allegorical readings of Homer and Hesiod. They argued that the ancient poets had unknowingly written down the wisdom of an earlier stage of history, which can be revealed in the text through the allegorical method.

It became common in the Middle Platonic tradition to assume that philosophy was concealed by gods in symbolical poetry and religious

143 Valentinian's fragment 6 in Clement's Strom. 6.52.3. This is opposite to the teaching attested in the Tripartite Tractate, which condemns not only the philosophical search for wisdom but the elementary studies as well. Cf. Dunderberg, Beyond Gnosticism, 181-185.

144 For details, cf. chapter 6.3.3.


147 Ar. Met. A 8, 1074b1-14.

148 Brisson, How Philosophers Saved Myths, 53-54.
revelations, which could be grasped by allegorical exegesis. The writing of Philo are a testimony to the Hellenistic Jewish allegorical tradition, which intended to integrate the Greco-Roman philosophical traditions with the revelation of the Scriptures. For Philo, the Scriptures had a two-fold meaning: a literal (ῥητή) or obvious meaning (φανερά) and an underlying meaning (ὑπόνοια). The underlying level of the text Philo calls allegorical (αλληγορία). Philo declares that it is “obscure to the many,” and clear only to “those who can contemplate bodiless and naked facts” and to “men who are capable of seeing.” Allegory is the “one which likes to hide” and into which one has to be “initiated.”

Philo was, however, a proponent of “multiple exegesis.” This procedure means that the text can be handled at different levels depending on the reader’s spiritual capability or the context of the interpretation. Although the migrations of the patriarchs were seen as symbols of a spiritual journey and their marriages as symbols for unification with Wisdom, Philo did not neglect the historicity of the biblical narratives or the importance of the role of Israel as a political commonwealth.

In some cases, however, the allegorical interpretation was obligatory. For Philo, the literal interpretations of the anthropomorphic descriptions of God would have been blasphemous. Moreover, the passages that were irrational, such as the creation of Eve from Adam’s rib, must be interpreted allegorically. The allegorical method also had an apologetic function. The Jewish people of Alexandria should not be ashamed of their cultural and

---


150 Cont. 28; Abr. 200, 236; Plant. 36; Migr. 205; Fug. 179. Cf. also Wolfson, Philo I, 115 ff.

151 Fug. 179.

religious heritage because it contained the highest level of human wisdom exceeding even the Greek philosophical tradition.\textsuperscript{153}

It is clear that Philo was working within the Jewish exegetical tradition, and he frequently refers to other Jewish allegorical readers of the Bible. Philo’s allegorical commentaries are not a testimony to the one solid allegorical school tradition or Philo’s innovative spirit, but a compendium of exegetical traditions, which he brought together in his writings.\textsuperscript{154} The allegorical readers of Alexandria can be divided according to Philo’s references into three sub-groups:\textsuperscript{155}

1. The extreme allegorists whom Philo dislikes because they seem to have neglected the prescriptions of the Law.
2. Moderate or non-mystical allegorists who did not follow Philo’s path and are more bound to the literal meaning of the text.
3. Mystical allegorists described in \textit{Vita Contemplativa} who are models for Philo’s allegorical reading.

It is noticeable that Philo never used the terms σχολῆ or διατριβή as references to his “school.” He used, however, the verb σχολάζειν to denote philosophical investigations during the Sabbath\textsuperscript{156} and the term διδασκαλεῖον in the sense of a school.\textsuperscript{157} Although the most natural context for Philo’s teaching would have been the synagogue, it is difficult to imagine, how Philo’s rather complicated allegorical teachings could have functioned in that kind of public context. The most probable context for Philo’s school was a private school in Philo’s home or a personally owned structure for advanced students who had the capability of coping with the extended philosophical expositions of the

\textsuperscript{153} Runia, “Philo, Alexandrian and Jew,” 4-5; Dawson, \textit{Allegorical Readers}, 73-129. \textit{The Letter of Aristeas} can be dated to the beginning of the second century BCE, and it contains the High Priest Eleazer’s ethical interpretation of the Jewish dietary laws. Eusebius has preserved two fragments of Aristobulus, who uses the allegorical method of interpretation in order to avoid the anthropomorphic description of God. Aristobulus explained that the hands of God refer to God’s power. The goal of the allegorical method used by the author of the \textit{Letter of Aristeas} and Aristobulus was apologetic. On the one hand, these Jewish allegorists intended to show that the best parts of Greek intellectual and moral values are found in the Jewish religion and its literary heritage. On the other hand, the aim was to build a bridge to Greco-Roman society. Cf. Ellen Birnbaum, “Allegorical Interpretation and Jewish Identity among Alexandrian Jewish Writers,” in \textit{Neotestamentica et Philonica: Studies in Honor of Peder Borgen} (ed. David E. Aune, Torrey Seland et.al.; Leiden: Brill: 2003), 307-329.

\textsuperscript{154} Tobin, \textit{The Creation of Man}, 5-10.

\textsuperscript{155} Fuglseth, \textit{Johannine Sectarianism}, 94.

\textsuperscript{156} Opif. 128; Mos. 2.211; Dec. 98

\textsuperscript{157} Mos. 2.216
THE FOUNDATIONS OF ALLEGORICAL INTERPRETATION IN PHILO AND AMONG THE VALENTINIANS

Bible. It is rather likely that Philo’s private school was not a sect or cult, but an institution that functioned within the Jewish parent body.

For Philo, the ideal social setting for the study of the Law of Moses was the esoteric community of the Therapeutae, who lived on the shores of Lake Mareotis. They were totally devoted to spiritual exercise (ἄσκησις), which is defined as “philosophizing” (φιλοσοφεῖν) and interpreting allegorically the ancestral philosophy (φιλοσοφία) of the Scriptures. The community used memorials (μνημεῖα), a sort of allegorical notebook, which had been written by “the founders of their school of thought” (αἵρεσις). The Therapeutae considered the Law of Moses to be a “living organism.” While the literal level parallels the body, the spiritual meaning of the text is its soul.

And these explanations of the sacred scriptures are delivered by inner meaning in allegories. For the whole legislation appears to these men a living being, and the literal commandments is the body, the soul is an invisible mind laid up in its wording, in which the rational soul begins to contemplate through discriminating the things of its own order as through the mirror the extraordinary beauties of the concepts removing and unfolding the symbols, and bringing to light the naked thoughts for those who, with only a little reminding are able to contemplate the hidden through what is visible.

The mystical or philosophical allegorists received spiritual vision as they studied the written text. The extreme allegorists, however, abandoned the literal level altogether, being like “bodiless souls.”

There are some who, taking the laws in their literal sense as symbols of intelligible realities extremely accurate (ἄγαν ἠκρίβωσαν) in their investigation of the symbol, while frivolously neglecting the letter.

---

158 Sterling, “The School of Sacred Law,” 149-151; Runia, “Philo of Alexandria and the Greek Hairesis-Model,” 128. For the synagogue setting of Philo’s school, see R. Allan Culpepper, The Johannine School (SBL Dissertation Series 26; Missoula, Montana: Scholar Press, 1975), 212-214. Harry Wolfson has maintained that Philo worked in the synagogue schools of higher education for Jews only. See Wolfson, Philo I, 79. It seems that Philo’s method of teaching was a unique combination of the question-and-answer format used in the Alexandrian synagogue setting and the problem-solution method used in the Greek philosophical texts. See the discussion in Dillon, “The Formal Structure of Philo’s Allegorical Exegesis,” 77-87; Sterling, “The School of Sacred Laws,” 158-160.

159 Fuglseth, Johannine Sectarianism, 363-364. Erwin Goodenough has proposed that the school of Philo can be equated with the Hellenistic mystery association. Judaism in Alexandria had been organized long before Philo as a “mystery cult.” See Erwin Goodenough, By Light Light. The Mystic Gospel of Hellenistic-Judaism (New Haven, 1935), 1-10.

160 Cont. 28-30.

161 Cont. 78. Translated by David Winston in Philo of Alexandria. Winston has pointed out that Philo was influenced by Plato’s Phaedrus 264c where Socrates says that “every discourse must be organized as a living being.” See Winston, Philo of Alexandria, 321.
Such people I, for my part, should blame for their cool indifference, for they ought to have cultivated both a more precise investigation of things invisible and an unexceptionable stewardship of things visible. As it is, as if living alone by themselves in a wilderness, or as if they had become discarnate souls (ἀσώματοι ψυχαὶ γεγονότες), knowing neither city nor village nor household nor any company of humans at all, transcending what is approved by the crown, they track the absolute truth in its naked self.\textsuperscript{162}

It is not easy to define the difference between Philo's allegorical method and the extremism of other allegors. It seems that the allegorical radicals neglected any literal interpretation of the Bible, which may, however, have been relevant for Jewish communal living. The biblical text functioned solely as a tool for individual and spiritual revelation. Although Philo may have owed much to the allegorical inventions of the pure allegorists, this did not lead to separation from Jewish religious observances.\textsuperscript{163} The cultic observances of Judaism were important for Philo's spiritual life.

It is noticeable that Philo's allegorical exegesis differed from the approach of the Hellenistic philosophers. Philo assumed that Moses wrote intentionally in allegorical language. The allegorical level was not artificially added by the reader of the text, but the original message of the Law of Moses was hidden in the symbols, numbers, and etymologies. The biblical text itself was originally an allegorical presentation of the reality of the cosmos or human being. David Dawson has pointed out that the Philo's allegorical method was based on the theory of the corruption of language.\textsuperscript{164} God confused the languages to prevent wickedness from reaching its goal as humankind tried to build the Tower of Babel. As a result, the language lost its capacity to mediate real meanings. The theory of language in the Valentinian Gospel of Philip (NHC II, 3) is strikingly similar.

The names of worldly things are utterly deceptive, for they turn the heart from what is real to what is unreal. Whoever hears the word “God” thinks not of what is real but rather of what is unreal. So also with the words “father”, “son,” holy spirit,” “life,” “light,” “resurrection,” “church,” and all the rest, people do not think of what

\textsuperscript{162} Migr. 89-90. Translated by David Winston in Philo of Alexandria, 81.

\textsuperscript{163} Sandmel speaks about Philo's religiosity, not his religion. This would mean that the Greek philosophical tradition was interpreted and taught in a Jewish religious environment. The religion of Philo, the Jew, was not a criterion for philosophical truth, but it formed a cultural framework for Philo's school of thought. The Law was not an end or criterion of truth itself, but a means to the greater end, which was articulated on the grounds of philosophy. Philo's religious context set certain pre-conditions for philosophical scrutiny. Cf. Sandmel, Philo of Alexandria, 82-88.

THE FOUNDATIONS OF ALLEGORICAL INTERPRETATION IN PHILO AND AMONG THE VALENTINIANS

is real but of what is unreal, [though] the words refer to what is real. The words [that are] heard belong to his world. [Do not be] deceived. If word belonged to the eternal realm, they would never be pronounced in this world, nor would they designate worldly things. They would refer to what is in the eternal realm.165

It is stated in the Gos.Phil 67, 9-27 that truth did not come into the world naked, but in “symbols and images” because the world could not receive truth in another way. The “resurrection” was seen as an image of “rebirth” in the bridal chamber, i.e. the spiritual awakening and enlightenment. The bodily resurrection described in the gospels was not an object of belief but a spiritual symbol of the individual’s “rebirth.” Gos.Phil. 54, 13-31 explains how the archons corrupted language so that it became a method of deception.

Truth brought forth names in the world for us, and no one can refer to truth without names. The truth is one and many, for our sakes, to teach us about the one, in love, through the many. The rulers wanted to fool people since they saw that people have a kinship with what is truly good. They took the name of the good and assigned them to what is not good, to fool people with names and link the names to what is not good. So, as if they are doing people a favor, they take names from what is not good and transfer them to the good, in their way of thinking. For they wished to take free people and enslave them forever.

The theme of language as a tool for deception is also found in Philo, who explains the confusion of languages at Babel. Philo writes in Conf. 190:

This is our explanation, but those who merely follow the outward and obvious think that we have at his point a reference to the origin of the Greek and barbarian languages. I would not censure such persons, for perhaps the truth is with them also. Still I would exhort them not to halt there, but to press on to allegorical interpretation and to recognize that the letter is to the Oracle but as a shadow to the substance and that the higher values therein revealed are what really and truly exist. Indeed, the lawgiver himself gives openings for this kind of treatment to those whose understanding is not blinded as he certainly does in the case now under discussion when he calls what was then taking place a “confusion.”

Philo’s view is evidently based on the Platonic notion of the sense-perceptible world as shadows of the ideal world. God not only divided the language into “Greek and barbarian languages” as is commonly suggested, but he confused languages semantically. Philo makes a distinction between “confusion” and “separation.” God did not merely separate languages but confused their

165 Gos.Phil. 53.23-54.5. Translated by Marvin Meyer in Nag Hammadi Scriptures.
semantic apparatus. This means that the confusion concerns all human languages, which are like shadows of the bodily appearances. At a literal level language contains “prodigies and marvels, one serpent emitting a human voice and using quibbling arguments to an utterly guileless character, and cheating a woman with seductive plausibility” but to those who interpret words according to allegory “all that is mythical is removed out of our way, and the real sense becomes as clear as daylight.”166

For Philo, the allegorical interpretation was not an isolated enterprise to find proofs for philosophical opinions, but was an instrument of spiritual ascent. The fusion of the allegorical reading of the visible text and the contemplation of the invisible cosmos is attested explicitly in Spec. 3.1-6. The spiritual goal of allegorical interpretation is to “see the invisible through the visible” (τὰ ἀφανῆ διὰ τῶν φανερῶν θεωρεῖν).167 In this method the ascension of Moses was paradigmatic. All allegorists were able to reach the same noetic vision. Moses ascended “in thick clouds” to the spiritual realm, where bodily eyesight was not involved, and he was shown “the forms of the intelligible things and the measures of all things by which the world was made.”168

When Moses wrote out the Law, he had to use “fallen language,” and it had to be “decrypted” through the allegorical method to mediate real meanings. Moses left, however, clues and “invitations” that pointed to the vision of the Logos beyond the written text. Philo and other allegorists were able to find these clues in the peculiarities of words, etymologies, numerical codes, phraseology, grammar, and syntax.169 Through the allegorical method God’s voice could be “seen” once again:

For what life is better than a contemplative life, or more appropriate to a rational being? For this reason, whereas the voice of mortal beings is judged by hearing, the sacred oracles intimate that the words of God are seen as light is seen; for we are told that “all the people saw the Voice (Ex. 20.18), not that they heard it; for what was happening was not an impact on air made by the organs of mouth and tongue, but virtue shining with intense brilliance, wholly resembling a fountain of reason and this is also indicated elsewhere on this wise: “You have seen that I have spoken to you out of Heaven.” (Ex. 20.22), not “you heard,” for the same cause as before.170

166 Agr. 96-97.
168 QE 2.52; Mos. 2:74-76.
170 Mig. 47.
The Valentinian allegorists belong to the same hermeneutical trajectory with the Alexandrian Jewish allegorists. The Valentinian teachers did not use the allegorical method only with the Jewish Scriptures, but also with the early Christian texts. This method of reading biblical texts was vehemently criticized by Irenaeus and other early Christian teachers. Irenaeus accused the Valentinian teachers that they “subvert Scriptures according to their own intention” and “arrive at their contrived exegeses,” whereas the truthful interpretation follows a “clear and open sense of Scripture” and builds the interpretations on the “clear and unambiguous parts.”

Despite Irenaeus’s harsh criticism, the allegorical interpretation was not an unknown method for patristic authors and not for Irenaeus himself. The problem with the Valentinian teachers was not the allegorical method as such but the philosophical myth which formed the basis for the interpretations. Origen and Clement criticized Valentinian teachers for deriving allegorical interpretations from the philosophical myth without any connection to the context of the text. Strikingly, Origen faced almost the same criticism from the Antiochian bishop Eustathius, who criticized Alexandrian allegorists for neglecting history and paying too much attention to names and terms instead of deeds. It would seem that the criticism that Irenaeus leveled against the Valentinian teachers was repeated by the principals of the church of Antioch against Alexandrian allegorists, such as Origen and Clement, who broke the coherence of the texts and twisted its original intention.

171 Iren. Haer. 1.3.6; 1.9.1; 2.27.1-4.
172 Origen maintained that as human beings are divided into body, soul and spirit, the Scriptures yield three meanings: literal, moral and spiritual. The spiritual meaning was only for those Christians who have made progress in Spirit and were capable of using the allegorical method of interpretation. According to Jerome, the Scriptures have a three-fold meaning: juxta historiam, juxta morale and juxta intelligentiam spiritualem. Augustine says that the Jewish Scriptures are “handed down fourfold to them who desire to know them, according to history, according to aetiology, according to analogy and according to allegory.” For the summary of the allegorical method of the church fathers, cf. Harry Wolfson, The Philosophy of the Church Fathers. Vol. 1. Faith, Trinity, Incarnation (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1956), 43-72.
174 The rivalry between Antioch and Alexandria concerning biblical exegesis can be understood as a rivalry between philosophical (to metodikon) and rhetorical (to historikon) schools. The Alexandrian exegetes emphasized philosophical education and the linguistic aspects of the text (etymologies, tropes, styles), whereas the school of Antioch stressed the background of the texts (history, context). This does not mean that the Antiochian exegetes did not explore allegories at all, but that the historical and typological interpretations were primary. Nor did Origen and Clement for their part neglect the historical meaning altogether, but instead they considered the allegorical meaning to be more valuable.
text must be read as a literary unit, which forms an “iconic” starting point even for its hidden intention. Instead, the allegorical approach was based on the “inspiring Spirit,” which could only enlighten readers so that they can reach the deeper spiritual meaning of the text. The difference between Origen and the Valentinian exegetes was not so much about the method, but the content of the “Spirit” which revealed the hidden meaning of the text.

Before entering into a detailed comparison of the allegories of Philo and the Valentinians, I will investigate two case studies which illustrate the multidimensionality of the method used by these teachers. Whereas the first example illustrates an extreme case, the latter case serves as an example of a moderate allegorical reading of the text.

### 3.3.1 Allegorical interpretation of Ex. 13:2 in Philo’s *Her.* 117-119 and *Iren. Haer.* 1.3.4

At first glance it seems that Philo as well as the Valentinian exegetes brought allegorical interpretations into the text artificially. There were, however, some signs in the texts which served as “indicators” for the opportunity to “ascend” from the literal level to the level where the spiritual vision could be reached. Philo calls these textual details “invitations” and “clues” (ἀφορμαί) concerning the use of allegory, which is “dear to men with their eyes opened.” These textual clues can be of various sorts. Some are etymological (*Det.* 15-17), some are based on factual errors in the literal text (*Somn.* 2.246) and some others are based on absurd details in the text (*Agr.* 130-131). Also, repetitions of the same word or double narratives were “invitations” for allegorical interpretations. As certain terms, names or themes were given an allegorical meaning, they functioned as new “invitations” to interpret allegorically other texts where these terms appeared.

The first example is related to the allegorical interpretation of Ex. 13:2, which describes the law concerning sanctifying firstlings: “Consecrate to me..."
THE FOUNDATIONS OF ALLEGORICAL INTERPRETATION IN PHILO AND AMONG THE VALENTINIANS

every firstborn (πρωτότοκος) male. The first offspring (πρωτογενές) of every womb among the Israelites belongs to me, whether human or animal.” The double mentioning of words with the same meaning (πρωτότοκος and πρωτογενές) in these sentences served as an “invitation” for the allegorists to postulate a theory of the two-fold opening of the womb. I will present first the Valentinian interpretation of the text that is included in the protological myth of Sophia in Iren. Haer. 1.3.4.

But the Savior is from the All [of the Aeons] and himself is the All according to the following passage: “All males that opens the womb.” For he, being the All, opened the womb of the Intention of the suffering Aeon, who had been expelled from the Pleroma and who is called the second Ogdoad as we will speak later on.177

It is clear that Irenaeus’s quotation of this Valentinian myth is an allusion to the sanctification of the firstborn mentioned in Ex. 13:2, although the proof-text stems from Luke’s gospel. The verse Πᾶν ἄρρεν διανοῖγον μήτραν is a direct quotation from Luke 2:23, which describes how Jesus was brought into the Temple according to Mosaic Law. Every first-born boy that “opens his mother’s womb” should be dedicated to God.

In the Valentinian interpretation, the sanctification of the firstborn and opening the womb of the mother was projected into the spiritual realm as part of protological myth. Firstly, the Savior was identified with “all males” because he was the male offspring of the Pleroma. Secondly, the Savior did not open the womb of Sophia from “inside” through his birth, but he opened the womb of the suffering Sophia from the outside by healing her emotions through knowledge in order to make Sophia capable of procreating spiritual offspring as her firstborn (Iren. Haer. 1.4.5).

Strikingly, Philo has a similar kind of allegorical reading of Ex. 13:12 in Her. 117-119, although the context of the interpretation is different. Philo’s allegory is part of the preceding discussion in Her. 105-110 in which he criticized those, who maintain that the human mental and sense faculties are not attributed to God. Philo says that this kind of view represents a selfish attitude towards God’s gifts because God’s immaterial power fundamentally energizes all the activities of mind, speech, and sense perceptions. Philo finds a proof-text for his view in an allegorical reading of Ex. 13:12:

And elsewhere he says “The Lord spoke to Moses saying: “Sanctify to me all the first-born, those that are generated first, all that open the womb among the children of Israel, whether of human beings or animals belong to me.” (Ex. 13.1-2). Thus, it is also admitted here that the first in time and value are God’s possessions and especially the

177 Iren. Haer. 1.3.4. My translation.
first in a generation. For since genus is in every case indestructible, to the indestructible God will it be justly assigned.  

Philo notices the repetition of the words πρωτότοκος and πρωτογενές in Ex. 13:2. In some other passages, Philo suggests that the term “firstborn” (πρωτογενές) is the name of the Logos (e.g. Conf. 146) or those, who can be equated with the sons of God like Isaac (e.g. Fug. 208). Therefore, the meaning of πρωτογενές can be shifted to the new context and the biblical passage in question could be read as if it refers to two distinct beings, i.e. the one who is brought forth from the womb (πρωτότοκος) and the one who opens the womb for them (πρωτογενές). The term firstborn (πρωτότοκος) is associated with reason and speech, which are brought forth when the Logos (πρωτογενές) opens the human mind like a womb. The human mental activities should be attributed to God, because their cause, the Logos, is the firstborn dedicated to Father. Therefore, Philo can write:

And that is true too of one who opens the womb of all from man; that is reason and speech, to the beast; that is sense and body. For he that opens the womb of each of these, of mind, to mental apprehensions, of speech, to the activities of the voice, of the sense, to receive the pictures presented to it by objects, of the body, to the movements and postures proper to it, is the invisible, seminal artificer, the divine Logos, which will be fitly dedicated to its Father.

Although the context of the allegory in Ex. 13:2 in Philo’s text differs from Iren. Haer. 1.3.4, the rather awkward logic when reading the passage is strikingly similar: it is not the firstborn (πρωτότοκος) only who opens the womb from the “inside” through birth, but there is another being dedicated to the Father as his firstborn (πρωτογενές) which opens the womb from the “outside.” In Philo, the “womb” is the mind, speech or the body, the offspring are the activities of these capacities (understanding, voice, sense perception and bodily motions), and the one that opens the womb is the Logos dedicated to the Father. In the Valentinian allegory, it is the emotions of Sophia that are referred to as the womb, the offspring is Sophia’s spiritual seed, and the one who opens her womb through knowledge is the Savior being the All, i.e. the perfect fruit of the Pleroma. Despite the apparent differences in the context of the allegorical interpretation, the Valentinian reading of the text evidently requires the allegorical “double reading” of Ex. 13:12, which is similar to that of Philo’s in Her. 117-119.
3.3.2 A moderate allegorical teaching in Ptolemy’s Letter to Flora

The second example of Valentinian allegorical exegesis represents a more moderate approach. It comes from Ptolemy’s Letter to Flora that is preserved as a whole in Greek in Epiphanius’s Panarion (33.3-7). The letter is didactic, and it is composed stylistically according to the pattern of Greco-Roman public speeches.\(^{180}\) The argumentative technique of the letter follows the philosophical method of διαίρεσις according to which the subject matter is divided into subcategories and the specific differences between terms are made explicit.

Although the letter is addressed to Flora, who is called in the letter “my honorable sister,” the epistle is not a private letter in a strict sense, but it can be compared with the philosophical letter written by Epicurus or Porphyry.\(^{181}\) We can conclude, however, that the recipient of the letter is part of the inner circle of the Valentinian community, but she would be in need of further instruction to “prove worthy of the apostolic tradition.”

The consensus is that the intellectual background of Ptolemy’s letter was the Marcionite schism in Rome in the middle of the second century. Ptolemy intended to solve one main problem, which was related to the two erroneous opinions of the origin of the Mosaic Law. On the one hand, Ptolemy’s opponents were those “ordinary” Christians, who suggested that Moses’s Law came from the highest God. On the other hand, some radical Marcionites thought that the Law of Moses came from the Devil.\(^{182}\) Ptolemy represents a sophisticated middle way between these extreme options. He argues that the Law of Moses does not come from the perfect God or the Devil, but from God of the Hebrew Bible, who although not perfect but is just.

The identity of the author of Ptolemy’s letter and his relation to the teachings described by Irenaeus in Iren. Haer. 1.1-8 is a somewhat debated issue in scholarship. There have been attempts to connect the author of the letter to the incident mentioned by Justin in the Second Apology. Justin tells about a Christian teacher in Rome called Ptolemy whose female disciple converted to Christianity and left her husband on account of his debauchery. Justin mentions that Ptolemy was arrested and eventually executed for being a Christian under the prefect Urbinus (144-160 CE). Although it cannot be said with certainty whether Ptolemy in Justin’s Apology is identical with the Valentinian Ptolemy, it is interesting that the Letter to Flora handles the

\(^{180}\) Dunderberg, Beyond Gnosticism, 79-80.
\(^{182}\) Rasmus notices that Marcion himself never identified the Jewish God with the Devil. Marcion’s disciple Apelles considered the lawgiver to be the devil, although the good God created the world. Dunderberg states that Ptolemy’s view in the debate is rather close to the moderate Marcionite position. Cf. Tuomas Rasmus, “Ptolemaeus and the Valentinian Exegesis of John’s Prologue,” in Legacy of John: Second-Century Reception of the Fourth Gospel (ed. Rasmus; Leiden: Brill, 2015), 147; Dunderberg, Beyond Gnosticism, 87-90.
question of permission to divorce under certain conditions and the ethics of revenge. These issues were also present in Justin’s story about Ptolemy and his female disciple.\textsuperscript{183} I suggest, however, that we do not have enough information to identify Ptolemy in Justin’s \textit{Apology} with the Valentinian Ptolemy who wrote the letter to Flora. Moreover, Jesus’ prohibition of divorce was central to Marcion’s argumentation and therefore the topic of the letter may have been part of Anti-Marcionite polemics rather than the personal circumstances of the recipient of the letter.\textsuperscript{184}

Also, Ptolemy’s relation to the descriptions of the Valentinian teaching in Iren. \textit{Haer}. 1.1-8 is problematic. Markschies has argued that in Iren. \textit{Haer}. 1.1-7 Irenaeus describes mainly the teachings of the “followers of Valentinus,” who are a different group than the “disciples of Ptolemy” or those “around Ptolemy” mentioned in Iren. \textit{Haer}. 1. praef. and 1.21. In addition, it is not evident that the protological commentary on John. 1:1-3 attested in Iren. \textit{Haer}. 1.8.5 goes back to Ptolemy, because its ascription (et Ptolemaeus quidem ita) exists only in the Latin translation of Irenaeus’s work but is missing in Epiphanius’ Greek text. Markschies says that the ascription in the Latin texts of Iren. \textit{Haer}. 1.8.5 is an error, and therefore, Ptolemy’s \textit{Letter to Flora} is the only reliable source for a reconstruction of his teaching, which does not contain any cosmological myth.\textsuperscript{185}

I suggest that Markschies’s argumentation goes too far. Firstly, the distinction between “the disciples of Valentinus” and “the disciples of Ptolemy” is artificial. There is no reason to suggest that the teachings of Ptolemy’s disciples are not included in Irenaeus’s source material mentioned in Iren. \textit{Haer}. 1. praef.\textsuperscript{186} Secondly, we do not have any explanation why the

\textsuperscript{183} Dunderberg, \textit{Beyond Gnosticism}, 90-92. Tuomas Rasimus is rather confident that Ptolemy mentioned by Justin can be identified with the author of the \textit{Letter to Flora}. Thomassen is, however, skeptical, whether these two persons with the same name can be identified with each other. Cf. Rasimus, “Ptolemaus and Prologue’s Valentinian Exegesis,” 154-155; Thomassen, \textit{The Spiritual Seed}, 494.

\textsuperscript{184} Markschies, “New Research,” 248.

\textsuperscript{185} Dunderberg agrees with Markschies and is doubtful whether the commentary on John’s prologue comes from Ptolemy. Cf. Dunderberg, \textit{Beyond Gnosticism}, 197-199. Thomassen and Rasimus are of the opinion that the ascription is authentic and the author of the protological commentary attested in Iren. \textit{Haer}. 1.8.5 is Ptolemy. Rasimus points out that that Epiphanius follows Hippolytus rather than Irenaeus in identifying various heresies. Hippolytus maintains in his \textit{Syntagma} and \textit{Refutatio} that a variant of the model system goes back to Valentinus, not to Ptolemy. This would explain why Epiphanius dropped the ascription from his text. Cf. Thomassen, \textit{The Spiritual Seed}, 263-268 and Rasimus, “Ptolemaus and Prologue’s Valentinian Exegesis,” 165-166.

\textsuperscript{186} Thomassen is of the opinion that Iren. \textit{Haer}. 1.1-9 was based on a document circulating among group of Valentinians who regarded themselves as followers of Ptolemy. Cf. Thomassen, \textit{The Spiritual Seed}, 20-22. I do not regard, however, that Irenaeus’s descriptions of the Valentinian system in Iren. \textit{Haer}. 1.1-9 was based on a single document. Irenaeus’s “great account” contains teachings from different sources including the disciples of Ptolemy.
Latin redactor of Irenaeus's text would have added the erroneous ascription to the Valentinian protological commentary. Thirdly, Ptolemy's letter is not protreptic, as Markschies correctly points out. Therefore, it is comprehensible that Ptolemy did not present the whole doctrine concerning the first principle in his letter, but concentrated on one acute topic. The omission of protology in Ptolemy’s letter is not a mark of deviancy from Irenaeus’s description of the Valentinian myth. It is also possible that the protological commentary does not represent an authentic teaching of Ptolemy, but goes back to his disciples in Rome who may have elaborated Ptolemy’s teaching.

Ptolemy gives, however, a significantly different kind of interpretation of John’s prologue in his letter of Flora than in the protological commentary in Iren. Haer. 1.8.5 (par. Exc. Theod. 6-7). In the Letter to Flora, Ptolemy explains that “the all” (τὰ παντά) in John 1:3 refers to the creation of the visible cosmos by the Demiurge, while in the protological commentary it refers to the creation of the intelligible cosmos by the Logos. Irenaeus criticized the latter view and argued that “the all” must refer to the creation of the visible cosmos by the Logos because it stated in the Gospel of John that the Savior came to his own world, “but according to Marcion and those like him, neither was the world made by him nor did he come to his own things, but to those of another.”

Strikingly, in the Letter to Flora Ptolemy presents an interpretation, which is parallel with Irenaeus’s critical view.

The demiurgic agent in this passage is the Savior, who entered into the world on his own (John 1:11) and the just God, i.e. the Demiurge, is in another agent through whom all things in the world were made (John 1.3). Ptolemy argued that thus the apostle “took away in advance the baseless wisdom of the false accusers, and shows that the creation is not due to a God, who

\[187\] Iren. Haer. 3.11.1-2.
\[188\] Πτολεμαύς, Προλόγους' Ἰουλιανία γένησις, 149.
\[189\] Θομάσσαν, Ἰεράνθρωπος, 122-123; Rasimus, “Πτολεμαύς καὶ οἱ Προλόγοι’ Ἰουλιανία γένησις,” 149-150. Ptolemy represents, thus, the view also attested in some other Valentinian accounts (e.g. Exc. Theod. 45.3) according to which the Savior is the “first creator” who delegated the final task of creation to Sophia and the Demiurge, who finally shaped the psychic heaven and material earth out of pre-cosmic matter (Gen. 1:1). It is notable that Heracleon also interpreted “all things” in John 1:3 to be a reference to “the cosmos and its contents” (Orig. Comm. Joh. 2.14). See Thomassen, “Heracleon”, 177-178; Pagels, The Johannine Gospel, 23-35.
brings corruption, but to the one who is just and hates evil.” 190 Although “the all” is not created by the Logos in Ptolemy’s letter, but by the just creator God, “the all” refers, however, to the creation of the visible world, not to the creation of the intelligible cosmos as in Ptolemy’s protological commentary in Iren. *Haer.* 1.8.5.

It seems that both Irenaeus and Ptolemy have used a common anti-Marcionite argumentation, which circulated among Christian teachers in Rome. Ptolemy’s view differed, however, from Irenaeus in that in addition to the Savior, who was the principal creative agent, there was another agent, the just Demiurge, through whom the Savior created the world. From Ptolemy’s point of view, Irenaeus represented the other extreme view according to which the creation, as well as the Mosaic Law, came from a perfect God. Ptolemy could use, however, practically the same method as Irenaeus in rejecting some radical opponents, who thought that the Devil created the cosmos. 191

It seems that Ptolemy’s *Letter to Flora* was an introductory teaching that followed a more elaborated protological teaching about the first principles and the origin of the cosmos. This may have been part of the further teaching, which would explain “how different natures evolved from the Father of All.” 192 We can conclude that the Valentinian exegesis was not as radical as Irenaeus tried to show, but it was instead multidimensional. There may be different levels of interpretation of the same biblical texts, and the level of interpretation depended on the intellectual level of the audience. Valentinian exegesis parallels Philo, who was also a proponent of “multiple exegesis,” which means that the text can be handled at different levels depending on the reader’s spiritual capability or the context of the interpretation.

There are also some other allegorical teachings in Ptolemy’s *Letter to Flora*, which parallel Philo’s teachings concerning the division of Mosaic Law and spiritual interpretation of its cultic observances. Ptolemy divided the Mosaic Law into two parts. Firstly, there is the law of God, which comes from the Demiurge; and secondly the commandments, which contain human additions by Moses or the elders. In addition, Ptolemy divided the law, which was purified of human additions, into three sub-categories. Firstly, the pure law, i.e. the Ten Commandments, which contains both commands (πρόσταξεις) and prohibitions (ἀπαγόρευσεις). This is the law which was made perfect by the Savior. Secondly, the cultic law, which is typical and symbolic,

---

190 ἔτι τε τὴν τοῦ κόσμου δημιουργίαν ἰδιαὶ λέγει εἶναι τὰ τε πάντα δι’ αὐτοῦ γεγονέναι καὶ χωρὶς αὐτοῦ γεγονέναι οὐδὲν ὁ ἀπόστλος προαποστερήσας τὴν τῶν ψευδηγορούντων ανυπόστατον σοφίαν καὶ οὔ φθοροποιοῦ θεοῦ ἀλλὰ δικαίου καὶ μισοποιήτου.


192 Thomassen, *The Spiritual Seed*, 263-268. Dunderberg maintains that we cannot be sure whether the cosmological myth Ptolemy had in mind was identical with what we now find in Iren. *Haer.* 1.1.1-3. See Dunderberg, *Beyond Gnosticism*, 79.
and is enacted according to the image of the spiritual level (τυπικὸν καὶ συμβολικὸν τὸ κατ᾽ εἰκόνα τῶν πνευματικῶν). Thirdly, the law that is based upon retaliation and has been abolished absolutely by the Savior. 193

In most cases, Philo divided the Law into the historical part and the legislative part. The historical part contains the history of the families as well as the punishments and rewards of wicked and virtuous human beings. The legislative part, i.e. the Ten Commandments and particulars laws, is divided into the commandments (πρόσταξεις) and the prohibitions (ἀπαγόρευσεις). 194 Ptolemy’s tripartite division of the Law (the Law of God himself, the legislation of Moses and the commandments of the elders) parallels Josephus, Jewish-Christian and rabbinical sources. 195 It is noticeable, however, that the division of the Law into the “commands and prohibitions” is not distinctive in the Septuagint, Josephus or the New Testament. It seems that Ptolemy knew of similar categorizing of the legislative part of the Mosaic Law in to the “commandments and prohibitions” as Philo had done. 196

Philo made also a distinction concerning the distribution of the Law. While the Ten Commandments were dictated directly by God, the particular laws came through Moses, whom God filled with the Spirit in order to become capable of interpreting his will. 197 Philo regarded, however, the whole Law as perfect regardless of the means through which it was distributed to humankind. Philo saw only some problem in the execution of the penalties of the Law. It was intolerable that a good God could himself have been responsible for the execution of penalties for breaking the law of God. Therefore, God delegated the punishments to his subordinate punitive powers or angels. Ptolemy’s criticism of the law was harsher than Philo’s. It was not only the execution of the death penalty but the law of retaliation itself, which was mixed with evil and must be rejected altogether.

In addition to the theory concerning the division of the law, Ptolemy presents in his letter allegorical and spiritual interpretations of the cultic commandments. Animal sacrifices were not allowed, but the Christians should offer only spiritual sacrifices such as praise, fellowship and beneficence. In the same manner, circumcision does not mean a fleshly, outward ritual, but a circumcision of the heart. The Sabbath and fasting

---


194 Philo's view concerning the division of the Law is not consistent. In Mos. 2.45-48 the creation of the world is included in the historical part of the Law, whereas in Abr. 2-5 and Praem. 1-3 Philo sees the creation of the world as a distinct part of the Law. In Abr. 2-5 the lives of the patriarchs served as archetypes for the particular laws, which apparently also contain the Ten Commandments. In Mos. 2.45-48 and Praem. 1-3 the historical part is separated from the legislative part, which is divided in Mos. 2.45-48 into commandments and prohibitions.


197 Dec. 175-176.
mean rest and abstention from evil deeds. The symbolic interpretation of the Law of Moses is attested in various Jewish and early Christian sources (cf. e.g. the Epistle of Barnabas). Also, circumcision as a symbol of spiritual improvement and excision of pleasures was commonplace in Hellenistic Jewish teaching. Philo mentions this interpretation but also Paul, who made a distinction between the external sign and the spiritual significance of the covenant. Philo also mentions the metaphor of sacrifice as the “piety of the soul who loves God” and “the thanksgiving of the sages,” which parallels Paul, who taught that piety is the real sacrifice of the believer. It is likely that Ptolemy’s source for these interpretations was not Philo but Paul.

There are, however, some allegories of cultic law in Ptolemy’s letter that do not have exact parallels in the New Testament but in Philo. Paul does not mention the spiritual interpretation of the Sabbath as avoiding evil deeds as Ptolemy does, nor does he allegorize the Jewish dietary laws. Philo says, however, that the Sabbath is not only the day of philosophizing and contemplation of the creation but also the day for repentance and ethical improvement. In addition, fasting is not solely abstinence or avoidance of certain foods, but a symbol of the fight against bodily passions together with the holy prayers, “in which they are wont to ask that their old sins may be forgiven and new blessings gained and enjoyed.” These notions bring Ptolemy’s spiritual interpretations of the Mosaic Law rather close to the allegorical patterns that are found in the writings of Philo.

This second case study concerning allegorical interpretation in Ptolemy’s Letter to Flora shows that Valentinian allegorical exegesis was multidimensional. The Valentinian allegories were not only extreme symbolism about the spiritual realm, which were comprehensible only in the light of Valentinian protological myth. The Valentinian sources also contain moderate interpretations of the law which recall Philo’s division of the Mosaic Law and allegorical interpretations of its cultic commandments.

### 3.4 Conclusions

The origin of the Valentinian tradition can be traced back to the years after the Jewish revolt in Alexandria during the first half of the second century CE.

---

198 Dunderberg, Beyond Gnosticism, 83.
199 Abraham’s circumcision as a symbol of excision of pleasures is mentioned also in the Gospel of Philip: “When Abraham [was able] to see what he was to see, [he] circumcised the flesh of the foreskin, thus teaching us that it is necessary to destroy the flesh.” (Gos.Phil. 82, 26-29). Translated by Marvin Meyer in the Nag Hammadi Scriptures.
200 Spec. 1.8-10; Rom. 2:29
203 2. Mos. 24
The religious and intellectual milieu of Alexandria served as an urban setting for the birth of various Gnostic school traditions, which continued the traditions of philosophical Judaism combined with Pauline theology. Rather than a sect or cult within early Christianity, the school of Valentinus can be regarded as a Christianized cult within the Platonic-Pythagorean tradition. The Valentinian teachers taught Pythagorean transcendental monism in the guise of Christian religiosity. They can be equated with the popular philosophers, even though the social setting of the school of Valentinus was the Christian *ecclesia*. The attitude of the Valentinians towards Christian cultic observances was twofold. On the one hand, the Christian rituals were seen merely as *propaideia* for the deeper mysteries without any transformative power. On the other hand, the sacraments were converted into Platonic theurgy and were the means to gain spiritual redemption from the bondage of the flesh. It is rather likely that the different views concerning the rituals were related to the more profound anthropological disagreement concerning the degree of the incarnation of the soul.

The Valentinian teachers were famous for their allegorical interpretation of the Bible. Although the allegorical method was used by the Hellenistic philosophers as a hermeneutical tool in interpreting Greco-Roman myths and poetry, the Valentinian teachers and Philo differed from them in that the allegorical method had its basis in the linguistic theory about the confusion of language. This means that the allegorical level was not artificially added to the text, but the religious texts were intentionally written allegorically, and, therefore, must be decoded through the allegorical method. In many cases the Valentinian exegetes reformed the preceding Gnostic *mythopoiesis* on the grounds of Hellenistic Jewish allegorical methods by integrating the Gnostic myth more closely to the actual biblical text and downplaying the distinctively Gnostic motifs in the myth.

The two case studies handled at the end of this chapter demonstrate that the Valentinian exegesis was multidimensional. The degree of allegorical symbolism depended on the intellectual level of the audience and the context of the texts, which parallels Philo, who was also a proponent of “multiple exegesis.” Valentinian exegesis was based on a careful reading of the text, which contains clues and invites the use of the allegorical method. The allegorical meaning was not added artificially to the text, but it followed certain rules of interpretation. Ptolemy's *Letter to Flora* proves that the author of the letter was familiar with the categorization of Mosaic Law and the symbolical interpretation of Jewish cultic law, which are also found in Philo.
4 PROTOLOGY: THE CREATION OF THE INTELLIGIBLE COSMOS

In this chapter, I will investigate issues that are related to the conception of God and the creation of the so-called “intelligible cosmos” – κόσμος νοητός – a concept first mentioned by Philo of Alexandria. The Valentinian protological account becomes comprehensible in the light of Middle Platonic philosophy, which intended to harmonize the Platonic two-world model with Aristotelian transcendent philosophy and Pythagorean first principles. Philo of Alexandria can be located in the initial stage of this same Platonic-Pythagorean tradition. David Winston has pointed out that the philosophical-mystical tradition of Plato was “the first intellectual love for Philo” and I would suggest that this goes for the Valentinian teachers as well.204 Just as Lady Philosophy revealed herself to Boethius, it was the Pythagorean Tetrad who revealed himself to Marcus the Magician in the shape of a woman or the Logos who spoke to Valentinus in the voice of a child.205 Although the common Middle Platonic intellectual background explains many parallels between Philo and the Valentinian tradition, Valentinian teachers were also dependent on Hellenistic Jewish allegorical inventions similar to those attested in Philo’s writings. I will begin this chapter with a brief sketch of the philosophical background of Valentinian protology.

4.1 Philo of Alexandria, Valentinian teachers and the transcendental monotheism

The birth of the Middle Platonic tradition is related to the return of dogmatic Platonism and the renaissance of Pythagoreanism. In the period between the first century BCE and the first CE, the Academy and the Lyceum were closed, Aristotle’s school treatises were put into circulation, and there was a revival of interest in Pythagorean pseudepigrapha. Aristotle’s philosophy became a tool to discuss philosophical issues, which were related to interpreting Plato’s writings.206 It was Eudorus of Alexandria (ca. 30 BCE), who revised Plato’s

204 Winston, Logos, 13.
205 The conversation with Lady Philosophy is a well-known theme in Boethius’s work Consolation of Philosophy. For Boethius, Lady Philosophy is both the healer and nurturer who reveals Boethius’s intellectual disease. For the mystical experiences of Marcus and Valentinus, see Iren. Haer. 1.14.1; Hipp. Ref. 6.42.2.
cosmological model in the *Timaeus* in the light of Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* and Neo-Pythagorean principles in a way which became standard among Middle Platonic teachers, although Eudorus’s extreme monism was not favored by all later Middle Platonists. Bonazzi maintains that “Eudorus’s doctrine appears as one of the first attempts to break with Stoic tradition, with the aim of promoting a turn (or return) to a transcendent principle.”207 The Pythagorean turn in Eudorus had a significant impact on the intellectual milieu, especially in Alexandria. During this development, some pseudo-Pythagorean works (e.g. pseudo-Archytas and pseudo-Timaeus’s *On the Nature of the World*) were written in Eudorus’s circle in order to emphasize the Pythagorean nature of the Old Academy.208

The discussion concerning Pythagorean protology started during the Old Academy. Plato had already in *Parmenides* taken up the problem of how the world of multiplicity could be derived from unity, which “cannot have a name or be spoken of, nor can there be any knowledge or perception of opinion of it” (*Parm.* 141e-142a; cf. also *Philebus* 26e-30e). Also, the systematic development of the series of paired principles had already been introduced by Plato’s immediate successors (Speusippus, Xenocrates), but it was based on dualistic philosophy. Eudorus first time articulated the idea of the transcendent One above the Monad and the Dyad, which brings these opposite principles together.209

The most influential critic of Plato’s *Timaeus* was Aristotle, whose supreme God was a transcendent and meta-cosmic intellect who did not engage in any practical activity. Rather than an efficient cause of the changes of the visible world, he is an unmoved mover, who moves everything through attraction (ὄρεξις) like a magnet.210 Eudorus’ innovation was to identify the Aristotelian prime mover with the Platonic Demiurge, who became the highest God (ὁ ὑπεράνω θεός). The transcendent God was associated with the Pythagorean “one” (τὸ ἕν) and Ideas, which had in Plato’s cosmology an

independent existence, became the thoughts of God. As the Ideas externalized from God’s mind, they became the Monad (μονάς), which was commonly associated with the rational aspect of Plato’s World Soul. Besides the Monad was the Dyad (δύας), which also was derived from the One to become the principle of matter and multiplicity. In Pseudo-Archytas’s Principles the first pair of principles (the Monad and the Dyad) are equated with Aristotelian form and matter, but there is the third principle above them, the highest God, which could bring them together.211

In the various Middle Platonic systems the discussion concerning the first principles was related to these basic ontological structures, the One, the Monad, and the Dyad, although the systems differed in details. In some systems, the demiurgic activity of the transcendent God was delegated to the Monad, which was divided and “infected” as it came in contact with pre-existent matter.212 In some other systems, the opposition of the first principles (the Monad and the Dyad) was stressed in a manner that led to a strict cosmological dualism.213

The Valentinian protological myth can be located in the Neo-Pythagorean tradition, which saw the intelligible cosmos as a combination of form (active, male) and matter (passive, female) and above them is located the transcendent One, who possesses the characteristics of the Aristotelian self-thinking God. The Middle Platonic doxographer Aetius described Plato’s view about God in the following way:

211 Bonazzi, “Eurodorus of Alexandria,” 376. The author of Pseudo-Archytas is not the early Pythagorean Archytas of Tarentum, although in antiquity Iamblichus, followed by others within the tradition, believed that Archytas had composed this text. The local context for the ideas given in this treatise suggests that its author was writing in the middle of the first century BCE, possibly in the time of the Peripatetics Andronicus and Boethus and the Platonist Eudorus of Alexandria, each of whom wrote on Aristotle’s Categories to challenge Stoic materialistic cosmology. See Michael Griffin, Aristotle’s Categories in the Early Roman Empire (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 97-102.

212 In Numenius’ system, the first Monad is absolute unity, but the second Monad is unstable because he has a desire for Matter. The second Monad is divided as he seized material things. For the system of Numenius, see Dillon, The Middle Platonists, 367-368. In Numenius the distinction between the first and second God is that the first God is at rest while the second God is in intellectual motion. The intellectual life of the first God is directed towards himself, which generates an attraction towards himself and forms the order of the world. The intellectual motion of the second God is directed towards creation and matter. See John Dillon, “Numenius: Some Ontological Questions,” in The Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies. Greek and Roman Philosophy 100 BC-200 AD. Volume II. (50) 2014, 397-402.

213 Plutarch was still working with dualistic systems in which the principle of the Dyad was associated with an evil world-soul. For the dualistic system in De animae procreation in Timaeo see Jan Opsomer, “Plutarch on the One and the Dyad,” in The Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies. Greek and Roman Philosophy 100 BC-200 AD. Volume II. (50) 2014, 379-383.
Plato affirms that God is the One, the single natured and the self-natured, the monadic, true Being, and the Good. All such names refer to the intellect. God therefore is intellect, a separate form... Of this Father and Maker the cosmos the other divine beings are offspring. Some are intelligible, the so-called intelligible cosmos <and the ideas>. These are paradigms of the visible cosmos.214

The main tenets in this description can also be found in the writings of Philo, who may have been a contemporary of Aetius. Although it is not likely that Philo would have been a member of any philosophical school, his philosophical commentaries on the Scriptures bear all the marks of the Middle Platonic tradition, which was influenced by Neo-Pythagoreanism. Philo can be located within the earliest phase of Middle Platonic tradition that goes back to the circle of Eudorus of Alexandria.215 For Philo, Moses was a Platonic philosopher, who crypted Neo-Pythagorean principles in numbers, etymologies, and symbols.216 This means that the Scriptures contain


215 The question concerning Philo’s philosophical orientation is a debated issue among scholars of Philonic studies. David Winston, Gregory Sterling and John Dillon are of the opinion that Philo was a Middle Platonic philosopher. See Winston, Philo of Alexandria, 1-37; Dillon, The Middle Platonists, 139-183; Sterling, “Platonizing Moses: Philo and Middle Platonism,” in StPhA (5) 1993, 99-103.

Winston compares the philosophical system of Philo with Spinoza’s religious philosophy. David Runia has argued that Philo was not a Platonist in the sense that he would have belonged to the Platonic institutionalized school. Runia maintained that although Philo was familiar with Platonic doctrines, primacy was given to the actual text, which the commentator was obliged to follow where ever it led. Philo was not a philosopher, but an exegete, and he was not married to any particular school, although the Pythagorean-Platonic preferences are dominant in his writings. See Runia, Philo of Alexandria, 544 and ibid. “The Rehabilitation of the Jackdaw: Philo of Alexandria and Ancient Philosophy,” in The Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies. Greek and Roman Philosophy 100 BC-200 AD. Volume II. (50) 2014, 491-495.

216 Harry Wolfson maintained that Philo was the founder of a religious philosophy that was adopted by the later Middle Platonists and Platonizing dogmatists of the nascent orthodoxy. Wolfson, Philo II, 434-460. Although Wolfson’s thesis has not gained large support, it goes without saying that Philo did not only repeat the doctrines of the contemporary philosophical schools but created something of his own. Although the influence of Philo’s philosophy remained, mainly inside the Christian tradition, it is possible, or even probable, that Numenius knew Philo’s works. In Praeparatio evangelica Eusebius mentions the famous saying of Numenius: “What is Plato Moses speaking in Attic?” Evidently, Numenius knew and used Jewish material (Frag. 9 = Eusebius, Praep. ev. 9.8.1-2) and 10a (= Origen, Cels. 4.51). Gregory Sterling has argued that Numenius may have altered standard Platonic vocabulary in Frag. 13 (= Eusebius, Praep. ev. 11.18.13-14) in a way, which parallels Philo’s Mut. 11-14 (cf. also Post. 171). Cf. Gregory Sterling, “The Theft of Philosophy: Philo of Alexandria and Numenius of Apamea,” in The Studia Philonica Annual XXVII (Atlanta: SBL, 2015), 71-85.
philosophical truths, which can be revealed through the allegorical method of interpretation. Philo's cosmological or anthropological theories become comprehensible on the grounds of philosophical discussion within the Middle Platonic tradition. As John Dillon has pointed out:

Certainly, God is in heaven, and he is the creator of our world, but he did not create it according to a pattern laid up in his mind, which is co-extensive with his heaven. If we find such a concept in a Jewish thinker such as Philo, or later Christian theorists such as Clement or Origen, we reckon that it has been imported from somewhere else; and the same is the case if we come upon it in a document of Gnosticism, Christian or otherwise.217

Philo was a representative of the Platonic-Aristotelian tradition, which owed much to the Pythagorean revival within the philosophical circles of Alexandria.218 The three main topics – ideas, matter and the role of the Demiurge – which were discussed within Middle Platonic circles and presented in the quotation of Aetius above were also fundamental in Philo's philosophical exegesis. The main principles of the Middle Platonic tradition can be found in Philo's writings.

1. The postulation of the unknowable and transcendent first principle called the One, or God, or the first Monad, who is also the Creator of All.
2. The use of the Pythagorean principle in the conceptualizing of the first principles of the cosmos.
3. The postulation of the second Monad, which derived from the first Monad and was identified with the Logos and associated with the Platonic world soul.
4. The postulation of ideas as the thoughts of God, which were located in the second Monad.
5. The postulation of the pre-cosmic principle of matter, i.e. the Dyad, which was derived from the Logos.

In a fragment that contains a discussion of Philo and his nephew Alexander, Philo says that he is not a teacher but an interpreter.219 This would mean that Philo was an interpreter of ancient philosophical teachings, but he was not a

---


218 Philo knew some works of the Pythagoreans by name (Aet. 12), and he also praised the excellence of the doctrines of the Pythagoreans (Quod. Omn. Prob. 1.2). Clement of Alexandria called Philo “a Pythagorean” (Strom. 2.100.5)

219 This information is attested in an Armenian fragment of Philo (Anim. 7). See David Runia, “Philo of Alexandria and Ancient Philosophy,” 493.
Philo is one of the earliest imperial philosophers who explicitly articulated many of those theories which became dominant in the first- and second-century Platonic tradition. Philo says clearly that the ineffable and transcendent God is “the One who is greater than the Good, antecedent to the Monad, purer than the One, impossible to see by another being since he is apprehensible to himself alone.”

Philo’s theory concerning the origin of matter was influenced by Platonic-Pythagorean teachings which supposedly went back to Eudorus of Alexandria. Also, the theory of ideas as God’s thoughts and the externalization of God’s thinking as his Logos (= Monad) is first found in Philo. It would be farfetched to suppose, however, that this teaching originated from Philo. The most credible explanation is that Philo adapted the conception of ideas as God’s thought(s) from the Platonic circles of Alexandria, possibly from Eudorus, which he integrated into his Logos-theology. The two phases of the existence of Logos in Philo are summarized by Harry Wolfson as follows:

---

220 Praem. 40; Cont. 2; Leg. 5; QG 2:44.
222 Opif. 16-20.
223 In Plato’s Timaeus the Ideas existed independently besides the Demiurge and the Receptacle as the third arche of creation. It became common within the Middle Platonic tradition to locate the Ideas in the mind of God. The Ideas have their origin in the mind of God, but in two subsequent phases: firstly collectively in the mind of the transcendent One, and in the second phase as the objects of his thought. This is attested in the Placita of Aetius in 1.3.21: Πλάτων τρεῖς ἀρχάς, τὸν θεὸν τὴν ἰδέαν ὁ δὲ θεὸς ἐστι τοῦ κόσμου, ὡμίλῳ δὲ τὸ ύποκεκάμενον πρότον γενέσει καὶ φθορά, ιδέα δὲ οὐσία ἀαύματος ἐν τοῖς νομίσμασι καὶ φαντασίας τοῦ θεοῦ. (cf. Jones, “The Ideas,” 321). Radice agreed with Wolfson, who suggested that Philo was the inventor of the conception that the Ideas are the thoughts of God. This view was adopted by the later Middle Platonists (cf. R. Radice, “Observations on the Theory of the Ideas as Thoughts of God in Philo of Alexandria,” in The Studia Philonica Annual 3 (ed. by D. T. Runia, D. M. Hay and D. Winston; Atlanta: SBL: 1991), 128. Actually, Varro (116 – 27 BCE) attested the same concept in the allegory of Minerva springing from the head of Jupiter as the Ideas spring from the mind of God (Aug. Civ. Dei VII, 28). See Dillon, “Pleroma and Noetic Cosmos,” 101.
The Logos, therefore, which started its career as the mind of God or as the thinking power of God, and hence is identical with the essence of God, now enters upon a second stage of its existence, as an incorporeal mind created by God, having existence outside of God’s essence, and containing within itself the intelligible world and the myriad of ideas of which the latter consists.224

Aristotle’s conception of God as a self-thinking Nous may have influenced Philo’s theory of God.225 In Philo, however, God is not thinking of himself solely, as Aristotle’s prime mover does, but the object of thinking is both God himself and his thoughts, νοήματα, i.e. the Ideas.226 In the intelligible realm God is identical with his thought, and the moment he thinks something distinct from himself these thoughts, i.e. the Ideas, are externalized from himself. Therefore, the Ideas did not have an existence of their own, but were created by God, who began to think about them.

The objects of God’s thoughts are the archetypes of the visible cosmos.227 David Winston has pointed out that “the Logos is not a second entity by the side of God acting on his behalf, nor is it an empty abstraction, but rather a vivid and living hypostatization of an essential aspect of the Deity, the face of God turned toward creation.”228

Philo was aware that the Ideas were according to Plato not only patterns, or representations, but also causes (αἰτίαι) and powers (δύναμεις).229 Philo intends to show that this teaching was presented already by Moses: the glory that surrounds God consists of the powers of God which refer, according to Philo, to the Ideas in their pre-created stage. These ideas emanated like rays of light from the light giving God.230 Philo can also say that the intelligible

---

224 Wolfson, Philo I, 232.
226 Ar. Met. XII 9, 1074b, 34; 1075a, 3-5; Albinus, Didaskalos, 9. See Jones, “Ideas,” 324.
227 It was rather difficult for Philo to find biblical proofs for the theory that the Logos of God is a pattern according to which the visible cosmos is created. Philo infers this idea from Gen. 1:26-27, according to which the human being was created according to the image of God. This image of God was the Logos, and it served as the archetype for the creation of the soul of the first human being, or, at least, its rational part. Philo inferred that if the human soul is an image of Logos, there is no reason to reject the idea that the whole visible cosmos is also fashioned according to Logos, which contained all the archetypical patterns of the visible world. See David Runia, On the Creation of the Cosmos according to Moses. Introduction, Translation and Commentary (Atlanta: SBL, 2001), 149-150.
228 Winston, Logos, 49-50.
229 Plato presents the conception of ideas as powers and causes in Phaedo 95 e ff.; Sophist 247 d-e, which is referred to by Philo in Mut. 122 and Spec. Leg. I 45-48.
230 Spec. 1. 45-48, Cher. 31.106; Immut. 17.78; Wolfson, Philo, 217-219; Winston, Logos, 19.
The powers have a role in structuring matter because God cannot shape shapeless matter directly by himself but through the agency of incorporeal powers that are also called ideas. The Ideas do not have, thus, in Philo an independent existence as in Plato, but they are inseparable from God, whose thinking (“Ideas”) and acting (“powers”) are simultaneous. To sum up: Philo’s God creates the world by thinking about it, and if He stopped thinking, the whole world would collapse.

In Philo’s transcendental monism, the whole world was interrelated through the Logos, which was a cosmic bond holding all things together. There were several tiers of cosmic forces, which were all derived from the One. At the top was the supreme God, whose essence is not definable, but only his existence. At the second level is the “second god,” the Logos, which takes in the world of becoming the form of the Ruling Power (Lord) and the Creative Power (God). These powers can be equated with Plato’s two principles, peras and apeiron (Philebus 23C-31A). Although the essence of God and his powers is not knowable, they show a kind of impressions (ἐκμαγεῖα) of their energy to the minds, which are created as images of the Logos.

4.2 The outline of the Valentinian myth

It became rather common in the first century Middle Platonism to depict God in an apophatic manner, which stressed the transcendence of God. There was nothing that can define the transcendent One because this would mean that there is a more profound principle which can determine the primal God. Alcinous said that the first God is “eternal, ineffable and the summit of all perfections, the source of all goodness being the object of desire.” Philo also stated that God was unutterable and absolutely without physical

---

231 Conf. 172; Winston, Logos, 19, note 40.
232 Spec. 1.329. I will investigate Philo’s theory of the Logos-tomeus in the following chapter. According to his theory, the Logos is not only an archetype but a cutting power, dividing pre-cosmic matter according to its physical characteristics. (cf. Her. 133ff.)
235 Alc. Did. 10.164.30. See Wolfson, Philo I, 115.
qualities. One can know only the existence of God through his Logos and powers, but the essence of God is incomprehensible.\textsuperscript{236} For that reason, Philo uses a method called κατ’ ἀφαίρεσιν in describing God according to which God is dissociated from all sensible predicates.\textsuperscript{237}

In the Valentinian myth the primal God is “invisible and unknowable, eternal and unbegotten who remained in throughout innumerable cycles of ages in profound serenity and quiescence.”\textsuperscript{238} In the Tripartite Tractate the Father of All “is the one who has been born by no one, but who, on the contrary, has given birth to the All and has brought it into being.” He is “also unchangeable in his eternal being, in that which he is, in that which makes him immutable and that which makes him great” and he does not have a partner as he creates, because this would imply a limitation. The eternal Father has no name that suits him, and his essence is not comprehensible.\textsuperscript{239} The primal God cannot be known except through his hypostasized Mind, who only has the capability to contemplate Father’s immeasurable greatness, which surpasses all definitions and limits of understanding.\textsuperscript{240}

The Valentinian account of Clement in Exc.Theod. 43.2-65 (= Exc. C) begins abruptly without any description of the creation of the intelligible realm. The first thing that is mentioned is the descent of the Savior to Sophia, who has been cast out from the Pleroma (Exc. Theod. 43.2). It is clear, however, that Exc. C presupposed some preceding protological narrative, but we do not know for sure, whether it was similar to that of Irenaeus’s model system in Iren. Haer. 1.1-3. We do not have any reason to suppose that the accounts of Irenaeus and Clement would have differed significantly from each other, although there may have been differences in the terms and concepts used in their protologies. I will begin the investigation of Valentinian protology by presenting the outline of the myth in Iren. Haer. 1.1-3, which will be compared with the accounts in Iren. Haer. 1.12.1; Hipp. Ref. 6.29.3-4, Exc. Theod. 6-7, and Iren. Haer. 1.8.5.

1. The ultimate transcendent deity Profundity (Βυθός), which is also called First-Beginning and First-Father (Προαρχή, Προπάτωρ) possesses Thought (Ἔννοια), which is also called Grace and Silence (Χάρις, Σιγή), which depicts the primal Deity as a self-thinking Unity.

2. The First-Father duplicates himself by exteriorization of his Thought and generates Mind (Νοῦς). He is also called the Only-Begotten, Father and the Beginning (Μονογενής, Πατήρ, Ἀρχή). He emits the “Beginning” of all things.

\textsuperscript{236} Cher. 67; Somn. 1.67; Immut. 62; Praem. 40.

\textsuperscript{237} Deus 55-56. The same method is used in Alcinous in Did. X 165.15 and Clement of Alexandria in Strom. 5.71.2-3.

\textsuperscript{238} Iren. Haer. 1.1-2.

\textsuperscript{239} Tri.Trac. 51.8-54.35. Translation by Einar Thomassen in The Nag Hammadi Scripture.

\textsuperscript{240} Iren. Haer. 1.1-2.
as a “seed” in the womb of Silence, who becomes pregnant and gives birth to “Mind.”
3. Mind (Νοῦς) is the manifested double of the First-Father, whereas Thought (Ἐννοια) is the hidden double of the Father. The Mind is “like and equal to the one who projected him, and who alone comprehended the greatness of the Father.” As a copy of the primal unity in duality, the Mind is joined to his pair called Truth (Αλήθεια). Thus, these four (Profundity, Silence, Mind and Truth) generate the principal Pythagorean Tetrads, which is the root of all things.
4. The Only-Begotten and Truth produced Logos and Life (Λόγος, Ζωή), which in turn brought forth the conjugal pair Man and Church (Ἄνθρωπος, Ἐκκλησία). Out of this first-begotten Ogdoad (Bythos-Monogenes-Logos-Anthropos + their female conjugal pairs the whole Pleroma consisting of 30 aeons is brought forth.241
5. The youngest of the aeons, Sophia, intended to know the greatness of the Father of All, but she was prevented by an aeon called Limit (Ὅρος), who was produced by the Father as a guardian. His task was to prevent the aeons from knowing the Father. The Limit was a limiting principle of the divine world and he kept the unlimited female aspect of the intelligible world in control.242

---

241 The ten aeons emitted by Logos and Life are Profound and Mingling, Ageless and Union, Self-Producing and Pleasure, Immobile and Blending, Only-Begotten and Happiness. The twelve aeons emitted by Man and Church are Advocate and Faith, Paternal and Hope, Maternal and Love, Praise and Understanding, Ecclesiastic and Blessedness, Desired and Wisdom.

242 In the Platonic-Pythagorean tradition, the term Limit (πέρας) describes the process in which unlimited matter was kept in check. In Valentinian theology this principle was called the Boundary (ὅρος), but also, the Cross (σταυρός), the Redeemer (λυτρωτής), the Emancipator (καρπίστης), the Boundary-setter, (ὁροθέτης) and the Guide (μεταγωγεύς). Irenaeus maintains in Iren. Haer. 1.3.5 that the function of the Limit is twofold: when it strengthens the unity it is called σταυρός, but when it separates multiplicity it is called ὅρος. In Exc. C the Cross plays a double role: it both separates and strengthens (Exc. Theod. 42.1-3). The fan mentioned by John the Baptist (Mt. 3:12) is explained to be the Cross, which both purifies the saved and consumes the wicked. These notions are based on the allegorical reading of the Gospel of Matthew. The strengthening power of the Cross is depicted in the words of Jesus according to which “whoever does not take his cross cannot be my disciple” (Mt. 10:38) and the separating power of the Savior is depicted when Jesus says “I came not to send peace, but a sword”, i.e. the Cross (Mt. 10:34). The Cross and the Crucifixion were thus associated with the Pythagorean metaphysical principle of separation and unification. In this process, the Cross became a symbol of the two-fold process in which the lower essences (the Dyad) are separated from the higher ones, and at the same time, the purer essences are strengthened into a unity (the Monad). At the protological level, the separation of Sophia's erroneous thought from the Pleroma was seen as a “crucifixion”. Matter was crucified out of the Pleroma, but at the same time the Pleroma was unified through the Cross. In the same vein, Jesus's crucifixion was not seen in the gospel narratives as an atonement for sins but as a separation of the spiritual and psychic essences from the Savior's material existence. The Valentinians transformed the Pauline theology of the Cross into the metaphysical theory of separation.
The passion for knowing the Father began already with Mind and Truth, but it spread like an infection to Sophia under the deception of love that was directed to the Father without a conjugal partner.

6. The presumptuous thought of Sophia, called Intention, was separated from her, and it was cast out of Pleroma by the Limit. In the realm below the Pleroma, the Intention became the lower Sophia, called Achamoth. After the separation in the divine realm, the Only-Begotten produced another conjugal pair Christ and the Holy Spirit (Χριστός - Πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον), whose task was to inform the other aeons that the First-Father was not able to be comprehended except by the Only-Begotten alone.

7. Finally, all the aeons were strengthened and rectified by the Christ - Holy Spirit and the whole Pleroma was brought to rest. All the aeons were made equal in form and mind (μορφῇ καὶ γνώμῇ ἴσους κατασταθῆναι τοὺς Αἰῶνας): all became Mind, Logos, etc. and Truth, Life, etc. As a result, all the aeons produced together the perfect fruit of Pleroma Jesus, who contains all the aeons within himself. Jesus is called “the Savior,” “Christ,” “Logos” and “All.” At the same time, the aeons emanated angels to be the bodyguards of the Savior.

8. Sophia Achamoth, who now outside the Pleroma, was saved in two subsequent phases that parallel the rectification of Sophia in the Pleroma (cf. stages 5-6 above). In the first phase Christ gave form to Sophia, who was amorphous and shapeless, but he did it without recourse to perfect knowledge. However, Christ left with Sophia the fragrance of immortality and perfection. After Christ left her, she started to feel various emotions, such as fear, consternation, perplexity and ignorance, but also the emotion of “returning” or “repentance” (ἐπιστροφή) to the Light, who had deserted her. In the second phase of salvation, the Savior descended to Sophia and gave her form according to the knowledge and healed her emotions: ὁ Σωτήρ ἐπιφέρει αὐτῇ μόρφωσιν τὴν κατὰ γνῶσιν καὶ ἱάσιν τῶν παθῶν.

9. The Savior separated the emotions of Sophia, which became the origin of cosmic matter. The Savior bestowed capability upon the unformed matter that was formed into cosmic elements and compounds of the visible cosmos by the Demiurge. The psychic and luminous essence was created out of Sophia’s will to return to the Light, and the four cosmic elements (earth, water, air, fire) were created out of Sophia’s negative emotions. Sophia herself was transformed from the hylic-psychic stage into a spiritual being. She began to feel joy as she contemplated the Savior and his angels. As a

243 The term ἐπιστροφή (conversion) was not only an essential soteriological term used in the gospels and religious texts in general, but in the Valentinian system it became a key technical term that also appears in the texts of later Neo-Platonists. Sophia’s will to return to the Light became the source of all psychic essences of the world that have an innate desire to return to the Light and to know God. This parallels later Neo-Platonic epistemology in which all souls that have come into being from the One have an innate desire to revert (ἐπιστροφή) to that from which they have proceeded (cf. Proclus, Elements 31-32, Simplicius, Phys. 147.9).
product of joy, she produced offspring according to the images of the angels of the Savior. The following scheme presents the general structure of the Valentinian cosmological system. It also contains the realms of psychic and material essences, which are investigated later in the following chapters.
4.3 The origin of Valentinian protology

Einar Thomassen has argued that the Valentinian protologies can be divided into two main groups. There are theories that give the aeons an existence in the supra-mundane divinity but do not name the particular aeons. The aeons are derived from the primal Unity in two subsequent phases: firstly in the thought of the Father, and secondly as independent beings when they are manifested from Him. The same kind of idea of generative exteriorization is the basis for the theories of the second group, but in these accounts the names and the number of the aeons are detailed, and the totality of the aeons is organized according to the pairs of syzygies. The protological system described above (Iren. Haer. 1.1.1-3) belongs to the latter model. The main representative of the former system is the *Tripartite Tractate*, but it also lies behind the *Gospel of Truth* and other so-called eastern Valentinian documents. The difference between the various protological versions lies mainly in the concepts, which were chosen for the description of the same generation of the first principles from the unitary source. Thomassen points out, however, that fundamentally the Valentinian protologies seek to express the one and the same truth, namely how the world of multiplicity could generate from the unitary whole. This means that the Father of All

---

244 Thomassen maintains that the other writings whose protology can be placed together with Irenaeus’ account (Iren. Haer. 1.1.1-3) in the same group are Iren. Haer. 1.8.5, Hipp. Haer. VI 29:2-30:5, Epiph. Pan. XXXI 5-6 and Exc. Theod. 6-7.3. Also, the variations described in Iren. Haer. 1.11-12 are representations of the same main group. Val. Exp. (NHC XI,2) 22:19-31:34 is the only extant surviving document of a protology similar to Irenaeus’s *Haer. 1.1.1-3*. It belongs to the phase of the Valentinian system where the protologies similar to Irenaeus *Haer. 1.1-3* (pages 29-30 in the document) are combined with protology that parallels the *Tripartite Tractate* (pages 17-24). This notion indicates the importance of the system described by Irenaeus until the latter part of the 3rd century, when the document was presumably written. For details, see Thomassen, The Spiritual Seed, 194, 236-241.

245 Einar Thomassen is of the opinion that the protology of Irenaeus’s system represents a secondary elaboration of a more primitive theory and the theories in the *Tripartite Tractate* and the *Gospel of Truth* stand near this primitive theory. Cf. Thomassen, The Spiritual Seed, 200. It should be noted that the Valentinian accounts attested in Irenaeus and Exc. C were written at the latest only a few decades after the death of Valentinus. This would mean that the elaboration of the Valentinian protology according to the Neo-Pythagorean arithmology was made at a rather early phase, possibly in Rome within the circle of the disciples of Ptolemy or by Ptolemy himself. Kenney suggests that the *Tripartite Tractate* is a more philosophical version of the Valentinian myth compared to that presented by Irenaeus in Iren. *Haer. 1.1.1-3*. It should be observed, however, that the Neo-Pythagorean and philosophical terminology is more clearly postulated in Irenaeus’s version of the Valentinian myth. However, the protological system of the *Tripartite Tractate* does not contain any explicit references to John’s prologue or to Genesis. This would mean that the Valentinians behind the accounts of Irenaeus and Exc. C were more interested in the biblical formulation of the Middle Platonic cosmic myth. It is possibly that the protological myth in the *Tripartite Tractate* and the *Gospel of Truth* belong to the
externalized His intention to be known in the form of emanations, i.e. intellectual beings called aeons, who have their origin in the mind of God as His thoughts. These aeons desired to see the one who emitted them and to be informed about their root, which was without beginning. It is noticeable that the protological model in Iren. *Haer.* 1.1.1-3 is based on the protological commentary on the prologue of the *Gospel of John* that is attested in Iren. *Haer.* 1.8.5 having parallel in Clement’s *Exc. Theod.* 6-7. I will begin the examination of the protological commentary with Clement’s version, which represents, in my opinion, a more original version of the Valentinian commentary on John’s prologue.

The words “In the Beginning was the Logos, and the Logos was with God, and the Logos was God” are interpreted by the Valentinians as follows: They say that “the Beginning” is the Only-Begotten, whom they also call God. Just as he is also explicitly said to be God in the following [sentence]: “The only-begotten God, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has explained him.” The “Logos” who is in “the Beginning” – that is, in the Only-Begotten and Mind and Truth – reveals the Christ, being Logos and the Life. Therefore, he too with just cause is called God because he is in God and Mind. “That which came into being through him” – through Logos – “was the Life” – his partner. That is why the Lord also says: “I am the Life.”

The starting point for the protological theory is the allegorical reading of the prologue of the Gospel of John. The expression 

\[ \text{Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος} \]

is an ontological rather than a temporal definition: it depicted how the Logos had its origin in “the Beginning” or was inside “the Beginning.” At the same time,
“the Beginning” was personified as the Only-Begotten, which was produced by the Father. The Only-Begotten contained within himself the Logos and the Life. Moreover, the Only-Begotten was called the “Mind”, and he has as his partner the “Truth”. The relations of these beings are explained in the following manner:

Now, being unknown, the Father desired to become known to the aeons. And through his Intention - knowing himself as it were – and through the spirit of knowledge, which is in the [Spirit of] knowledge, he emitted the Only-Begotten. Thus, the one who came forth from knowledge – that is the Son – himself became knowledge, for “through the Son the Father has become known.” Moreover, the spirit of love mingled with the [the Spirit of] knowledge, as the Father with the Son and Intention with Truth and it [i.e. the Spirit of love] came forth from Truth, just as [the Spirit of] knowledge did from Intention. And the one who remained as “the Only-Begotten Son in the bosom of the Father” explains the Intention using [the Spirit of] knowledge to the aeons, having also been emitted from his bosom.” The one who appeared here below, however, is no longer called “the Only-Begotten” by the apostle, but “as an Only-Begotten”: “glory as of the Only-Begotten.”

Valentinian protology contains an epistemological dimension: the unknown God intended to be known by creating other intellectual beings. The Father emanated intellectual beings because he wanted to be known through them. The Father possessed an “intention” (Ἐνθύμησις) to be known, which caused the generation of the entirety of the intellectual beings. The intelligible realm was not, however, an archetype of the visible world, but it

---


249 Casey and Thomassen translate Ἐνθύμησις as Thought. A better translation, however, is Intention. Thomassen is of the opinion that it parallels Ἐννοια in Irenaeus’s accounts (Ir. Haer. 1.1.1; 1.12.1; 1.12.3). The translation of Ἐννοια as “Thought” is not perfectly correct, and should be translated “Concept”. It is mentioned in the Stoic epistemological sequence as being a concept: phantasia-katalepsis-ennoia. Cf. Dillon, St. Irenaeus of Lyons, 138 note 11. Philo also uses the term Ἐννοια when he refers to the term “concept” (cf. e.g. Opif. 36). I would use, however, the translation “Thought” for Ἐννοια, but “Intention” for Ἐνθύμησις.
was an instrument through which the Father could be known. The Father could be known through the two Spirits proceeding from him, which were mingled together. These spirits are the Spirit of knowledge (πνεῦμα γνώσεως) and the Spirit of love (πνεῦμα ἀγάπης).250

Irenaeus’s version of the protological commentary (Iren. Haer. 1.8.5) mainly follows the same logic as Clement’s account, but its author has made some modifications. The emission of the beings is described using metaphors of sexual union. The Father emitted all things through the Son as through a seed (ἐν ᾧ τὰ πάντα ὁ Πατὴρ προέβαλε σπερματικῶς). This theme is lacking in Exc. Theod. 6-7. As in Clement’s commentary, the phrase “he was at the beginning with God” was not a temporal expression, but it “shows the order of emission” (ἔδειξε τὴν τῆς προβολῆς τάξιν). The distinction is made, however, between things, which are made through the Logos and the things that are made in the Logos (John 1:3). The Logos formed all the aeons after him and became their cause, but what was made in him was the Life (πᾶσι γὰρ τοῖς μετ’ αὐτὸν Αἴώσι μορφώσεως καὶ γενέσεως αἵτις ὁ Λόγος ἐγένετο. Ἀλλ᾽ ὃ γέγονεν ἐν αὐτῷ φησί Ζωή ἐστιν). Thus, the Life was the conjugal partner of Logos, and they emitted the last pair of the second Tetrad, i.e. the Man and the Church. The Life was associated with the Light (John 1:4), but the Light was not a distinct being for the whole intelligible cosmos was depicted as Light. The Savior is the fruit of the whole Pleroma and the Light, which shines in the darkness, i.e. in the realm outside the Pleroma.

In Exc. Theod. 6-7, the principal Tetrad consisted of the Mind, the Truth, the Logos, and the Life but the Father was not counted as a member of the Pleroma. He was the source of intellectual beings, not part of them. In Irenaeus’s account, the Grace is mentioned as the conjugal pair of the Father, and they form together with the Mind and Truth the first Tetrad. In addition to the Logos and the Life, another pair, i.e. the Man and the Church, must be added in order to generate the second Tetrad. Consequently, the whole Ogdoad was completed, and it served as the Mother of all Aeons. The Savior was according to Iren. Haer. 1.8.5 the fruit of the entire Pleroma.

It is rather likely that Exc. Theod. 6-7.3 and Iren. Haer. 1.8.5 were two reworkings of the same protological commentary that goes back to Ptolemy or his disciples. It served as the basis for the elaborated version of the protology in Iren. Haer. 1.1.1-3. Although Exc. Theod. 6-7 may be closer to the original version of the commentary, it is not clear, whether Clement presents it accurately. The following schema illustrates the Valentinian model system attested in Iren. Haer. 1.1-3, which developed on the ground of

250 The conceptual background of this primitive Valentinian protology is more Aristotelian than Platonic because it stresses the synergy of intention and knowledge, not merely knowledge. It is stated in Irenaeus’ account that Sophia intended to know the Father, and she acted under the pretense of love, but in reality in temerity (τούμη) without union with his consort Desired (Iren. Haer. 1.2.2.) This would mean that Sophia did not function according to the Spirit of knowledge and the Spirit of love, but only according to her intention to love.
allegorical reading of the prologue of the Gospel of John. I have marked the protology of *Exc.Theod.* 6-7 in grey and the elements that were added in Iren. *Haer.* 1.8.5 are bolded.

Hans Krämer has pointed out that in the Valentinian model system described above the aeons of the Pleroma correspond to the world of Platonic ideas, conceived as paradigmatic virtues (Σοφία, Ζύνεσις, Πίστις, Έλπις, Αγαπή) and qualities (Μίξις, Ἐνωσις, Ακίνητος etc.). The things outside the Pleroma, separated by the boundary (Horos), are called images or shadows of the Pleromatic realities. It seems that the Valentinian system derives from a Pythagorean-Platonic doctrine of ideal numbers, which were personified by
the Valentinians. In Iren. Haer. 1.1.1-3 the names of the “unknown God” are Προπάτωρ or Προαρχή, which are derived from the primitive version of the protological account. In Exc. Theod. 6-7 and Iren. Haer. 1.8.5 the Only-Begotten is called ἄρχη which would mean that God out of which the Only-Begotten was emitted can be called Προαρχή. In Iren. Haer. 1.1.1 the conjugal partner of the First-Father is called Χάρις, which appeared earlier in the commentary in Iren. Haer. 1.8.5. She is also called the Silence (Σιγή), a term which frequently appears in the Valentinian sources as a conjugal partner for the Father. The First-Father is also called the Profundity (Βυθός). In the elaborated model system in Iren. Haer. 1.1.1-3 the aeons were in the first place in the thought of the Father as in the “womb” out of which they were generated as the seed. This embryological feature of protology goes back to Neo-Pythagorean sources according to which the Monad contains within itself potentially all numbers like the seed inside the womb. The Neo-Pythagorean source forms also the basis of Neoplatonist Syrian’s commentary on Aristotle’s Metaphysics:

“For the divine number ‘proceeds from the hiding-place of the pure Monad, until one comes to the sacred Tetrad; she, then, bore the mother of all things, all-containing, old, setting a boundary around all things, unchangeable, inexhaustible; they call her pure Decad, the immortal gods and earthborn men.”

The same kind of embryological model can also be found in the Chaldean Oracles, which speaks about the Monad as the Father and the womb that contains the all. Also, the name Βυθός for the Father appears in the Chaldean Oracles, which speaks about πατρικὸς βυθός. In addition, the name Σιγή, which is attested in many Valentinian sources, occurs also in the Chaldean Oracles. It refers to the womb from which the aeons are born.
It is commonly noticed that the Valentinian protological system parallels some Classic Gnostic texts, such as the *Apocryphon of John* (BG 24,20-25,1), *Zostrianos* (64,14-16) and *Allogenes* (49,26-38; 65,32-36). The “Depth” (Βυθός) also occurs in *Eugnostos* (V 6,20) and Irenaeus’s description of Ophite mythology in Iren. *Haer.* 1.30.1. The “Silence” (Σιγή) is found in the *Eugnostos* (V 15,21; III 88, 8-9) as well as in the related *Sophia of Jesus Christ* (III 112,8; 117,17.21) and the *Apocryphon of John* (III 10,15). In these texts, the first principle is depicted in an apophatic manner existing beyond being, or having undetermined essence. Although it became common among the Middle Platonic philosophers to use apophatic language in describing the radical transcendence of the first principle, the *Apocryphon of John* and some other Gnostic texts also used *kataphatic* language to stress the gulf between the divine world and material creation. The Demiurge called Yaldabaoth was no longer the representative of the good and ordered cosmos, whose providence guided the rational souls of the planetary gods, but an amorphous and chaotic figure who created in order to deceive and whose fiery rulers of heaven intended to enslave humanity.

It seems that the Valentinian cosmological model represents a more positive world view than the Classic Gnostic accounts mentioned above. Although the material world did not have a firm place in the divine world, but originated as a result of the conflict in the divine world, the Demiurge and the heavenly rulers were created as images of the aeons longing for the

combined them with Chaldean theology in an innovative manner by creating a hierarchy triads: father-power-intellect. See John Turner, “The Chaldean Oracles and the Sethian Platonizing Treatises,” in *Plato's Parmenides and Its Heritage, Volume 1: History and Interpretation from the Old Academy to Later Platonism and Gnosticism* (ed. John Turner and Kevin Korrigan; Atlanta: SBL, 2010), 213-233. Rasimus has pointed out that the anonymous commentary on Parmenides contains fragments which parallel pre-Plotinian Sethian texts, such as the *Apocryphon of John* and the *Zostrianos*. Rasimus concludes that “in light of the Sethian evidence, we must reassess Pierre Hadot’s theory and conclude that it was the Sethian Gnostics rather than Porphyry who were the innovators and that the role of the Sethian Gnostics in the development of Neoplatonism has been greatly underestimated in previous scholarship.” For the detailed investigation of the Sethian material and its relation to the Neoplatonic system of thought, see Tuomas Rasimus “Porphyry and the Gnostics: Reassessing Pierre Hadot’s Thesis in Light of the Secondand Third-Century Sethian Treatises,” in *Plato's Parmenides and It's Heritage Volume 2: Its Reception in Neoplatonic, Jewish, and Christian Texts* (ed. John Turner and Kevin Corrigan; Atlanta: SBL, 2010), 81-110. Thomassen is of the opinion that Valentinian theologians were dependent on the same sources as Porphyry and the later Neoplatonists, Marius Victorinus, Synesius, and the Platonizing Sethians. See Thomassen, *The Spiritual Seed*, 298-307.

---

256 Rasimus, “Ptolemaeus and the Prologues’ Valentinian Exegesis,” 164.

257 Rasimus, “Ptolemaeus and the Prologues’ Valentinian Exegesis,” 159, note 60.


259 It is not clear, however, whether the pessimistic world view was part of the Gnostic myth, which was reformed by the Valentinian theologians, or whether the pessimistic motif in the Gnostic myth resulted from its later “Sethianization.”
heavenly light. Hence, the Valentinian theologians were closer to cosmological dualism in Plato’s *Timaeus* and the protological teachings attested in Philo’s works. The Marcosians, who may have formed a distinct sect within Valentinian tradition, taught that the creation of the visible world in Gen. 1 follows the numerological order of the Pleroma. Not only the heavenly sphere but the creation of the dry land, the sea, the plants, and the animals, are manifestations of the Tetraktys, the Ogdoad, the Decad, and the Dodecad.²⁶⁰

It is noticeable that Hippolytus presents in Hipp. *Ref.* 6.29.3-4 a version of the Valentinian protological myth, which differs from the one attested in Iren. *Haer.* 1.1.1-3. The main differences between these accounts concern the reason for Sophia’s fall and the essence of the Father. In Irenaeus’s system Sophia intended to know the Father who is unknowable, whereas in Hippolytus’s system Sophia attempts to imitate the creative power of the Father by generating without her consort. In addition, Hippolytus maintains that the Father is “unfeminine, unwedded and solitary” without a partner, whereas Irenaeus linked, as we noticed above, the Father with a female consort called “Grace” or “Silence.” Hippolytus suggested that the system in which the Father was solitary was closer to Pythagorean doctrine and the version which says that the Father cannot exist without a female consort represents a later development of the protological myth.²⁶¹

Thomassen is of the opinion that Hippolytus’s version is a revision of the original theory, which was based on the 30 aeons. In Hippolytus’s system, the Father is not included among the Ogdoad, which results in the Pleroma only having 28 aeons. According to Thomassen, this breaks the structure of 30 aeons, and the pair of aeons “Anthropos-Ecclesia” has no apparent function in the system. Stead points out, however, that Hippolytus’s version, which stressed an ultimate Monad, is closer to the traditions of the Jewish and Christian views of God, whereas an ultimate Dyad in Iren. *Haer.* 1.1.1 seems to deviate from these views. It is also notable that the number 28 parallels the numerological speculations in Philo.²⁶²

Hippolytus’s version of the Valentinian myth in *Ref.* 6.29.3-4 contains some elements which connect it to the primitive version of the Valentinian

---

²⁶⁰ Iren. *Haer.* 1.18.


²⁶² For Philo, the number 28 is a perfect number, because it is a sum of its factors (1+2+4+7+14), the sum of its digits 1 to 7 and the product of 4 x 7 being related to the phases of the moon. Cf. Stead, “The Valentinian Myth,” 80. Also, ten and twelve are important numbers for Philo referring to the twelve tribes, the twelve signs of the Zodiac, and the twelve stones of the high priest’s breastplate (*Praem.* 65; *Spec.* 1.87; *Mos.* 2.124; *Q.E.* 112-117). Philo does not have a special interest in the symbolism of the number eight (Ogdoad), but in *Opificio Mundi* he devotes an extremely long section to speculation concerning the protological and cosmological significance of the number seven (Hebdomad), which is treated by the Pythagoreans as a symbol of God Himself (cf. *Opif.* 100). For Philo’s discussion concerning the Monad and Hebdomad, cf. Runia, *On the Creation*, 260 ff.
cosmological myth in *Exc. Theod.* 6-7. In these accounts, the Father is solitary whose intention was not only to love but to be known and loved. In Hippolytus’s system, the Father was solitary and subsisted in a state of quietude and isolation within himself and the transition from oneness to duality is related to the concept of love:

> Since he was a productive being, he decided once to generate and bring forth the fairest and most perfect that he had in himself, for he was not fond of solitariness. Indeed, he was all love, but love is not love if there is nothing beloved. Thus, the Father himself, being alone, projected and generated Mind and Truth, a Dyad...263

Strikingly, *Exc. Theod.* 6-7 and Hippolytus’s account parallel the protology in Iren. *Haer.* 1.12.1, which according to Irenaeus goes back to “the more expert followers of Ptolemy.” In Iren. *Haer.* 1.12.1 the Father is without a consort, and he has two dispositions (διαθέσεις), thought (Ἕννου) and will (Θέλησις), which recall the two Spirits in *Exc. Theod.* 6-7.264 The fact that the accounts in Iren. *Haer.* 1.8.5 (par. *Exc. Theod.* 6-7) and Iren. *Haer.* 1.12.1 go back to Ptolemy or his “more expert followers” confirms that the elaborated protological model system in Iren. *Haer.* 1.1.1-3 has its origin in the circle of Ptolemy’s disciples. The protological systems in these accounts can be derived from the allegorical interpretation of the prologue of the Gospel of John, which contains some striking parallels with Philo’s exegesis on Gen. 1:1-5.

### 4.4 The Philonic interpretation of the prologue of the Gospel of John

The origin of the Valentinian protology and the Gnostic myth of Sophia lies in the Neo-Pythagorean transcendental monotheism. In the Valentinian protological systems described above, the myth of Sophia was integrated into the prologue of John’s Gospel. The Valentinian commentators intended to show that their philosophical-cosmological myth enjoyed apostolic authority because it can already be found in the Gospel of John. I suggest that the Johannine prologue was not chosen accidentally as a proof text for the protological myth. Valentinian commentators – and their Gnostic predecessors – may have had good reason to believe that it was written as a Platonizing description of the creation of the intelligible world. The speculation concerning the metaphysical structure of the prologue was a

263 Hipp. Ref. 6.29.5-6. Translated by Thomassen in *The Spiritual Seed*, 202.

264 Thomassen points out that *Exc. Theod.* 6-7 parallels the protology in the *Tripartite Tractate* (55:3-27, 56:23-57:8) and the idea that the Father possesses a Will in addition to his Thought is a theme that can be found in the *Gospel of Truth* and the *Tripartite Tractate*. Cf. Thomassen, *The Spiritual Seed*, 208, 212.
debated issue among Alexandrian exegetes. Origen criticized Heracleon in Comm. John 2.72-99 for arbitrarily limiting the creation activity of the Logos, because Heracleon considered that “the all” (John 1.3) refers to the visible creation. Origen identified “the beginning” with the divine Wisdom, which preceded the Logos. The life and light were inside the Logos, which means that these could not be created through the Logos.\(^{265}\)

Gregory Sterling has pointed out that the prologue of the Gospel of John can be placed together with Philo’s Opif. 26-35 in the same trajectory of Platonizing interpretation of Gen. 1:1-5.\(^{266}\) Sterling notes that the author of John’s prologue took certain catchwords (ἐν ἀρχῇ - ἦν - ὁ θεός - ἐγένετο - τὸ φῶς - τὸ σκότος) in the same order as they appear in Gen. 1:1-5. In addition, he used a Semitic “staircase parallelism” to interlock the pair of clauses in the prologue poetically. The comparison between Gen. 1:1-5 and John. 1:1-5 is presented below. The keywords in common are bolded:\(^{267}\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gen. 1:1-5</th>
<th>John 1:1-5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἐποίησεν ὁ θεός τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ τὴν γῆν.</td>
<td>καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν θεόν, καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. η δὲ γῆ ἦν ἀόρατος καὶ ἀκατασκεύαστος, καὶ σκότος ἐπάνω τῆς ἀβύσσου, καὶ πνεῦμα θεοῦ ἐπεφέρετο ἐπάνω τοῦ ὕδατος.</td>
<td>καὶ οὗτος ἦν ἐν ἀρχῇ πρὸς τὸν θεόν.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. καὶ εἶπεν ὁ θεός Γενηθήτω φῶς. καὶ ἐγένετο φῶς.</td>
<td>πάντα δι’ αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο, καὶ χωρὶς αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο οὐδὲ ἕν ὃ γέγονεν.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. καὶ εἶδεν ὁ θεὸς τὸ φῶς ὅτι καλόν. καὶ διεχώρισεν ὁ θεὸς ἀνὰ μέσον τοῦ φωτός καὶ ἀνὰ μέσον τοῦ σκότους.</td>
<td>ἐν αὐτῷ ἦν ζωή, καὶ ἡ ζωή ἦν τὸ φῶς τῶν ἀνθρώπων.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. καὶ ἐκάλεσεν τὸ φῶς ἡμέραν καὶ τὸ σκότος ἐκάλεσεν νύκτα. καὶ ἐγένετο ἑσπέρα καὶ ἐγένετο πρωί, ἡμέρα μία.</td>
<td>καὶ τὸ φῶς ἐν τῇ σκοτίᾳ φαίνεται, καὶ ἡ σκοτία αὐτὸ οὐ κατέλαβεν.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There is in John’s prologue a definite logic in the use of the verbs ἦν (“to be”) and ἐγένετο (“to become”), which mark in Plato’s Tim. 27d-28b the

---


\(^{266}\) Peder Borgen regards John 1:1-5 as a Targumic interpretation of Gen. 1:1-5. He concludes that Gen. 1:3 forms the basis for the re-writing of John’s protological account. The Logos was seen as the “true light” and it was the light which came into existence through God’s words “let there be light.” The Logos, the light and God’s words were thus brought together. Cf. Peder Borgen, “Observations on the Targumic Character of the Prologue of John,” in NTS 16 (1970), 28-29. Also, Thomas Tobin, “The Prologue of John and Hellenistic Jewish Speculation,” in CBQ 52 (1990), 262 and John Painter, “Rereading Genesis in the Prologue of John?” in Neotestamentica et Philonica. Studies in Honor of Peder Borgen (ed. David E. Aune, Torrey Seland et.al. Leiden: Brill, 2003), 179-201.

The distinction between the eternally existing intelligible world of being (τί τὸ ὂν ἀεί) and the visible world of becoming (τί τὸ γιγνόμενον μὲν ἀεί). The four repetitions of ἦν are contrasted with two appearances of ἐγένετο. The temporal distinction is made in verse 3, which divided the prologue into two section. Verses 1-2 describe the genealogy of the Logos and verses 4-5 the manifestation of the Logos in the creation. Also, the author has adapted the terminus technicus from the Middle Platonic tradition in assigning the role of instrumentality to the Logos through which (δι’ αὐτοῦ) the world came into being.268

Evidently, the Valentinian interpreters of John’s prologue understood that it represented a Platonizing interpretation of the creation narrative. It was not, thus, a coincidence that they selected it as a proof-text for the genealogy of the aeons of the Pleroma. It is not clear whether the Valentinian teachers invented their peculiar interpretation of John’s prologue or whether it was already a part of the preceding Gnostic myth. However, the Valentinian exegetes twisted the temporal and ontological structure of the prologue in a way that indicates that they were also familiar with Philo’s allegorical interpretation of Gen. 1:1-5 in Opificio Mundi.269

Philo maintained that God created the intelligible cosmos, i.e. the Platonic world of ideas, during the first day of creation (Gen. 1:1-5). Creation during days 2-6 describes the creation of the visible copies of eternal ideas (Gen.1:6-2:4).270 Philo explains that God acted like an architect who is about to build a city. First he makes a model in his mind which will be given to the building master who is in charge of the building program. In the same manner, the ideas of the intelligible cosmos were first in the mind of God before they were

268 Prepositional metaphysics go back to the distinction between different kinds causes in Aristotelian logic. The Hellenistic philosophers elaborated these causes and assigned prepositions to them. Philo of Alexandria is an important witness to the Middle Platonic metaphysics of prepositions (cf. esp. Cher. 124-127). Philo connected the instrumental cause of creation to the Logos through which (δι’ οὗ) the cosmos came into being. The metaphysics of prepositions and their relation of Christ is attested also in 1 Cor. 8:6; Col. 1:16; Heb. 1:2. Cf. Gregory E. Sterling, “Prepositional Metaphysics in Jewish Wisdom Speculations and Early Christian Liturgical Texts,” in The Studia Philonica Annual. Studies in Hellenistic Judaism. Volume IX (eds. David T. Runia and Gregory E. Sterling: Brown University, 1997),219-238; Tobin, The Creation of Man, 68 ff.


PROTOLOGY: THE CREATION OF THE INTELLIGIBLE COSMOS

conveyed to the Logos through which the world came into being.\(^\text{271}\) The sum-total of ideas which God placed in the Logos constitutes “the intelligible cosmos” (κόσμος νοητός), which was distinguished from the “sense-perceptible cosmos” (κόσμος αἰσθητός).\(^\text{272}\) In this sense, Philo called the Logos an “idea of ideas” (ἰδέα ἱδεῶν) because it contains all the ideal world within himself.\(^\text{273}\)

A special feature of *Opificio Mundi* is the role of number symbolism. The order of the creation follows a certain numerological logic.\(^\text{274}\) The expression ἐν ἀρχῇ in Gen. 1:1 was not according to Philo a temporal definition because time was created together with the cosmos. Time was related to the motion of the celestial bodies, and there could not be motion before they were created. Therefore “in the beginning” should be understood as “according to the number” (κατ’ ἀριθμόν), which depicts the ontological predominance of the creation during “the day one” compared with the creation of the visible cosmos during days 2-6. Therefore, the first day of creation is called “day

---

\(^{271}\) Opif. 17-19...τὰ παραπλήσια δὴ καὶ περὶ θεοῦ δοξαστέον, ὡς ἄρα τὴν μεγαλόπολιν κτίζειν διανοηθεὶς ἐνενόησε πρότερον τοὺς τύπους αὐτῆς, ἐξ ὧν κόσμον νοητὸν συστήσαμεν ἀπετέλει καὶ τὸν αἰσθητὸν παραδείγματι χρώμενοι ἐκείνο.

\(^{272}\) Philo was the first philosopher who explicitly used the term κόσμος νοητός but it has, however, some Platonic antecedents. In *Timaeus* (39e) Plato speaks about “the intelligible living being” (τὸ νοητὸν ζῶον) as a model for the sensible world and in the *Republic* (508b13) he draws an analogy between the sun and the idea of the Good, which is in the “noetic place” (ἐν τῷ νοητῷ τόπῳ). A similar phrase occurs in the *Timaeus Locrus*, which speaks about ὁ ἰδανικὸς κόσμος. See David Runia, “A Brief History of the Term Kosmos Noētos from Plato to Plotinus,” in *Traditions of Platonism. Essays in Honour of John Dillon* (ed. John J. Cleary; Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999), 152-158; ibid, *On the Creation*, 136.

\(^{273}\) Opif. 25; Mig. 18.103. Runia notes a similar kind of theory of “idea which includes itself all ideas” is attested in Arius Didymus, mentioned in Eusebius Prep. Ev. 11.23.6. Cf. Runia, *On the Creation*, 151. Wolfson sees the expression of Logos as “the idea of ideas” is based upon Aristotle’s description of the human mind as the form of forms, ἐν ὧν εἶδος εἶδον (De Anima III, 8, 432a, 2). See Wolfson, *Philo I*, 233.

\(^{274}\) Philo refers in his writings to his work *On Numbers*, which is also mentioned by Eusebius in his catalogue on Philo’s works. Runia is of the opinion that Philo’s numerological work was a collection of arithmological material from various sources for allegorical purposes. In *Opif*. Philo explains the relevance of the number of days it took to create the world. Strikingly, the number five and the number six are related to the creation narrative, but in the case of the number four and seven he speaks only about their arithmological importance without any explicit references to the days of creation. Philo even devotes a long excursus in *Opif*. 89-128 to the significance of the number seven but does not handle its significance for the seventh day. Cf. Runia, *On the Creation*, 25-29. Irenaeus describes the Marcosian system, which is based on the mystical union of numbers and letters. The Marcosian system saw the creation narrative in Gen. 1:1-5 as a visible manifestation of the Tetrad, the Ogdoad, the Decad, and the Dodeced (Iren. Haer. 1.13-21).
one,” not the “first day,” because of the Monadic essence of the intelligible cosmos.\footnote{Opif. 26-28. καὶ ἡμέραν οὐχὶ πρώτην, ἀλλὰ μίαν, ἢ λέλεκται διὰ τῆς τοῦ νοητοῦ κόσμου μόνωσιν μονάδικην ἔχοντος φύσιν.}

The Valentinian exegetes used Philo’s allegorical innovations in their protological allegory of the prologue of the Gospel of John in \textit{Exc. Theod.} 6-7 and Iren. \textit{Haer.} 1.8.5. They interpreted the phrase “in the beginning” (John. 1:1) as a non-temporal ontological expression. “The Beginning” (ἀρχὴ) refers to the Only-Begotten, who was emitted from the Father of All. Thus, the “Beginning” was hypostasized, and the preposition (ἐν) was interpreted as a reference to the ontological relation of the Logos and subsequently the other intelligible beings who had their origin “in the Only-Begotten.” The expression “in the beginning” does not refer to the temporal order, but to the “the order of emanations” (ἐδείξε τὴν τῆς προβολῆς τάξιν). This parallels Philo, who maintained that “in the beginning” (Gen. 1:1) does not refer to temporal order, but to the ontological predominance of the creation of the intelligible cosmos over the visible cosmos.\footnote{The terms which define the order in Philo declare that everything should develop in the right sequence. See Runia, \textit{On the Creation}, 160.}

While in Philo the ontological predominance of the first day of creation concerned the relation between the intelligible cosmos (day one) and the rest of the creation (days 2-6), in the Valentinian protology ἐν ἀρχῇ refers to the order of emanations in the intelligible realm. According to the Valentinian interpretation, the Logos was “in the Beginning,” through which “all things” in the Pleroma were created. Thus, John 1:3 does not refer to the creation of the visible cosmos, but to the foundation of the intelligible cosmos.\footnote{Irenaeus attacked in Iren. \textit{Haer.} 3.11.7 this Valentinian interpretation and said that “all things” in John 1:3 does not refer to the generation of the aeons of Pleroma, but to “this world and to everything in it.” Irenaeus also referred to John 1:11 which says that the Savior entered as “his own” (John. 1.11). Clement also saw the Valentinian interpretation of John’s prologue as untenable, but he did not criticize the Valentinian exegesis as such but only its metaphysical teaching, which threatened the oneness of God. Strikingly, Ptolemy in his \textit{Letter to Flora} offers an interpretation of John 1:3 which is similar to that of Irenaeus’s view. The explanation for the apparent discrepancy between Ptolemy’s teaching in his \textit{Letter to Flora} and the commentary on John’s prologue is that the Valentinian exegesis was multidimensional. Ptolemy’s commentary represents the spiritual exegesis according to which it is not the visible world that is created through Logos, but the intelligible cosmos. For a detailed investigation of Ptolemy’s \textit{Letter to Flora}, see chapter 3.} While in John’s prologue the demarcation line between the ideal world and the visible cosmos was in verse 3, the Valentinian commentators saw the whole passage (verses 1-5) as a description of the genesis of the beings in the intelligible cosmos. The Logos was the instrument through which the whole intelligible cosmos was created.

It is clear that the Valentinians were able to find the terms “the Beginning,” “the Only-Begotten,” “the Logos,” and “the Light” directly by
reading John’s prologue. However, in Valentinian protology they were given a logical pattern, which cannot be derived directly from the Gospel of John. “The Beginning” was hypostasized as referring to the Only-Begotten, and the Logos was seen as an instrument of the creation, not the visible cosmos, but the intelligible world of aeons, which was identified with the Savior and the intelligible Light. Strikingly, these terms can also be found in Philo’s *Conf.* 146, who not only mentions them but identifies them with each other by comparing them.

*But if there be any as yet unfit to be called a son of God, let him press to take his place under First-Born Logos, who holds the eldership among the angels, their ruler as it were. And many names is his, for he is called “Beginning,” and the Name of God and his Logos, and the Man after his image and “he that sees,” that is Israel.*

Philo identified the Beginning, the First-Born and the Logos with each other. These were the names for the same intellectual being, who was generated from the transcendent One. Although the Beginning (= the Only-Begotten) and the Logos are not exactly the same intellectual being in the Valentinian protology, the Logos is “inside” the Beginning, which served as the root for the Aeons. In Philo, the creation of the Logos was at the same time the creation of the intelligible cosmos, because the Ideas were placed in the Logos. This model parallels Valentinian protology according to which the Aeons were created through the Logos, who had its origin in the Beginning, i.e. the Only-Begotten. In Iren. *Haer.* 1.8.5 the Savior was depicted as the fruit of the entire Pleroma. The Savior contained all the Aeons within himself and as an image of the Pleroma he was also called the Light. These notions parallel Philo, who explains in *Somm.* 1.75, how the creation of light in Gen. 1:3 describes the creation of the Logos, who was associated with the Savior, i.e. the Light (cf. also *Leg. All.* 3.96).

*In the first place: God is light, for there is a verse in one of the psalms, “the Lord is my illumination and my Savior” And He is not only light, but the archetype of every other light, nay, prior to and high above every archetype, holding the position of the model of a model. For the model or pattern was the Logos, which contained all His fullness – light, in fact; for, as the Lawgiver tells us, “God said ’let light come into being’” whereas He Himself resembles none of the things that have come into being. Secondly: as the sun makes day and night distinct, so Moses says that God kept apart light and darkness; for “God,” he tells us, “separated between the light and between the darkness.” And above all, as the sun when it rises makes visible*

---

278 *Conf.* 146. καίν μὴ δέσω μέντοι τυγχάνη τις ἀξιόχρεως ἃν νῦς θεὸς προσαγωγορεῖσθαι, σπουδαζέω κοσμεῖσθαι κατά τὸν πρωτόγονον αὐτοῦ λόγον, τὸν ἀγγέλων πρεσβύτατον, ὡς ἂν ἀρχάγγελον, πολυώνυμον ὑπάρχοντα· καὶ γὰρ ἄρχη καὶ ὄνομα θεοῦ καὶ λόγος καὶ ὁ κατ’ εἰκόνα ἀνθρώπος καὶ ὁ ὄρον, Ἰσραήλ, προσαγωγορεῖσθαι.
objects, which had been hidden, so God when He gave birth to all things not only brought them into sight, but also made things that before were not, not just handling material as an artificer, but being Himself its creator.279

Philo says that the creation of light refers to the creation of the Logos and the whole intelligible cosmos. Philo also calls the intelligible realm, i.e. the Logos, “the most completed model” (παράδειγμα ὁ πληρέστατος), because it is filled with all ideas including the idea of light. The Pleroma (πληρόμα) was a key technical term in Valentinian protology. It is also mentioned in John 1:16: ὅτι ἐκ τοῦ πληρώματος αὐτοῦ ἡμᾶς πάντες ἐλάβομεν καὶ χάριν ἀντὶ χάριτος. Iren. Haer. 1.8.5 the whole Pleroma dwells in the Savior, which is a reference to phrase in Paul’s Colossians: ἐν αὐτῷ εὐδόκησεν πᾶν τὸ πλήρωμα κατοικήσαι.280

It is not likely that the term Pleroma in the Valentinian myth would have been derived solely from John’s Gospel, Pseudo-Pauline literature or Philo’s texts. The term Pleroma has its basis in Pythagorean numerological speculations. It refers to the fulfillment of the number of beings in the intelligible world.281 Valentinian exegetes found the Pythagorean term “Pleroma” or its equivalents in the Gospel of John and the Colossians, which permitted a protological interpretation of these passages. It seems, however, that in addition to the prologue of the Gospel of John, the Valentinians knew some other Hellenistic Jewish exegetical traditions in which the protological narratives of Genesis were interpreted in the light of Middle Platonic transcendent monism. It is not contrary to reason to suggest that Philo’s protological speculations in Opif. 26-28, Conf. 146 and Somn. 1.75 have been

279 ἐπειδὴ πρῶτον μὲν ὁ θεὸς φῶς ἐστι “κύριος γὰρ φωτισμός μου καὶ σωτήρ μου” ἐν ὕμνοις ᾄδεται καὶ οὐ μόνον φῶς, ἀλλὰ καὶ παντὸς ἐπίρου φωτός ἀρχέτυπον, μάλλον δὲ παντὸς ἀρχετύπου πρωσβύτερον καὶ ἀνώτερον, λόγον ἔχον παραδείγματος < παραδείγματος > τὸ μὲν γὰρ παράδειγμα ὁ πληρότατος ἐπὶ αὐτοῦ λόγος, φῶς „τὸ ἐκπέμπτον φησιν “ὁ θεὸς· γενέσθω φῶς”, αὐτὸς δὲ οὐδέκα τῶν γεγονότων ὅμοιος ἐπειθ’ ὡς ἠλικὸς ἡμέραν καὶ νύκτα διακρίνει, οὕτως φησίν Μωυσῆς τῶν θεῶν φῶς καὶ σκότος διατείχει: “διαχώρισε γὰρ ο θεὸς ἀνὰ μέσον τοῦ φωτός καὶ ἀνὰ μέσον τοῦ σκότους” ἀλλὰ τὰ τὸ ἠλικὸς ἀνατέλλει τὰ κεκρυμμένα τῶν σώματός ἐπιδείκνυται, οὕτως καὶ ὁ θεὸς τὰ πάντα γνωσμένα ἐν ὑμῖν τοις ἐν τῷ θεῷ ἡμᾶς  ἣς ἔχειν, ἀλλὰ καὶ ὧν καὶ ἀπόκρητον ὡς ἠγαγενεμένα, οὕτως νῦν ὑμῖν ἐν τῷ πάντως παραδείγματι κατοικήσετε. The insertion παραδείγματος comes from Colson. I do not think that the insertion is necessary, although it may be compatible with what Philo says elsewhere about the Logos as a paradigm.

280 The parallels between Philo’s Somn. 1.75, John 1:16 and Col. 2:16 is also noticed by Matthew E. Gordley in The Colossian Hymn in Context (WUNT; Mohr Siebeck, Tübingen, 2007), 224-225.

281 The realm of aeons became perfect as the number of intelligible beings was fulfilled. Sophia was the last aeon of the Dodecad (2+4+6) as well as the Triacontad (2+4+6+8+10=30). See Jean-Marc Narbonne, “The Neopythagorean Backdrop to the Fall of the Soul,” in Gnosticism, Platonism and the Late Ancient World. Essays in Honour of John D. Turner (ed. Kevin Corrigan and Tuomas Rasimus; Boston: Brill, 2012), 414-419.
exegetical source material for Valentinian theologians in their commentary on the prologue of the Gospel of John.

Philo maintains in Somn. 1.75 that God did not only reveal Light, i.e. the Logos, but he also made a separation between light and darkness. Although this distinction may refer to the distinction between intelligible light, i.e. the Logos, and visible lights, Philo’s exegesis in Opif. 29-35 indicates that it depicts the conflict within intelligible realm. This parallels Valentinian protology in which the Light that shone in the darkness (John 1:5) does not refer to the earthly darkness, as in the Gospel of John, but to the darkness in the intelligible realm which was separated out of the Pleroma by the Limit before the foundation of the visible cosmos. I will next investigate more thoroughly Philo’s exegesis on the creation of the intelligible cosmos during “the day one.”

4.5 Philo’s interpretation of day one and traditions of cosmic creation in Opif. 29-35

Philo’s description of the creation of the ideal world begins in Opif. 26-28, which describes the meaning of the phrase “in the beginning” and the numerological predominance of the day one. I have investigated these subjects and the parallels with the Valentinian accounts above. In Opif. 29-30 Philo gives an allegorical account of the structure of the intelligible realm which God placed in the Logos. Although Philo says that the number of ideas is uncountable, he intended to find in Gen. 1:1-5 the most fundamental ideas according to the sacred number seven. In Opif. 29 Philo maintained that God created in the first day the incorporeal heaven, the invisible earth, the idea of air, the idea of void, the incorporeal substance of water, the incorporeal substance of the spirit and the incorporeal light which served as a paradigm for all celestial lights.

First, therefore, the maker made an incorporeal heaven and an invisible earth and a form of air and the void. To the former he assigned the name darkness, since the air is black by nature, to the latter the name abyss, because the void is indeed full of depths and gaping. He then made the incorporeal being of water and spirit and as seventh and last of all of the light, which once again was incorporeal and was also the intelligible model of the sun and all the other light-bearing stars which were to be established in heaven.282

282 Opif. 29. πρῶτον οὖν ὁ ποιῶν ἐποίησεν οὐρανὸν ἀσώματον καὶ γῆν ἀόρατον καὶ ἀέρος ἰδέαν καὶ κενοῦ• ὃν τὸ μὲν ἐπεφήμισε σκότος, ἐπειδὴ μέλας ὁ ἀέρ τῇ φύσει, τὴν δ’ ἁμαρσπόσιν, πολύβυθον γὰρ τὸ γε κενὸν καὶ ἁγανέ• εἰτ’ οὖσιν ἀσώματον οὐσίαν καὶ πνεύματος καὶ ἐπὶ πᾶσιν ἐβδόμῳ φωτός, ὃ πάλιν ἀσώματον ἦν καὶ νοητὸν ἥλιον παράδειγμα καὶ πάντων ὅσα φωσφόρα ἀστρα κατὰ τὸν οὐρανὸν ἔμελλε συνίστασθαι. Translated by David Runia in On the Creation.
In *Opif*. 30 Philo writes that the ideas of light and spirit were given predominance in the intelligible cosmos, and the idea of light was associated with the idea of life.

*Both spirit and light were considered deserving of a special privilege. The former he named of God because the spirit is highly important for life and God is the cause of life. The light he describes as exceedingly beautiful, for the intelligible surpasses the visible in brilliance and brightness.*

Professional philosophers may have regarded Philo’s description of the intelligible cosmos as rather peculiar. The content of the ideal world and the relations between its elements were composed artificially on the grounds of biblical narrative. Harry Wolfson has proposed, however, that in *Opif*. 29 Philo tried to describe the creation of the ideas of the four cosmic elements (water, air, earth and heaven, i.e. fire) and the ideas of the void, spirit and light. The idea of the void refers to the Platonic Receptacle. Wolfson’s interpretation of Philo’s exegesis has not gained large support. It is not likely that the ideas of heaven, earth, air and water referred to the four cosmic elements, as Wolfson proposed, but to the regions of the cosmos. The view that heaven would have depicted the element of fire contradicts what Philo taught elsewhere about the essence of heaven. In most cases, Philo agreed with the common Middle Platonic view according to which the heavenly sphere were made out of ether. Also, the idea of the void does not refer to the Platonic Receptacle, as Wolfson suggested, but to the region between the moon and earth, which is filled with air. Philo may have criticized the Epicureans, who postulated the existence of the cosmic void. Philo explains these notions in the following passage in *Opif*. 32:

*Well said too is the statement that there was darkness above the abyss, for in a way the air is over the void since it is mounted on and has filled up the entire gaping, empty and void space that extends from the region of the moon to us.*

Philo’s exegesis on Gen. 1:3 concerning the creation of light is not consistent. In *Somn*. 1.75 Philo interprets the creation of light (Gen. 1:3) as denoting the

---

283 Προνομίας δὲ τό τε πνεῦμα καὶ τό φῶς ἠξιοῦτο· τὸ μὲν γὰρ ὀνόμασε θεοῦ, διότι ζωτικῶτατον τὸ πνεῦμα, ζωῆς δὲ θεοῦ αἰτίος, τὸ δὲ φῶς φήσαι ὅτι ὑπερβαλλόντος καλόν· τοσοῦτο γὰρ τὸ νοητόν τοῦ ὀρατοῦ λαμπρότερόν τε καὶ αὐγοειδέστερόν τε. For the translation, see Runia, *On the Creation*, 53.


286 Runia, *On the Creation*, 171-172. Runia maintains that the idea of spirit may refer to the *pneuma* in its Aristotelian sense as the instrument which allows the soul to affect the body (ibid. 166). For the criticism of Wolfson’s interpretation see also Winston, *Philo of Alexandria*, 9-13. The problem of the creation of matter in Philo is investigated in detail in chapter 5.
creation of the Logos, which is an image of God, the Light. In Opif. 31 Philo says, however, that the invisible and intelligible light (τὸ ἄόρατον καὶ νοητὸν φῶς), in Gen. 1:3 is an “image of the Logos,” who communicated its genesis (διερμηνεύσαντο τὴν γένεσιν αὐτοῦ). It is not the Logos, which was created in Gen.1:3, but its image. Strikingly, Opif. 31 contradicts not only the passage in Somn. 1.75, but also Opif. 29, which states that the idea of light is a part of the Logos, not an image of it.

It seems that in Opif. 31 Philo is dependent on the exegetical tradition according to which light in Gen. 1:3 does not refer to the intelligible light in the “world of being,” but to the creation of the essence of the cosmic intellects in the “world of becoming” as an image of the Logos. The light in Opif. 31 is not the paradigm (παράδειγμα) as in Opif. 29, but the source (πηγή) of all cosmic lights. In addition, in Opif. 31 the intelligible light is called “all-brightness” (παναύγειαν), which does not appear elsewhere in Philo’s texts. Opif. 31 breaks with Philo’s account concerning the creation of the intelligible world, i.e. the Logos, and it describes the creation of the essence of the visible lights of heaven as images of the Logos. These notions are important concerning the comparison of Opif. 31 with the Valentinian cosmological account, which I will investigate in the following chapter.

After a short reference to the ideas of air and void in Opif. 32, Philo explains in Opif. 33-34 the consequences of the manifestation of the intelligible light, i.e. the Logos, and its rivalry darkness. Although the manifestation of light, the yielding of darkness and the setting of morning

---

287 The phrase διερμηνεύσαντο τὴν γένεσιν αὐτοῦ evidently refers to Gen. 1:3 “God said...” Philo thought in Greek terms. The verb ἐξῆγεν (“said”) is the second aorist of λέγω, which is derived from the noun λόγος (= word). The word of God as an instrument of creation is also attested in Ps. 33:6 and in the proclamation of the prophets (Isa. 2:1; Jer. 1:2; Ezek. 3:16) and in the revelation of the Torah (Ex. 34:27-28; Deut. 10:4). In Philo’s allegorical exegesis the term “logos” does not only refer to the “word” or “speech” of God attested in these biblical passages, but has a “philosophical” meaning as an external manifestation of God’s thinking-acting. The connection between “philosophical Logos” and its biblical equivalent as “God’s word” enabled Philo to read the Bible in the light of philosophical reasoning. Cf. Winston, Logos, 15; Wolfson, Philo I, 254; Sterling, “Platonizing Exegetical Traditions,” 133-134.

288 Logically, Opif. 29 can be integrated to the account in Somn. 1.75. This would mean that the idea of light in Opif. 29 does not depict only one single idea, but as a seventh element created during day one, it represented the entirety of all ideas. The creation of the idea of light completes the creation of the whole intelligible world, i.e. the Logos. Runia suggests that the passage in Opif. 31 might be corrupted. He does not see any logical solution for the conflicting statements in Opif. 29, 31 and Somn. 1.75. Also, Sterling says that Opif. 31 is very difficult text. Cf. Sterling, “Platonizing Exegetical Traditions,” 132-133; Runia, On the Creation, 168.

289 Runia refers to Boyancé, who suggested that Philo must be dependent on some philosophical source in Opif. 31, but is himself sceptical. See Runia, On the Creation, 169. Opif. 31 is an important passage concerning the comparison with Valentinian exegesis on Gen. 1:3. It is likely that the commentator in Exc. Theod. 47-48 knew of a similar kind of interpretation in Gen. 1:3 as attested in Opif. 31.
and evening were events in the visible cosmos in Genesis, in Philo’s exegesis they became processes within the intelligible realm. In Opif. 34 Philo had to stress that these elements and boundaries belonged in the class of incorporeal things and they are entirely “ideas, symbols and seals” (ἰδέαι καὶ τύποι καὶ σφραγίδες). It is striking that according to Philo, there was some discord within the intelligible cosmos between the Logos and its rival, i.e. darkness. I will quote the passage in Opif. 33 in its entirety:

As soon as the intelligible light, which existed before the sun, was ignited, its rival darkness proceeded to withdraw. God built a wall between them and kept them separate, for he well knew their oppositions and the conflict resulting from their natures. Therefore, in order to ensure that they would not continually interact and be in strife with each other, and that war would not gain the upper hand over peace and ring about disorder in the cosmos, he not only separated light and darkness, but also placed boundaries in the extended space between them by means of which he kept the two extremes apart.290

In Opif. 34 Philo says that the intelligible boundaries (ὅροι) which were between the light and darkness, were evening and morning.291 They were set in the middle, which may mean that they are two sides of the same boundary. The intelligible darkness must be fenced and controlled by these boundaries, which were set in the middle of them. The conflict within the intelligible realm in Philo’s account may reflect Middle Platonic speculation concerning Plato’s list of opposites in Sophist 254d-255a (same, different, movement and rest). In Plato, these opposites describe the characteristics of two distinct realms of creation (the world of being and the world of becoming), but the

290 Opif. 33. Translated by David Runia in On the Creation, 53-54. μετὰ δὲ τὴν τοῦ νοητοῦ φωτὸς ἀνάλαμψιν, ὃ πρὸ ἡλίου γέγονεν, ὑπεχώρει τὸ ἀντίπαλον σκότος, διατείχοντος ἀντ’ ἄλληλοι σκότος καὶ διαστάντος τοῦ τὰς ἐναντιότητας ἐδίδοτος καὶ τὴν ἐκ φύσεως αὐτῶν διαμάχην ἵν’ οὖν μὴ αἰεὶ συμφερόμενα στασιάζωσι καὶ πόλεμος ἀντ’ εἰρήνης ἐπικρατῇ τὴν ἀκοσμίαν ἐν κόσμῳ τιθείς, οὐ μόνον ἐχώριας φῶς καὶ σκότος, ἀλλὰ καὶ ὅρους ἐν μέσοις ἐθέτει διαστήμασιν, αἷς ἀνείρρητο τῶν ἄκρων ἐκάτερον.

291 The conflict between light and darkness may parallel Plato’s description of the relation of the ideas in the intelligible realm. In Sophist 254-256 Plato listed five major relations, namely being, similarity, difference, movement and rest. Runia points out that four of these kinds are opposites, which may represent a similar problem between light and darkness, as attested in Philo. See Runia, On the Creation, 164. Darkness is mentioned twice in Gen. 1:1-5. This possibly gave room for allegorical speculation. The first instance in Gen. 1:2 refers in Philo’s allegory to the idea of air, because air is by nature dark. For Philo, the air is black or hyacinth blue and this had parallels in many ancient texts. The second instance in Gen. 1:4 refers to some other darkness because it came into being as a rival to light, i.e. the Logos.
Middle Platonic teachers projected this distinction to the intelligible cosmos.\textsuperscript{292} The conflict within the intelligible realm and the separation of darkness in Philo’s exegesis of day one parallel Valentinian protological accounts. The principle of matter and the creation of the visible cosmos were an outcome of the conflict within the divine world. The separation of the erroneous Intention of Sophia from the realm of Light into the realm of shadow and the void parallels the separation of intelligible darkness and the Logos in Philo’s account.\textsuperscript{293} In the Valentinian accounts it was the Savior, as the Light of the Pleroma, who shone in the darkness, but darkness, i.e., the realm of Sophia outside the Pleroma, could not understand it.\textsuperscript{294} In Philo, the Light is also depicted as the Savior, and it was associated with the Logos. Both in Philo and in Valentinian accounts the rivalry of the Logos was fenced by the Limit, which was a standard Pythagorean term for the separation of the principle of multiplicity and matter from the One.\textsuperscript{295} In the Valentinian protology the Limit had a double role: on the one hand it separated, and on the other hand it strengthened. The duality of the “limit” parallels Philo’s account according to which Limit had a double function in the form of “morning” and “evening”.

In the Valentinian protology the conflict within the intelligible cosmos was the basis for the creation of matter and the visible cosmos. The erroneous intention of Sophia was separated from the intelligible realm and transformed into cosmic matter. Philo does not explicitly equate the

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{292} In Numenius (fr. 15) the difference between the first and the second God is related to movement. Whereas the essence of the first God is in rest, movement is related to the second God. The distinction between rest and movement does not depict the distinction between the intelligible realm and the visible cosmos as in Plato’s Sophist, but the distinction is already made between beings within the intelligible cosmos. See Dillon, “Numenius,” 198-199.

\textsuperscript{293} Iren. \textit{Haer}. 1.1.3; 1.4.1; 1.8.5. In Hipp. \textit{Ref}. VI 25 Hippolytus also refers to Gen. 1:2 as a proof-text for the amorphous nature of Sophia’s creation which was cast out of Pleroma: “Sophia, therefore, prepared to project that only which she was capable, viz., a formless and undigested substance. And this he says is what Moses asserts: ‘The earth was invisible and unfashioned’” (Gen.1:2). The conception that it was not Sophia’s erroneous “thought” – as in Irenaeus’s and Clement’s accounts described above – but her amorphous creation that was separated from the Pleroma comes a distinct source. In one passage Irenaeus refers to this same teaching in Iren. \textit{Haer}. 1.2.3. Ismo Dunderberg, however, is skeptical whether Hippolytus’s biblical allusions are taken from any Valentinian source. Dunderberg has pointed out that Hippolytus has a tendency to add biblical references to his descriptions of Valentinian teachings. It is possible that the reference to Gen. 1:2 in the case of the expulsion of Sophia’s creation out of Pleroma attested in Hipp. \textit{Ref}. VI 25 comes from Hippolytus’s pen, not from some separate Valentinian source. Cf. Dunderberg, \textit{Beyond Gnosticism}, 199-201.

\textsuperscript{294} Iren. \textit{Haer}. 1.1.3; 1.8.5.

\textsuperscript{295} The Limit (Horos) is a standard metaphysical term in Neo-Pythagorean logic which is attested widely in Valentinian texts. Thomassen, \textit{The Spiritual Seed}, 238-240. In the Valentinian accounts the Limit has a double role: on the one hand, it strengthens and on the other hand it separates. This would parallel the double function (evening-morning) of the Boundary in \textit{Opif}. 34.
\end{flushright}
intelligible darkness with matter. It is possible, however, that in Philo’s systems matter has its origin in conflict within the intelligible realm. This interpretation is compatible with Philo’s theory of creatio aeterna according to which matter came into being as a by-product of the creation of the intelligible cosmos, i.e. the Logos.

4.6 Conclusions

Philo of Alexandria and the Valentinian teachers can be located in the trajectory of the Platonic tradition, which integrated Plato’s Timaeus into Aristotelian transcendent monism and Neo-Pythagorean first principles. Philo interpreted the creation narrative in Gen. 1:1-5 as a description of the intelligible cosmos, while the Valentinians based the description of the creation of the intelligible cosmos on the prologue of John’s Gospel. The Valentinian teacher may have been aware that John’s prologue was written as a Platonizing commentary on Gen. 1:1-5 similar to Philo’s account in Opif. 25-36. It was not, thus, a coincidence that the Valentinians selected John’s prologue as a proof-text for their protological account (Exc. Theod. 6-7, Iren. Haer. 1.8.5).

The Valentinian exegetes intended to give the impression that their Platonizing protological myth was already present in John’s prologue. It is unlikely, however, that the protological myth was derived solely from the prologue of the Gospel of John. The myth of Sophia had its basis in Christianized Neo-Pythagorean philosophy and it was evidently a part of the preceding Gnostic myth, which was reformed by the Valentinian theologians. The Valentinian teachers were also familiar with the Hellenistic Jewish exegetical traditions attested in the writings of Philo. Philo’s protological speculations in Opif. 25-36, Conf. 146 and Somn. 1.75 may have been part of the exegetical source material for the Valentinian theologians in their commentaries on John’s prologue.

It is noticeable that in Philo the intelligible cosmos already contains a conflict between intelligible light, i.e. the Logos, and intelligible darkness, which must be confined in order to sustain the harmony of the cosmos. The monadic and dyadic aspects of the Godhead are present already in Philo’s exegesis on “day one.” Although Philo did not elaborate this conflict further in his text, these motifs were elaborated, however, by the Valentinian teachers, who considered the separation of the light and darkness as the separation of the principle of matter from the Pleroma. Thus, the conflict between intelligible light and darkness served as a biblical basis for the derivation of matter from the transcendent One.

Despite the similarities concerning the terms and patterns of interpretation, there were also fundamental philosophical differences between the accounts of Philo and those of the Valentinians. In Philo, the creation of the intelligible world served as an archetype for the creation of the
visible cosmos. The visible creation was sustained by the powers of the Logos of God. In the Valentinian accounts the Father of All created spiritual and intellectual beings in order to be known and loved by them. Thus, the Platonic ideas were personified as aeons. The ideas were not only intelligible but intelligent. They desired unity, which means that they were not only archetypes, but living beings. The visible cosmos was the outcome of an error in this epistemological process. Therefore, the elements and bodies of the visible cosmos do not have a firm place in the intelligible realm, but they came into being as a result of an erroneous thought of the youngest of the intellectual beings called Sophia. These notions are further investigated in the following chapter.
In the preceding chapter, I investigated the generation of the intelligible world in the systems of the Valentinians and Philo. In both traditions the divine world generated by the transcendent One was seen as an elaboration of the Platonic ideal world. While Philo saw Gen. 1-5 as the basis for the discussion concerning the creation of the intelligible cosmos, Valentinians used the prologue of John’s Gospel as a proof-text of the protological account. The Valentinian teachers saw Gen. 1:1-5 as a description of the creation of the visible cosmos. Also, the intelligible cosmos was not according to the Valentinians an archetype of the visible world, as in Philo’s system, but the unknown God created it to be known by intelligible beings called aeons. The creation of the visible cosmos had its origin in the epistemological rupture among the divine being and the fall of the youngest of the aeon called Sophia. I will show in this chapter that in the Valentinian system the chasm between the intelligible cosmos and the visible world was not absolute: the psychic heaven, i.e. the realm of the heavenly bodies, was ruled by the psychic “intellects,” who had their archetypes in the Pleroma.

The creation of matter was one of the most debated questions within Hellenistic philosophical schools. The Valentinian teachers drew their theory of matter from the Neo-Pythagorean tradition, which derived the principle of multiplicity and matter from the transcendent One through deprivation. Although Philo did not present a detailed theory about the origin of matter, the most logical conclusion is that he supported a metaphysical-ontological interpretation of Plato’s *Timaeus*, which went back to Eudorus of Alexandria. Philo and the Valentinians can be located in the hermeneutical tradition, which interpreted Plato’s *Timaeus*, as well as the creation narrative of Genesis, metaphorically in the light of Pythagorean and Aristotelian views. Strikingly, both Philo and the Valentinian teachers associated biblical Wisdom with pre-cosmic matter, which represented the dyadic aspect of God’s creative power.

5.1 The philosophical background of the creation of matter

Plato’s *Timaeus* formed the cosmological basis for further speculations among the Middle Platonic philosophers. In the *Timaeus* the basic causes of the universe were the mind (νοῦς) and necessity (ἀνάγκη), which interacted with each other as the Demiurge created the visible copies of eternally living
THE CREATION OF MATTER AND THE WISDOM OF GOD

beings (tα νοητα ζωη). In addition to the eternal model, i.e. the world of Ideas and the Demiurge, there existed according to Plato the Receptacle, which received the images of the cosmic elements, earth, water, air and fire. In Tim. 50 Plato explains that the Receptacle was like a mirror which reflected images of the cosmic elements without having qualities of its own. He also compared the Receptacle with an ointment that was a neutral base for various fragrances. Although the Receptacle itself was neutral, the powers (δυνάμεις) of the elements began to interact with each other. They put the Receptacle into a chaotic motion, which generates the cosmic principle of necessity (ἀνάγκη). According to Plato, the qualities of the four cosmic elements in the Receptacle were in constant motion like seeds that shake and sway in a winnowing-basket (πλόκανον).

The task of the Demiurge, who functioned as the cosmic Mind, was to bring order into this pre-cosmic chaos by contemplating the eternal Ideas as models. For that reason, the Demiurge created the World Soul as a mediating entity, which forces the randomly moving elements of the Receptacle to rest according to divine reason. The visible cosmos is thus a combination of necessity and nous. On the one hand, the Receptacle was a neutral recipient “in which” genesis took place, but, on the other hand, it was a chaotic essence “out of which” the four elements of the world were brought forth by the Demiurge. It should be noted that the Receptacle in its chaotic stage was not corporeal until the Demiurge persuaded the four cosmic elements to rest.

Some Middle Platonic teachers reformed the creation narrative of the Timaeus by combining it with the transcendental monism of Aristotle and the Neo-Pythagorean first principles. The primary premises for the genesis of the cosmos were no longer “mind and necessity,” but the triad of the

---

296 Tim. 29, 30c. The Timaeus was divided into three sections, which look the premises of mind and necessity from three different points of view. The first section (Tim. 29d-47e) describes the ordering of the universe through the mind (νοῦς). The second section (Tim. 47e-69a) describes the same process from the point of necessity (ἀνάγκη). The third section (Tim. 69a-92c) discusses the interaction of the mind and necessity, especially at an anthropological level. Cf. Thomas Tobin, Timaios of Locri, On the Nature of the World and the Soul. Text, Translation and Notes (ed. Hans Dieter Betz & Edward N. O’Neil; SBL Texts and Translations 26; Greco-Roman Religion series 8; Chico, California: Scholars Press, 1985, 11-12.


298 Plato’s parable of the winnowing-basket is attested in Tim. 52e. Since bodily motion cannot exist without the self-motion of the soul, some commentators of Plato (e.g. Plutarch) postulated an irrational world soul that was responsible for pre-cosmic chaos. Plato himself left the reason for pre-cosmic chaos unanswered.

299 Cornford, Plato’s Cosmology, 191-203.
principles: the Ideas, matter and God.\textsuperscript{300} The Ideas did not exist any longer independently, but they were seen as the thoughts of God, who was identified as the prime mover of Aristotle. Aristotle associated Plato’s notion of space with his concept of matter (ὕλη), which was a recipient (τὸ ὑποκείμενον) of each thing and had the capacity to receive form.\textsuperscript{301} Thus, Aristotelian ὕλη parallels Plato’s Receptacle in its neutral stage, before the reflection of the qualities of the primary bodies occurred in it. Even though the Middle Platonic teachers took the term ὕλη from Aristotle, they do not connect it to the Platonic Receptacle in its neutral form, but in its chaotic stage.\textsuperscript{302} Chaotic matter was not fundamentally evil, but it had an innate tendency to escape rationality. It became the principle of disorder and necessity (ἀνάγκη) which must be persuaded by the Logos.\textsuperscript{303} Some Middle Platonic writers like Plutarch postulated an evil world-soul which was responsible for disorder in the world.\textsuperscript{304}

The existence of matter was also related to another more fundamental problem, namely the question of the eternity of the cosmos. Plato had maintained in Tim. 28b that “the primary question which has to be investigated at the outset in every case, – namely, whether it [the cosmos] has always existed, having no beginning of generation, or whether it has come into existence having begun from some beginning.” The latter option seems to be compatible with the narrative in the Timaeus, which describes how the Demiurge created the cosmos out of the pre-existent elements of the world. This conflicts, however, with Plato’s view according to which time itself came into being together with the creation and movement of the heavenly bodies. How, then, should the chronologically definable beginning

\textsuperscript{300} The doxological pattern of the three ἀρχαί is attested e.g. in Placita of Aetius (1.3.21) and Timaios of Locri, according to which “before the heaven came to be, the idea and matter, as well as the God, who is the fashioner of the better, already existed” (94c). Runia has pointed out that the system of three archai (God, matter, ideas) attested in the various Middle Platonic texts was an elaboration of the preceding model which consisted of only two first principles (nous-ideas and matter). Runia refers to Theophrastus’ fragment (230), and the Platonic doxography of Diogenes Laertius (3.67-80), where only two archai are mentioned. See Runia, “Philo and Middle Platonism Revisited,” 135; Tobin, Timaios of Locri., 14-16.

\textsuperscript{301} Ar. Phys. 192a, 31; 209b, 11-17. It is rather likely that the identification of matter and Plato’s Receptacle was not invented by Aristotle, but it came from the scholastic tradition of the Old Academy. It appears already in the teaching of Speusippus. Cf. Dillon, The Middle Platonists, 14.


\textsuperscript{303} It should be noted that the term necessity (ἀνάγκη) does not mean some deterministic natural law in its modern scientific meaning, but instead it refers in Plato to contingent motion without purpose or intention. It denotes the irrationality of the cosmos. Cf. Cornford, Plato’s Cosmology, 159-177; Tobin, Timaios of Locri, 14-16.

\textsuperscript{304} Dillon, The Middle Platonists, 202-204.
of the cosmos in the Timaeus be understood if time did not exist before the world came into being?

One solution to the aforesaid problems was to interpret Plato’s cosmological narrative in the Timaeus metaphorically. Some followers of Plato were of the opinion that Plato articulated the creation of the world by the Demiurge out of pre-existent chaotic matter in the Timaeus for pedagogical reasons and only in order to explain the logical structure of the world. Rather than a historical real divine being or God, the Demiurge can be understood as a symbolical figure, which could in reality be identified with the cosmic mind or the rational part of the world soul. This would mean that the definable point of time of the creation was also part of the metaphorical cosmic myth. In reality, both the realm of being, i.e. the world of ideas, and the realm of becoming, i.e. the visible cosmos, have existed ever since without beginning or end (creatio aeterna).

The symbolical interpretation of the Timaeus may have been a reaction towards Aristotle’s criticism of Plato’s cosmic myth. Aristotle took Plato’s
Timaeus literally and argued that it was absurd to suppose that the immaterial Demiurge could have created the material world. For Aristotle, the causation between beings at ontologically different levels was impossible. Also, the conception that the world was both created and eternal was irrational, because all things which were created were also destructible. Therefore, Aristotle stated that the world was uncreated and indestructible. This means that the cosmos was a closed system in which the elements of the world were constantly changing their accidental qualities and forming the next generation of bodies. The term genesis describes the process of change and generation within an eternal and non-changing substratum, which served the basis for genesis.

Some Middle Platonic philosophers revitalized the non-literal reading of Timaeus’s account of the creation of the world, but they combined it with Aristotelian transcendental theology and Pythagorean first principles. A theory of the creation of the world began to emerge according to which God is not solely a symbolical figure, but the source of the Ideas (the Monad) and the principle of multiplicity and matter (the Dyad) as well. According to this model “to be created” means metaphysical-ontological dependency on the transcendent One. Also, matter does not exist independently as an arche – like the Receptacle in the Timaeus – but it is derived from God. As the Ideas are located within God’s mind as his thoughts, the principle of has its origin in the transcendent One as a dyadic shadow projection of the Monad or a deprived aspect of the monadic Logos.

5.2 The creation of matter in the writings of Philo

Unfortunately, Philo does not give a clear answer whether he supported the doctrine of creation ex nihilo or creation out of pre-existent matter, and whether he saw the creation as a temporal act (creatio temporalis) or an eternal process (creatio aeterna). On the one hand, Philo seems to suppose the existence of matter before the Creator started to form the elements of the world. Philo states that there are two basic principles out of which the world is created. One is the pure universal and active mind, and the other is the passive, lifeless and motionless principle, which is full of discord and disharmony. The latter, passive element of the creation, is depicted as ὤλη.
or οὐσία or simply μὴ ὄν, i.e. “non-being”. On the other hand, Philo may say that God generates all things, not only making them visible, but bringing into being that which did not exist before, acting not only as the artificer (δημιουργός), but also as the creator (κτίστης). Philo clearly says that there is only one arche of the world and that God is the cause of everything that exists and matter is not excluded from the “everything.”

Harry Wolfson tried to prove that Philo was the first religious-philosophical teacher who taught creation ex nihilo. In his analysis of Philo’s theory of the creation of the intelligible cosmos, Wolfson argued that Philo postulated in Opif. 29 the creation of the ideas of the four cosmic elements, i.e. the ideas of earth, water, air and fire (= heaven). The “abyss” in Gen. 1:2 referred to the “idea of the void,” which Wolfson equated with the idea of the Platonic Receptacle. Moreover, Wolfson suggested that God not only created the Ideas but the cosmic copies of them, which means that God also created the cosmic copy of the idea of the Receptacle. Wolfson’s analysis of the content of the intelligible cosmos is not compelling. Rather than ideas of the cosmic bodies, Philo in Opif. 29 explained archetypical paradigms of the regions of the cosmos. The idea of the void referred to the region between moon and earth, which was filled with air, not to the idea of the Platonic Receptacle. In addition, the idea of heaven in Opif. 29 could not refer to the idea of the fourth cosmic element, i.e. fire, because Philo explicitly denies that the substance of the heaven is fire.

On the grounds of these discrepancies Wolfson’s thesis about creation ex nihilo has not received large support. In addition, it is not reasonable to suggest that God would have created something which he could not himself contact without intermediaries. Philo mentions explicitly that God created all things in the world out of matter “without laying hold of it himself, since it was not lawful for the happy and blessed One to touch limitless chaotic matter.” God had to use his incorporeal powers in order to shape shapeless matter. Also, the separation of pre-existent matter into four cosmic

312 The term “non-being” parallels mannah or offspring which were brought from non-being to being from pre-existent matter. The former had its origin in the element of air (Mos. 2.267) and the latter in parents who were the midway between divine and human nature (Spec. 2.225). Cf. Winston, Philo of Alexandria, 7-8.
313 Somn. 1.76, Opif. 22, Plant. 3, Heres 233-136.
314 Leg. 3.29, Heres 36, Decal. 41, 52, 64, Spec. 1. 20, 30, Legat 3.
315 Wolfson, Philo I, 308-309.
317 For the same kind of interpretation see Richard Sorabji, Time, Creation, and the Continuum: Theories in Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages (Ithaca: New York, 1983), 203-9. David Winston has pointed out that creation ex nihilo was an unknown doctrine within Judaism during the time of Philo. It is rather unlikely that Philo would have postulated such an innovative theory concerning the creation of matter without formulating this doctrine explicitly.
318 Spec. 1.328.
elements (air, fire, earth, water) was delegated to the Logos, which was depicted as a “cutter.” Philo’s statement according to which “nothing comes into being from the nonexistent and nothing is destroyed into the nonexistent” seems to oppose the theory of creation \textit{ex nihilo}.

If creation \textit{ex nihilo} is rejected as Philo’s model for the creation of matter, there are two remaining options which could explain Philo’s theory concerning the origin of matter. These options are i) matter has existed eternally as an independent principle besides God or ii) matter came into being indirectly as a result of the creation process. The former option is related to the theory of \textit{creatio temporalis}, according to which the world came into being at the moment God began to shape pre-existent matter. The latter represents \textit{creatio aeterna}, which became, as I noted above, the standard view among the Middle Platonists since Eudorus of Alexandria. According to \textit{creatio aeterna}, the temporal expressions in the creation myth of the \textit{Timeaus} should be taken metaphorically as descriptions of the ontological dependence of the world on its primary \textit{arche}.

Philo was evidently aware of the philosophical discussion and the different views concerning the creation of the world and the origin of matter. In \textit{On the Eternity of the World} he enumerates three philosophical solutions concerning the creation of the world. Firstly, the Aristotelian view according to which the world is uncreated and indestructible. Secondly, the Stoic view, which postulated a succession of created and destructible worlds. The third was the Platonic view which according to Philo was anticipated by Moses: the world was created, but its indestructibility was sustained by God’s providence.

\begin{footnotes}
\item[319] \textit{Her.} 134-140.
\item[320] \textit{Aet.} 5; \textit{Spec.} 1.266. See Winston, \textit{Philo of Alexandria}, 11-13.
\item[321] Gerhard May argues that Philo interpreted the \textit{Timaeus} literally. This would mean that the cosmos came into being at a definite point of time as a result of God’s will, and it will last eternally on the grounds of God’s omnipotence. Philo agreed with Plato in that matter exists eternally beside God as the second \textit{arche}. Cf. Gerhard May, \textit{Creation ex Nihilo. The Doctrine of Creation out of Nothing in Early Christian Thought} (Transl. A. S. Worral; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994), 6-21. A similar kind of interpretation can be found in Hans-Friedrich Weiss, \textit{Untersuchungen zur Kosmologie des hellenistischen und palästinischen Judentums} (TU 97; Berling, 1966), 18-74. Cf. also James Drummond, \textit{Philo Judeaus: The Jewish-Alexandrian Philosophy in its Development and Completion. 2 Vols.} (London: 1888), 297-307. Lilla argues that Clement believed in the existence of matter prior to the origin of the world. The same doctrine can also be found in Wisdom of Salomon, in Philo, and in Justin. Cf. Salvatore Lilla, \textit{Clement of Alexandria. A Study in Christian Platonism and Gnosticism} (Glasgow: Oxford University Press, 1971), 193-199. Runia is of the opinion that Philo does not give a clear answer to the problem of matter because his primary aim is exegetical and ethical. According to Runia, Philo taught the pre-existence of matter, which existed independently of God. Matter is not, however, the second \textit{arche} similar to God, because God is constantly forming matter. Cf. Runia, \textit{Philo of Alexandria}, 435-455.
\end{footnotes}
In *Aet.* 1-19 Philo was not, however, perfectly pleased with the various Platonic interpretations of the *Timaeus*.322 On the one hand, he rejected the sophisticated Platonic interpretation, which may refer to the symbolical reading of the *Timaeus* by the teachers of the Old Academy. On the other hand, he strikingly admired the Aristotelian view according to which Plato proved in the *Timaeus* that the world is both uncreated and indestructible. Philo did not say, however, that he accepted the latter opinion, but it was better and truer (βέλτιον καὶ ἀληθέστερον) than the former theory because it did not challenge the activity of God in the creation.323 Philo formulates his own thesis in *Prov.* 1.7.9-20 as follows:

> God is continuously ordering matter by his thought. His thinking was not anterior to his creating, and there never was a time when he did not create, the ideas themselves having been with him from the beginning. For God's will is not posterior to him, but is always with him, for natural motions never give out. Thus ever thinking he creates, and furnishes to sensible things the principle of their existence, so that both should exist together: the ever-creating Divine Mind and the sense-perceptible things to which beginning of being is given.324

Sterling points out that in *Prov.* 1.7.9-20 Philo may have modified his thoughts concerning the creation of matter found in *Opif.* 7, 9-11, which was closer to Plato's view in the *Timaeus*.325 In *Prov.* Philo states that the visible world cannot be distinguished from the eternally existing Ideas. Thus, there is only one arché of the world, which means that God must be indirectly also the arché of matter. The creation of the visible world is eternal (*creatio aeterna*) because God creates the world simultaneously (*creatio simultanea*) by thinking about its eternal Ideas. The existence of the world is dependent

---

322 *Aet.* 13, 14. Philo mentions that the view which regards the world as uncreated and indestructible was not an invention of Aristotle, but Pythagoreans. He mentions in *Aet.* 12 a work of Ocellus called *A Treatise on the Nature of the Universe* (Περὶ τῆς τοῦ παντὸς φύσεως) in which the author asserts that the world is indestructible and proves some demonstrative proofs. Philo does not explicitly reject this possibly Neo-Pythagorean teaching concerning the eternity of the world. He argues (*Aet.* 21-22) that the world can be destroyed only by external causes or by the powers within itself. Both of these causes are not compelling for Philo. Therefore, the world is indestructible.

323 The argumentation in *Aet.* 8-19 is rather complicated. Sterling agrees with Baltes that Philo may have used some Peripatetic source as he presents views from different philosophical schools of thought. Cf. Sterling, “Creatio Temporalis,” 36-37. I would suggest that Philo’s view was not absolutely Platonic, and it was not absolutely anti-Aristotelian either, which created a tension in Philo’s statements in *Aet.* 8-19. For Philo, the main problem in various philosophical theories was that they were infected by the charge of the inactivity of God.

324 Translated by David Winston in *Philo of Alexandria,* 15.

on God’s active and all-pervasive will to create through his thinking.\textsuperscript{326} Therefore, primordial matter does not have an independent and real existence of its own, as Plato taught in the \textit{Timaeus}, or God is not merely ordering it, but matter came into being as a by-product or “shadow reflection” of the creation of the intelligible world. David Winston has stated that for Philo matter is “a logical moment rather than a temporal reality.”\textsuperscript{327}

It seems that Philo did not accept Platonic or Aristotelian theories of the creation uncritically. Although Philo drew his teaching from the Neo-Pythagorean and Platonic tradition and he read the \textit{Timaeus} metaphorically, this should not diminish the activity of God in the process of creation as was the case in the purely symbolic view of some sophisticated Platonists.\textsuperscript{328} The term genesis was not according to Philo a temporal expression, but it means metaphysical-ontological dependence on God’s creative activity. Philo followed Plato in that the cosmos was not created in time, but time was created together with the world (γὰρ οὐκ ἦν πρὸ κόσμου, ἀλλ’ ἦ σὺν αὐτῷ γέγονεν ἦ μετ’ αὐτὸν). For Philo, the six days of creation does not mean that God needed time for the creation, but he created the whole world instantaneously by thinking about it.\textsuperscript{329} The number of days represents the logical structure of the visible world that is made simultaneously as a copy of the intelligible model, not the chronological interval between the days of creation.

The consensus of opinion among the Philonic scholars is that matter does have an intelligible archetype in the world of Ideas. Wolfson’s thesis according to which God also created the idea of the Receptacle is apparently erroneous. However, there are – as I noted in the previous chapter – some elements in Philo’s protological accounts, which may refer to the conflict within the intelligible world. In \textit{Opif.} 33-34 (par. \textit{Somn.} 1.75) Philo describes how darkness came into being as a rival to light, when the intelligible

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{326} Sac. 65-68; Mos. 1.283.
\item \textsuperscript{327} Winston, \textit{Logos}, 17-18. The \textit{Wisdom of Solomon}, another representative text of Alexandrian Hellenistic Judaism, says that God “created the world out of formless matter” (\textit{Wisdom}. 11.17) without mentioning the origin of matter. Winston stresses that there is not evidence for the doctrine of \textit{creatio ex nihilo} in Jewish or Greek tradition in the time of Philo. The creation in the \textit{Wisdom of Solomon} was understood as a continuous process. Matter was not created out of nothing, but it came into being as a by-product of creation. According to Winston, this which was also the opinion of Philo. It is therefore possible that the \textit{Wisdom of Solomon} was influenced by Philo’s writings. Cf. David Winston, \textit{The Wisdom of Solomon. A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary by David Winston} (The Anchor Bible 43; New York: Doubleday, 1979), 39-40.
\item \textsuperscript{328} Sterling, “\textit{Creatio Temporalis},” 40-41.
\item \textsuperscript{329} ἐπεὶ δὴ προσέδειτο χρόνων μήκος ὁ ποιών ἀμα γάρ πάντα ὁδὼν εἴκος θεόν, οὐ προστάττοντα μόνον ἀλλὰ καὶ διανοούμενον ἀλλ’ ἐπεὶ δὴ τοῖς γινομένοις ἐδει τάξεως. (\textit{Opif.} 13) Philo says that the number six is an arithmetically perfect number containing the male (number 3) and female (number 2) aspects of creation (3 x 2 = 6; 2+2+2 = 6; 3 + 3 = 6), and the creation in six days describes the perfection of the created cosmos metaphorically.
\end{itemize}
cosmos, i.e. the Logos, was created. Darkness must be fenced by Limits, i.e. the morning and the evening, which belonged according to Philo to the intelligible cosmos. The Limit is a standard Neo-Pythagorean principle as a controller of the principle of multiplicity and matter. Although God did not create matter, it came into existence as a counter-element to the Logos and opposed the ordered cosmos. Matter was, however, a necessary cosmic element for the creation of the visible world. In Philo’s cosmological system matter is not evil, although it may become the source of evilness if rationality does not control it. There is not, however, such a thing as cosmic evil or chaotic matter in Philo’s cosmology that has an existence of its own. God sends even chaotic natural catastrophes to benefit humankind in general, and if something evil happens as a result of them, it is not caused by God’s will but these effects are produced by their natural causes (Prov. 42-44, 52-54). It seems that chaotic materiality can be “experienced” in the world only in the microcosmic realm when the human mind loses its rationality and is captured by irrational passions and love of material things.

5.3 The creation of matter in the Valentinian sources

Einar Thomassen has argued convincingly that the generation of matter in the Valentinian sources parallels theories in the school tradition of the Neo-Pythagorean Moderatus of Gades. According to Moderatus’s theory “Quantity,” i.e. the principle of multiplicity and matter, was derived from the “unitary Logos” by depriving it of its rationality. Thomassen notices that in Valentinian cosmological myth the whole Pleroma, i.e. the sum-total of aeons below the primal God, can be equated with the second Monad or unitary Logos of Moderatus’s system and Sophia with Quantity, which was deprived of its rationality.

Thomassen lists some instances of shared vocabulary that unify the Valentinian protological account and Moderatus’s account. Extension (ἐκθείνεσθαι, ἔκτασις) is employed to describe Sophia as well as Quantity in Moderatus’s account. Sophia extends herself to reach the One, and she would have been absorbed and dissolved in the totality of being had she not encountered the power, i.e. the Limit, which supports the Pleroma. In Moderatus’s systems, Quantity is restricted by “boundaries.” Also, Sophia’s

---

330 Thomassen, The Spiritual Seed, 279-283.
Intention to extend herself is separated and excluded in the same way as Quantity is “torn off” in Moderatus’s system.\(^{332}\)

Although the Valentinian protological model fits nicely with Moderatus’s description of the derivation of matter, there are various allusions in the Valentinian accounts that connect them directly to Plato’s *Timaeus* in which the creation of the cosmos results from the synergy of *Nous* and Necessity. In Valentinian protology, the “Mind” (*Νοῦς*) emanates from God, and it contains all the aeons as the seed.\(^{333}\) However, the Intention of the youngest of the aeons, Sophia, is cast out “by necessity into the region of shadow and void” (ἐν σκιᾶς καὶ κενώματος τόποις ἐκβεβράσθαι κατὰ ἀνάγκην).\(^{334}\) Thus, the Valentinian theologians followed Plato in that the generation of the intelligible world was generated through the *nous* (τὰ διὰ νοῦ δεδημιουργημένα), whereas the creation of the visible world that follows from Sophia’s exclusion from the Pleroma is what came out of necessity (τὰ δι᾽ ἀνάγκης γινομένα).\(^{335}\) The Intention of Sophia was depicted as “shapeless and devoid of form” (ἀμορφὸς καὶ ἀνείδεος), which parallels Plato’s description of the Receptacle in the *Timaeus* which was “invisible and unshaped” (ἀνόρατον εἶδός τι καὶ ἀμορφοφον).\(^{336}\)

It is noteworthy that Sophia’s Intention (ἐνθύμησις) is also connected with ignorance. Sophia’s Intention was shapeless because she has not understood that the Father of All is incomprehensible. Therefore, the fall of Sophia from the divine realm had epistemological significance. The reference to “the places of shadow and emptiness” (ἐν σκιᾶς καὶ κενώματος τόποις) into which Sophia’s Intention was thrown is an allusion to Plato’s allegory of the cave.\(^{337}\) Like prisoners in a cave looking at shadows projected on the wall, Sophia is bound to the realm of the emptiness of knowledge and mere shadows until the Savior comes from above and enlightens her with perfect knowledge. These notions are also attested in the Valentinian account preserved by

---

332 Thomassen’s comparison is based on Iren. *Haer.* 1.2.2-4; 1.4.1. It is noticeable, however, that it was the last aeon, Sophia, who became the source of matter, although it is stated that the intention to know the unknown Father had infected the other aeons too (Iren. *Haer.* 1.2.2). The intention of the last aeon was fatal. This was based on the Pythagorean theory of the number 30 (2+4+6+8+10=30), which is also the total number of aeons in the Pleroma. Sophia was the last aeon of the Dodecad as well as the Triacontad. The creation of Sophia moved necessarily beyond the Limit (ὅρος) of the Pleroma, and it was therefore imperfect. The fall of Sophia has a numerological basis, which is also attested in the allegory of the parable of the lost sheep (Luke 15:4-7) by Marcus (Iren. *Haer.* 1.16.1.) See Jean-Marc Narbonne, “The Neopythagorean Backdrop to the Fall of the Soul,” in *Gnosticism, Platonism and the Late Ancient World. Essays in Honour of John D. Turner* (ed. Kevin Corrigan and Tuomas Rasimus; Boston: Brill, 2012), 414-419.

333 Iren. *Haer.* 1.1.1; *Exc.Theod.* 6-7; Iren. *Haer.* 1.8.5.

334 Iren. *Haer.* 1.4.1.

335 *Tim.* 47e-48a.

336 Iren. *Haer.* 1.2.2-4; *Tim.* 51b.

337 *Republic* 563 ff.
The creation of matter and the wisdom of God

Clement, which goes back to Theodotus. In that passage Sophia – although the text does not mention her name explicitly – fell into ignorance and formlessness (ἐν ἀγνωσίᾳ καὶ ἀμορφίᾳ ἐγένετο) when she wished to grasp that which is beyond knowledge. This led Sophia into the void of knowledge (κένωμα γνώσεως) and the shadow of the Name (σκιὰ τοῦ ὀνόματος), i.e. the perfect form of the aeons.

The salvation of Sophia, who was living in the place of shadows and “the cave of ignorance,” is actualized in two subsequent phases which parallel the salvation of the prisoners in Plato’s allegory of the cave. In the first phase, Christ descended from the intelligible realm of Light and visited Sophia Achamoth and bestowed upon her form, but not in accordance with perfect knowledge. Christ left her only a fragrance of immortality and a desire to return to the Light. When Sophia tried to follow Christ to the Pleroma, she was prevented by the Limit. Therefore, Sophia began to experience various kinds of emotions such as fear, perplexity, consternation, distress and ignorance, which served as the basis for incorporeal matter. It is noticeable that it was the light of Christ which revealed to Sophia her fallen condition and activated her emotions. Sophia did not experience bad emotion when she lived in the world of shadows but only after she got to know that something better exists. In the second phase the Savior, i.e. the Light, descended on Sophia and gave her form according to knowledge. The Savior taught Sophia the emanations of the Father of All and that the Father is beyond understanding.

The salvation of Sophia from the shadows of ignorance was part of the cosmic drama which led to the creation of matter and the visible cosmos. The Savior not only healed Sophia’s emotions through knowledge but separated them and converted them from incorporeal passions into incorporeal matter (ἐξ ἀσωμάτου πάθους εἰς ἀσώματον τὴν ὕλην). The Savior bestowed capability upon matter to be later formed by the Demiurge into bodily structures and compounds. It seems that there was no consensus concerning Sophia’s emotions in the Valentinian sources. This becomes evident if the various theories of the passions of Sophia in Exc. C and Iren. Haer. 1.1-7 are compared with each other. It seems that Irenaeus has combined different Valentinian sources in his account of the Valentinian myth. The following table illustrates the inconsistencies between Valentinian sources concerning the analysis of Sophia’s emotions.

---

338 Exc. Theod. 31.
339 Iren. Haer. 1.4.1.
340 Iren. Haer. 1.4.5; Exc. Theod. 46.1.
341 For the fourfold division of the passions in Valentinian, Stoic and Sethian sources, see Dunderberg, Beyond Gnosticism, 112.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Iren. 1.4.1</th>
<th>Iren. 1.4.2</th>
<th>Iren. 1.5.4</th>
<th>Exc. C</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>conversion</td>
<td>conversion: the psychic essence</td>
<td>conversion + fear: the psychic essence conversion: the Demiurge</td>
<td>origin of the psychic essence is not mentioned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fear</td>
<td>fear: rest of the psychic arche</td>
<td>fear: water + <strong>irrational souls</strong></td>
<td>fear: <strong>irrational souls</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>distress</td>
<td>distress: rest of the psychic arche + corporeal elements</td>
<td>distress: air + <strong>evil spirits</strong> and the Devil</td>
<td>distress: <strong>evil spirits</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>perplexity</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>perplexity: <strong>elements of the world</strong></td>
<td>perplexity and consternation: <strong>elements of the world</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ignorance</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>ignorance: fire [inherited in the earth, water &amp; air]</td>
<td>[fire inherited in the earth, water &amp; air] origin not mentioned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>terror and consternation: corporeal elements</td>
<td></td>
<td>consternation: earth</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tears: water</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>smile: light</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is quite likely that the teachings attested in Iren. *Haer*. 1.5.4 and *Exc. C* parallel each other. In these passages fear and grief are seen as the source of irrational souls and evil spirits, and the elements of the world (earth, water, air) are based on terror and perplexity. Strikingly, the idea of the conversion of Sophia as the source of psychic essence is not mentioned in *Exc. C*. It is likely, as I have pointed out earlier, that it was an innovation of the Valentinian teaching, which goes back to the disciples of Ptolemy in Rome.

In the *Timaeus* Plato says that the projection of the ideas of the cosmic bodies into the Receptacle is “most perplexing and very hard to apprehend.” The Receptacle is the “all-receiver,” which reflects like a mirror the random...
toing and froing of the qualities of the four cosmic elements, but Plato could not explain the cause of the reflections.\textsuperscript{342} The Valentinians intended to give an answer to this “perplexing problem,” and explained not only how the pre-cosmic matter was derived from the transcendent One, but also how the cosmic elements are projected into the incorporeal matter. Just as the Platonic Receptacle had no qualities of its own before the cosmic bodies were projected into it, Sophia did not have any qualities of her own until Christ, i.e. the Light, deserted Sophia and put her emotions into chaotic motion. These emotions of Sophia became the basis for incorporeal matter and the elements of the world. They can be equated with the randomly reflecting qualities (\textit{ίχνη}) of the cosmic elements in the Receptacle. The emotions of Sophia were like the ideas of the cosmic elements, which became the pre-cosmic matter as the Savior separated them and transformed them into unstructured proto-matter and gave this proto-matter the capability of becoming corporeal structures.\textsuperscript{343}

The myth of Sophia was not, however, only a paradigm of the origin of matter and the cosmic elements, but also the paradigm of the enlightenment of the human mind from the shadows of ignorance. Matter does not have its origin in the ideal world. It has its basis in the “emotional” surplus which resulted from the fixation of the ignorance of the one corrupted aeon who was saved from the “shadows of ignorance.” This “waste product” was transformed into the cosmic matter out of which the visible cosmos was created. Some part of matter possesses, however, a sort of innate inclination towards incorruptibility, which had its origin in Sophia’s will to escape from the “cave of ignorance” and return to the Light. This part of matter is called “psychic” and it served as “raw material” not only for the psychic part of the human soul but for the heavenly cosmos. The ruler of the seven heavens, the Demiurge and his angelic powers were made out of “luminous,” psychic essence.\textsuperscript{344}
5.4 Wisdom as mother and matter in Philo and Valentinian sources

In the Valentinian protological account pre-cosmic matter and the principle of multiplicity were associated with Biblical Wisdom, i.e. Sophia. This view can be found already in Philo, who transformed Hellenistic Jewish Wisdom theology into Logos-theology. Philo describes the role of the Logos in almost all the senses as Wisdom in Jewish Wisdom literature. In Hellenistic Jewish Wisdom Theology, Wisdom possessed existence before the creation of the world (Prov. 8.22-31); the world was established by Wisdom (Jer. 10.12; Prov. 3.19) and in Wisdom all the works of God are performed (Ps. 104.24). Wisdom is imparted to men by God (Prov. 2.6); it is personified (Prov. 8.1), and it is identified with the Torah (Sirach 24.23) and linked to the “reasoning” of God (Wisdom 9:9). All these characteristics of Wisdom are applied to the Logos in Philo’s writings.345

Although in most cases the Logos substituted Wisdom in Philo, it did not exhaust all the characteristics of personified Wisdom. In some cases, the Logos and Wisdom seem to be causally linked to each other. In Fug. 97 the Logos is said to be the fountain of Wisdom, but in Fug.109, it is Wisdom that is the mother of the Logos. In the allegory of the river of Eden and its four heads, Philo says in Somn. 2.242-3 that it is “right reason,” i.e. the Logos, which descends from the fountain of Wisdom like a river and waters the “virtue-loving souls.” In Leg. All. 1.65 Philo interprets this same verse differently: the river is the “idea of virtue,” which comes forth from the Wisdom of God that is identified with the Logos. In the first passage the Logos is compared with a river that has its origin in Wisdom, but in the latter passage, the Logos and Wisdom are identified with each other.

It is rather difficult to balance these contradictory statements of Philo concerning the relation between the Logos and Wisdom. Wolfson has proposed that the relations between Wisdom and the Logos described the same God’s thinking power from different points of view. In those instances, where the Logos is said to spring forth from Wisdom, the Logos represents the immanent stage of the Logos, whereas Wisdom represents its pre-cosmic stage. In those instances, where the Logos is the fountain of Wisdom, the situation is reversed: Wisdom is seen as an immanent representation of the pre-cosmic Logos. It is, however, the same stream of Logos-Wisdom, which is depicted in some cases as the Logos and in some other cases as Wisdom.346

In some cases, Wisdom is called by Philo the “mother.” In Fug. 109 Wisdom is called mother (μήτηρ) “through which all came into existence” (δι’ ης τὰ ὅλα ἥλθεν εἰς γένεσιν) and in Det. 54 Wisdom is the “mother through

345 It is noteworthy that Plato also speaks in Philebus 30c about wisdom (σοφία) and mind (νοῦς) as equivalent terms, which may have supported Philo’s tendency to assimilate the Logos (= nous) and Wisdom.

which all things were brought to completion” (μητέρα δὲ τὴν σοφίαν, δι’ ἦς ἀπετελέσθη τὸ πᾶν). Thus, Wisdom is not only called the “instrument”, like the Logos, but “mother.” In Ebr. 31 Philo describes Wisdom also as “the mother and nurse” (μήτηρ καὶ τιθήνη), who is made fertile by the seed of God and gives birth to her son, the visible world.

Father and mother have different meanings, though the words are the same. For we shall rightly say that the Craftsman who made this universe is also the father of that which had thus come into being, and that the Maker’s knowledge is the mother. When God had intercourse with her, not in the manner of a human, he sowed coming-to-be. And she, having received the seeds of God, with productive birth pangs gave birth to her only and beloved visible son, this cosmos. Now, by one member of the divine choir, wisdom is presented as speaking about herself in this way, “God acquired me as the first of his works, and before the ages he founded me” [Prov 8:22]. For it was necessary that all that which came into being should be younger than the mother and nurse of the whole.

It is evident that Philo derives these characteristics from Plato’s Timaeus, which calls the Receptacle the “mother and nurse.”347 The generative terminology used by Plato depicts the Receptacle in which the creation took place. This idea goes back to an ancient theory according to which the mother does not produce the child but only gives nutrition and room for an embryo. Aristotle says that the female does not contribute anything to generation but only gives place (τόπος) for an embryo.348 In the Timaeus the Father is the model, i.e. the world of forms, the mother is the Receptacle, and their offspring is the world of Becoming.349 In Philo, the Father is God, who unites with the Mother, and the Son is their offspring, the visible cosmos, which is produced from the seed of the Father.

It is striking that Philo associates Wisdom with the “the mother and nurse,” which are descriptions of the Receptacle in Plato. David Runia suggests, however, that there “is insufficient evidence to prove a philosophical rationale behind the similar description of ὕλη and σοφία.” Runia maintains that in Philo there is plasticity of symbols and images. Therefore, the symbols of father, mother, daughter, nurse etc. can be used rather freely by Philo without any need to make drastic philosophical conclusion from them.350 John Dillon suggests that Philo may have found the idea of the female life-principle in the Platonic-Pythagorean tradition, which he applied to the figure of Wisdom from the Bible. This led to a conflict in Philo’s general system of thought according to which Wisdom and the

347 Tim. 49a, 51a.
349 Tim. 50c-d.
intelligible cosmos were seen as virtually opposite to matter. The concept of wisdom as mother and nurse was not elaborated any further by Philo because he noticed that it would lead to inconsistencies concerning his overall theory of creation.351 David Winston has pointed out that Philo was evidently aware of a Neo-Pythagorean formulation according to which an aspect of the Nous/Logos could be described as the feminine Unlimited Dyad or Intelligible Matter. 352

The association of biblical Wisdom with matter was exceptional in Hellenistic Jewish and Early Christian literature. Evidently, it was also a marginal feature in Philo’s Logos -theology. It is possible, however, that Philo may have integrated some preceding allegorical traditions in his works, which did not fit perfectly well in his overall theological system. Significantly, the Gnostics and the Valentinian teachers also knew these traditions which they integrated into the myth of Sophia. The stages of Sophia’s pre-cosmic salvation formed not only the origin of matter, but also served as the paradigm for the salvation of human beings. At an anthropological level the ordos salutis of Sophia played a threefold role. Firstly, she was an archetype of the imperfect soul who has assimilated with sense perceptions and passion. Secondly, she was a paradigm for those who were searching for immortality. Thirdly, Sophia was the mother of those whose souls were healed and formed according to perfect knowledge.

A similar kind of parallelism between Wisdom as a nurturer of cosmic matter and the paradigm of the cultivation of the human soul is also attested also in Philo. In Ebr. 59-61 Philo describes the formation of the soul of Sarah from femininity to the perfect male. Philo explains that the words of Abraham in Gen. 20:12 “she really is my sister, the daughter of my father though not of my mother” mean allegorically that Sarah does not have Wisdom as a mother, because she has rejected the customs of women, i.e. the passionate sense perceptions, and become an offspring of the seed of the Father of All.

She is not born of that material substance perceptible to our senses, ever in a state of formation and dissolution, the material which is called mother or foster-mother or nurse of created things by those in

351 Dillon, The Middle Platonists, 164. Most recently, Arco den Heijer has argued that Wisdom as “mother” does not necessarily depict the Platonic Receptacle or the Pythagorean unlimited Dyad but it has in Philo its basis in the Pythagorean Tetrad, which is referred to as “the mother of all.” Heijer points out that in Philo Wisdom as mother is not a passive all-receiver but she also has an active and emanative role in the cosmic harmony as well as in the harmony of the soul. Cf. Arco den Heijer, “Cosmic Mothers in Philo of Alexandria and in Neopythagoreanism,” in The Studia Philonica Annual XXVII (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2015).

352 Winston, Logos, 20-21. There is also an analogous attempt by Plutarch (Is. et Os. 371e, 374a) to fuse Egyptian mythology with Platonic philosophy by allegorizing the Receptacle in Timaeus as the goddess Isis.
whom first the young plant of wisdom grew; she is born of the Father and Cause of all things.\textsuperscript{353}

It could not be a coincidence that Philo depicts the sense-perceptible matter (ὕλης τῆς αἰσθητῆς) in terms that were used by Plato in the *Timaeus* for the Receptacle - μήτηρ (50d3), τιθήνη (49a6, 52d5, 88d6), τροφός (88d6). It is of note that Philo says that the young plant of wisdom grew from matter, which is contrasted to Sarah, who was born from the seed of the Father of All. We can conclude, thus, that Philo compares the imperfect soul to the sense-perceptible matter and Wisdom. In *Det.* 115 the Platonic Receptacle-terminology is also associated with the education of the human soul. Philo says that Wisdom is an educator, a foster-mother and a nurse of those who seek incorruptible food of God from the Scriptures (πέτραν τὴν στερεὰν καὶ ἀδιάκοπον ἐμφαίνων σοφίαν θεοῦ, τὴν τροφὸν καὶ τιθηνοκόμον καὶ κουροτρόφον τῶν ἀφθάρτου διάτεχς ἐφιεμένον.) In *Her.* 53 Philo personifies Wisdom and calls her the mother of all who are living to God:

“For Adam,” it says, “called the name of his wife ‘Life,’ because she is the mother of all things living,” that is doubtless of those who are in truth dead to the life of the soul. But those who are really living have Wisdom for their mother, but Sense they take for a bond-woman, the handiwork of nature made to minister to knowledge.\textsuperscript{354}

The association of Wisdom with matter does not necessarily contain a negative meaning in Philo. The earthly soul is the neutral “all-receiver” or “the nurse of becoming,” in which the formation of the perfect soul can be actualized. At an anthropological level, the earthly soul is depicted negatively only if right reason does not control it and the soul dissolves into the realm the sense perceptions and flesh. Without right reason, the soul is comparable to restless matter, which randomly reflects the images of the sense perceptions. It is, however, the earthly soul in which the formation of the perfect soul can take place and therefore it can also be depicted as “mother” and “nurse.” Philo did not associate Wisdom solely with the soul, which is only potentially perfect, but also with the soul, which had been perfected by the seed of virtue. Those, who obey right reason have Wisdom as their mother, similar to the soul of Sarah, which was formed and made fertile by the seed of Logos.\textsuperscript{355}

These multiple associations of Wisdom with “mother” and with “matter” in Philo’s texts can also be found in the Valentinian accounts. On the one

\textsuperscript{353} οὐ γὰρ ἐξ ὕλης τῆς αἰσθητῆς συνεσταμένης ἀεὶ καὶ λυομένης, ἢν μητέρα καὶ τροφὸν καὶ τιθήνην τῶν ποιητῶν ἔφασαν, ἰδίᾳ πρώτος σοφίας ἀνεβλάστησεν ἔρνος, ἀλλ’ ἐκ τοῦ πάντων ἀτίου καὶ πατρός.

\textsuperscript{354} «ἐκάλεσε» γάρ φησιν «Ἀδὰμ τὸ ὄνομα τῆς γυναικὸς αὐτοῦ ζωή, ὅτι αὕτη μήτηρ πάντων τῶν ζωτῶν», τῶν πρῶτοι ἄλληθαι τῶν ψυχῶν τεθνηκότων ἐνίκου βίον. οἱ δὲ ζῶντες ἀντίδος μητέρα μὲν ἔχουσι σοφίαν, αἰσθησιν δὲ δούλην πρὸς ὑπηρεσίαν ἐπιστήμης ὑπὸ φύσεως δημιουργηθέντων.

\textsuperscript{355} *Leg.* All 2.82, *Cher.* 43-45, 49-50, *Mut.* 137, *Sac.* 78-79
hand, Sophia – or her negative emotions – represented the pre-cosmic matter out of which the Demiurge creates the visible world. On the other hand, Sophia’s negative emotions served as a paradigm for the irrational soul infected by passions. It seems that the Gnostic myth of Sophia was based on Hellenistic Jewish speculations concerning the relations of Wisdom and the Platonic Receptacle that were articulated in an initial stage in the writings of Philo, even though they do not fit perfectly well with Philo’s overall theology. The Gnostic theologians incorporated the myth of Sophia’s fall and salvation into Neo-Pythagorean protology. Sophia became the principle of multiplicity and matter, which was derived from the transcendent One. The epistemological dimension of the myth connects it to the anthropological level and Plato’s allegory of the Cave in the Republic. Sophia also became an archetype of the formation of the human soul which seeks freedom from the shadows of ignorance through knowledge.

5.5 The separation of matter

In the Valentinian protological myth it was not until the advent of the Savior that Sophia’s emotions were healed through knowledge and separated from her to become incorporeal matter. The Savior bestowed upon matter the capability of forming into two essences (hylic and psychic essences) and the elements of the world (earth, water, air and fire). The Savior left matter in a confused stage to be separated by the Demiurge into structures and bodies. This parallels Plato’s Timaeus in which chaotic matter did not become stable corporeal structures until the Demiurge started to organize it using shapes and numbers. The formation of matter out of Sophia’s emotions is attested in the accounts of Irenaeus and Exc. C in the following way:

---

356 Tim. 52d-53c.
THE CREATION OF MATTER AND THE WISDOM OF GOD

Exc. Theod. 46.1

Πρῶτον οὖν ἐξ ἀσωμάτου πάθους καὶ συμβεβηκότος εἰς ἀσωμάτον ἐπι τὴν ὑλὴν αὐτὰ μετήντλησεν καὶ μετέβαλεν· ἐφ' οὕτως εἰς συγκρίματα καὶ σώματα (ἀθρόως γὰρ οὐσίαν ποιῆσαι τὰ πάθη οὐκ ἐνῆν)· καὶ τοῖς σώμασι κατὰ φύσιν ἐπιτηδειότητα ἐνεποίησεν. Πρῶτος μὲν οὖν Δημιουργὸς ὁ Σωτήρ γίνεται καθολικός.

And first he poured into another place and transformed the incorporeal and accidental emotions into incorporeal matter (and) in this way into compounds and bodies. For it was not possible all at once to make an essence from sufferings. And he bestowed propensity upon bodies according to their nature. Therefore, the Saviour becomes the first general creator.

Iren. Haer. 1.4.5

ἀλλ' ἀποκρίναντα χωρῆσι τοῦ [χωρίς, εἰτα] συγχέαι καὶ πῆξαι, καὶ εἰς ἀσωμάτου πάθους εἰς ἀσωμάτον τὴν ὑλὴν μεταβαλεῖν αὐτά· ἐφ' οὕτως ἐπιτηδειότητα καὶ φύσιν ἐμπεποιηκέναι αὐτοῖς, ὡστε εἰς συγκρίματα καὶ σώματα ἐπιθεῖν, πρὸς τὸ γενέσθαι δύο οὐσίας, τὴν φαύλην τῶν παθῶν, τὴν τε τῆς ἐπιστροφῆς ἐμπαθῆ· καὶ διὰ τοῦτο δυνάμει τὸν Σωτῆρα δεδημιουργηκέναι φάσκουσι.

But he (the Savior) separated them, poured them together and fixed them and transformed them from incorporeal emotions into incorporeal matter. In this way, he bestowed upon them capability and nature to become compounds and bodies so that two essences will emerge, the bad one from emotions and the passionate from conversion. For this reason, they say that the Savior has virtually created (these things).

The accounts in Exc. C and Iren. Haer. 1.4.5 are not totally identical. In Exc. C the clause after ἐφ' οὕτως does not speak about bestowing predisposition upon the passions of Sophia, as in Irenaeus, but about the generation of structures and bodies (συγκρίματα καὶ σώματα). Irenaeus’s account also contains the second result clause (πρὸς τὸ) concerning the two essences (δύο οὐσίας) that are not mentioned in the account of Exc. C. However, the two essences are mentioned later in Clement’s account, which describes the separation of the psychic and hylic essences.357 Dunderberg points out that the terms used in these passages refer to potentiality and determination. The term πήγνυμι is used in the passive to denote something that is irrevocably fixed, and the term ἐπιτηδειότης refers to capability or potentiality.358 The term συμβεβηκός in Clement’s account was a term in ancient physics – especially in Peripatetic philosophy – which referred to an accidental

358 Cf. Dunderberg, Beyond Gnosticism, 124-125
attribute which does not define the essence of the subject. These notions imply that the passions of Sophia were in “an accidental state” before the Savior fixed them. The most important difference between these Valentinian accounts is that Exc. C nowhere mentions the theory concerning Sophia’s emotion of returning (ἐπιστροφῆς ἐμπαθῆ) as a basis for psychic essence. Despite these differences, the main content of these accounts is rather similar. The Savior healed the emotions of Sophia by separating them and transmuting them into unstructured pre-cosmic matter to be formed by the Demiurge.

In the Valentinian accounts, the Demiurge is not working independently, but Sophia controls him. Thus, creative activity is shared by three beings: the Savior, Sophia and the Demiurge. The Savior is called “the first and universal creator” (Πρῶτος μὲν οὖν Δημιουργὸς ὁ Σωτὴρ γίνεται καθολικός) who created the material and psychic essences of the world. Through the Savior’s instrumentality, Sophia came into existence and virtually it is the Savior who created the world because he fixed and separated Sophia’s emotions. Sophia was the second creator who builds a house (= the Demiurge) and based it on seven pillars, which refers to the seven heavenly spheres. The task of the Demiurge, in turn, is to separate psychic essence from matter and divide this matter into the four cosmic elements. The following scheme illustrates the relations of the Savior, Sophia and the Demiurge in the Valentinian accounts.

The Savior is a manifestation of the Pleroma, who is contemplated by

Sophia who uses

the Demiurge as an instrument in:

1. the creation of heavenly intellects out of psychic and luminous essence according to the model of the aeons and
2. the separation of matter into four cosmic elements.

---

359 Cf. Ar. Met. 1025a, and Ar. Top. I.

360 The psychic essence had its origin in the conversion of Sophia and it became the origin of the essences of the Demiurge and angels, but also of the Devil, because her conversion contained an element of fear. Unlike the Demiurge who is ignorant of the spiritual realm, the Devil knows the divine realm above the psychic heaven (Iren. Haer. 1.5.4).

361 In the Valentinian Exposition, it is the Savior himself who also acts in the role of the “dividing Demiurge” (Val. Exp. 35.30-34). See Thomassen, “The Derivation of Matter,” 16-17.
In Philo’s writings, the Logos is not only the pattern according to which the world was created (ἀρχέτυπος, παράδειγμα) or place (τόπος) for the Ideas, but also an instrument (ὅργανον) through which (ὁ δὲ οὖ) God created the world. The Logos also functioned as a cutter (τομεύς) that divided matter and shaped the cosmic elements (earth, water, air and water) out of it. Philo identifies God with the Platonic Demiurge, who uses the Logos as his instrument, whereas it is Sophia who uses the Demiurge as her instrument in the Valentinian systems. The functions of the Logos in Philo as a “pattern” and an “instrument” is distributed in the Valentinian myth to the Savior (the pattern) and the Demiurge (the instrument). Although Sophia intended to do everything in honor of the aeons, it is only the psychic realm that had the capability of reflecting the ideal world of the aeons. The psychic essence had its ontological basis in Sophia’s repentance and seeking for the light. This implies that only the beings of the psychic realm, which rule the seven heavens, are copies of the intelligible cosmos.

5.5.1 The creation as diakrisis in Iren. Haer. 1.5.1-2 and Exc. C

According to Iren. Haer. 1.5.1 and Exc. Theod. 47-48, the creation of heaven and earth in Gen. 1:1 does not describe the creation of the intelligible heaven and earth as in Philo, but the separation of the psychic (= heaven) and hylic (earth) essences, which were in confusion before the Demiurge began to shape them. In Iren. Haer. 1.5.1 the separation of heaven and earth is depicted in the following way:

Thus, they say that he is the Father and God of the beings outside the Pleroma, and he is the Maker of all psychic and hylic essences; he discriminated the two essences that had been poured together, and he made bodies out of incorporeal things, being the maker of heavenly and earthly things. He became the Demiurge of the hylic and the psychic essences, the things on the right and the left, light and heavy, those tending upwards and those tending downwards. He constructed the seven heavens, and they say that the Demiurge is above them and for that reason they call him Hebdomad, but the mother Achamoth is called Ogdoad preserving the number of the primal Ogdoad of the Pleroma. They say that that the seven heavens are intellectual, and they are angels, and the Demiurge himself is an angel. And Paradise is above third heaven and is the fourth archangel and Adam got something from there when he passed time within it.


363 Πατέρα οὖν καὶ Θεὸν λέγουσιν αὐτὸν γεγέναι τῶν ἐκτὸς τοῦ πληρώματος, ποιητὴν ὡντα πάντων ψυχικῶν τε καὶ υλικῶν· διακρίναντα γὰρ τὰ δύο οὐσίας συγκεχυμένας, καὶ ἐξ ἀπωμάτων σωματοποιήσαντα, δεδιστεροφρυσάντα ταί τε σύρρανα καὶ τὰ γήινα, καὶ γεγονέναι υλικῶν καὶ ψυχικῶν, δεξιῶν καὶ ἀριστερῶν δημιουργών, κοίρων καὶ βαρέων, ἁνοικερέων καὶ κατασφερέων· ἐπά τι γὰρ [l. καὶ] σύρανας κατεσκευάζειν, ὄν ἐπάνω τὸν Δημιουργὸν εἶναι λέγουσιν· καὶ διὰ τοῦτο ἐξδομάδα καλόδειν αὐτῶν, τὴν δὲ μητέρα τὴν Αχαμωθ
The Creator God made “heavenly and earthly things” (τὰ οὐράνια καὶ τὰ γῆινα) by separating (διακρινεῖν) the psychic and hylic essences each other. The creation of heaven and earth in Gen. 1:1 was seen as a separation of primordial matter. The Demiurge is called the “Father” and “God” outside the Pleroma and the “Maker” of all psychic and hylic things (Πατέρα οὖν καὶ Θεὸν λέγουσιν αὐτόν γεγονόντα τῶν ἐκτός τοῦ Πληρώματος, Ποιητὴν δὲ πάντων νυκτικῶν καὶ υλικῶν). Although the Demiurge gave form to all things that exist after him, he was in reality prompted by Sophia. Irenaeus may have collected the account in Iren. Haer. 1.5.1 from various sources. A more nuanced description of the creation of heaven and earth is found in Exc. C, which contains a detailed allegorical commentary on Gen. 1:1-3. The text in Exc. Theod. 47-48 is as follows:

Therefore, the Savior becomes the first general creator. “But Sophia” is the second and she “built a house for herself and erected seven pillars.” And first of all, she put forth the image of God the Father, and through him, she made “the heaven and the earth”, that is “the heavenly and earthly things,” the things on the right and the left. He, as an image of the Father, became the father, and he first put forth the psychic Christ as an image of the Son. Then he created the Archangels as images of the Aeons, and the angels of the Archangels, out of psychic and luminous substance, as the prophetic word speaks: “And the Spirit of God was superimposed upon the water.” This speaks of the engagement of the two essences made by him; the pure and unmixed was superimposed and the heavy and hylic, the dirty and coarse were put under it. But it is suggested that it (the earth) was, in the beginning, incorporeal by saying “invisible” (but) it was never invisible to any human nor God, but (this means that) he created it without form, shape and design as it is somehow declared. As the Demiurge discriminates pure things from the coarse (heavy), since he perceives each nature, he made light, that is he manifested and brought forth the idea of light, but the heavenly light of the sun (i.e. physical sun) was made much later.

The content of the allegorical commentary becomes clearer if it is presented besides the Greek text of Gen. 1:1-3. The key words are bolded.

---

364 Iren. Haer. 1.5.1. Philo also uses the demiurgic (“technical”) and procreative (“biological”) metaphors of the creation. In Opif. 7, 10 Philo stresses that the Creator of the universe is not only the Maker but also the Father who cares about the safety of his children. Cf. Runia, Philo of Alexandria, 421-423 and On the Creation, 113-114.
### Gen. 1:1-3

1. Εν ἀρχῇ ἐποίησεν ὁ θεὸς τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ τὴν γῆν.

### Exc. Theod. 47-48

Πρῶτος μὲν οὖν Δημιουργὸς ὁ Σωτήρ γίνεται καθολικός· "ἡ δὲ Σοφία" δευτέρα "οἰκοδομεῖ οίκον έαυτῆ καὶ ύπήρεισεν στύλους ἑπτά." Καὶ πρῶτον πάντων προβάλλεται εἰκόνα τοῦ Πατρὸς Θεόν, δι' οὗ ἐποίησεν "τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ τὴν γῆν", τούτης "τὰ οὐράνια καὶ τὰ ἐπίγεια", τὰ δεξιὰ καὶ τὰ ἀριστερά. Οὗτος ὡς εἰκὼν Πατρὸς πατὴρ γίνεται καὶ προβάλει πρῶτον τὸν ψυχικὸν Χριστὸν, Υἱοῦ εἰκόνα· ἔπειτα, τοὺς Ἀρχαγγέλους, Αἰώνων εἰκόνας· ἐκ τῆς ψυχικῆς καὶ φωτεινῆς οὐσίας ἥν φησιν ὁ προφητικὸς λόγος· “Καὶ Πνεῦμα Θεοῦ ἐπεφέρετο ἐπάνω τῶν ὕδατον”, κατὰ τὴν συμπλοκὴν τῶν δύο οὐσιῶν τῶν αὐτῷ πεποιημένων, τὸ εἰλικρινὲς ἐπιφέρεσθαι" εἰπών, τὸ δὲ ἐμβριθὲς καὶ ὑλικὸν ὑποφέρεσθαι, τὸ θολερὸν καὶ παχυμερές. —Ἀσώματον δὲ καὶ ταύτην ἐν ἀρχῇ αἰνίσσεται τῷ φάσκειν "ἀόρατον"· οὔτε γὰρ ἀνθρώπῳ τῷ μηδέπω ἀόρατος ἦν, οὔτε τῷ Θεῷ· ἐδημιούργησε γάρ· ἀλλὰ τὸ ἄμορφον καὶ νείδεον καὶ ἀσχημάτιστον αὐτῆς ὧδέ πως ἐξεφώνησεν.

2. ή δὲ γῆ ἦν ἀόρατος καὶ ἀκατασκεύαστος, καὶ σκότος ἐπάνω τῆς ἁβύσσου, καὶ πνεῦμα θεοῦ ἐπεφέρετο ἐπάνω τοῦ ὕδατος. ...ἐκ τῆς ψυχικῆς καὶ φωτεινῆς οὐσίας ἥν φησιν ὁ προφητικὸς λόγος: "Καὶ Πνεῦμα Θεοῦ ἐπεφέρετο ἐπάνω τῶν ὕδατον", κατὰ τὴν συμπλοκὴν τῶν δύο οὐσιῶν τῶν αὐτῷ πεποιημένων, τὸ εἰλικρινὲς ἐπιφέρεσθαι" εἰπών, τὸ δὲ ἐμβριθὲς καὶ ὑλικὸν ὑποφέρεσθαι, τὸ θολερὸν καὶ παχυμερές. —Ἀσώματον δὲ καὶ ταύτην ἐν ἀρχῇ αἰνίσσεται τῷ φάσκειν "ἀόρατον"· οὔτε γὰρ ἀνθρώπῳ τῷ μηδέπω ἀόρατος ἦν, οὔτε τῷ Θεῷ· ἐδημιούργησε γάρ· ἀλλὰ τὸ ἄμορφον καὶ νείδεον καὶ ἀσχημάτιστον αὐτῆς ὧδέ πως ἐξεφώνησεν.

3. καὶ εἶπεν ὁ θεὸς Γενηθήτω φῶς. καὶ ἐγένετο φῶς. 4. καὶ εἶδεν ὁ θεὸς τὸ φῶς ὅτι καλόν. καὶ διεχώρισεν ὁ θεὸς τὸ φῶς ὅτι καλόν. καὶ διεχώρισεν ὁ θεὸς τὸ φῶς ὅτι καλόν. καὶ διεχώρισεν ὁ θεὸς τὸ φῶς ὅτι καλόν. 5. καὶ ἐκάλεσεν ὁ θεὸς τὸ φῶς ἡμέραν καὶ τὸ σκότος ἐκάλεσεν νύκτα. καὶ ἐγένετο ἐσπέρα καὶ ἐγένετο πρωί, ἡμέρα μία. 

Διακρίνας δὲ ὁ Δημιουργὸς τὰ καθαρὰ ἀπὸ τοῦ ἐμβριθοῦς, ὡς ἂν ἐνιδώ τὴν ἐκατέρου φύσιν, φῶς ἐκοίτησεν, τούτῃς ἐφανέρωσεν καὶ εἰς φῶς καὶ ἐδέαν προσήγαγεν, ἐπεὶ τὸ γε ἡλιακὸν καὶ οὐράνιον φῶς πολλῷ ὀστερὸν ἐργάζεται.

It is possible that the account in *Exc. Theod. 47-48* is part of a longer allegorical commentary on Genesis, which was integrated into the protological account. After the Savior separated Sophia’s negative emotions and transformed them into pre-cosmic matter, she created the Demiurge...
through whom she separated heaven and earth. This parallels Irenaeus’s account according to which Sophia could not give form to anything spiritual, but she intended to make something which she was capable of doing. She began to form beings out of psychic essence in order to honor the aeons, though in fact they were made through her by the Savior. Sophia made the Demiurge as an image of the Father of All, who in turn made the psychic Christ as an image of the Only-Begotten Son and the angels and archangels out of “psychic and luminous essence” as images of the rest of the aeons.

Notably, Sophia is not identified explicitly anywhere in Irenaeus’s account with Biblical Wisdom. However, in Exc. C it is stated that “Sophia built a house for herself and erected seven pillars,” which refers to Wisdom in the Proverbs: Ἡ σοφία ὠκοδόμησεν ἑαυτῇ οἶκον καὶ ὑπήρεισεν στύλους ἑπτά. In the Valentinian allegory, the house refers the “cosmic house,” i.e. the psychic region of the Demiurge or the Demiurge himself, who is called in many Valentinian sources topos, i.e. the place. The seven pillars depict the seven heavenly spheres, which are ruled by the Demiurge and his angels, while the Demiurge himself is placed above them. The seven heavens are intellectual beings, and they form the invisible “psychic heaven,” which was created first by Sophia through the Demiurge (Gen. 1:1).

The Demiurge made the other intellectual beings, i.e. the Christ and the angels, out of “psychic and luminous essence” (ἐκ τῇ ψυχικῇ καὶ φωτεινῇ οὐσίᾳ). The psychic essence is referred to in the context of the “prophetical world” in Gen. 1:2: “Καὶ Πνεῦμα Θεοῦ ἐπεφέρετο ἐπάνω τῶν ὕδατων”. This describes allegorically the “engagement of the two essences”. In Irenaeus’s account the “two essences” was a conventional expression to depict the psychic and hylic essences (cf. Iren. Haer. 1.5.2, 1.4.5). In Exc. C the spirit

365 Iren. Haer. 1.5.1.

366 In Irenaeus’s version Sophia imitates the invisible Father and keeps herself concealed from the Demiurge, who is identified with the Only-Begotten (Iren. Haer. 1.5.1). I would suggest that this statement comes from Irenaeus, because it contradicts what he tells elsewhere in his account of the relation of the Father and the Son in the Pleroma. It is explicitly stated that the Son, i.e. the Only-Begotten, is the only aeon who knows the Father and is not concealed by him. Therefore, the idea that Sophia imitates the Father by concealing herself from the Demiurge does not make sense.

367 Prov. 9:1

368 The term Topos has more than one meaning in the Valentinian accounts. It can refer to the region of Sophia, i.e. the Ogdoad, which in Irenaeus’s account is also called ὁ μεσότητος τόπος (Tri. Trac. 92:26, Iren. Haer. 1. 5.3). In some Valentinian texts it is depicted as the final place of salvation for the Demiurge and the righteous ones (Iren. Haer. 1.7.1). The Topos can, however, also refer to the Demiurge himself or to Hebdomad, i.e. the region of the Demiurge, as is the case in Hippolytus account in Hipp. Haer. 6.32:7-9. Hippolytus describes the Valentinian teaching according to which the essence of the Demiurge is of a “fiery nature, and is also termed by them the super-celestial Topos, and Hebdomad.” The identification of the Demiurge with the Topos is quite likely also attested in Heracleon’s fragment 35. See also Thomassen, The Spiritual Seed, 116.

369 Iren. Haer. 1.5.2
refers to the psychic essence, which is intertwined with watery-matter. Although the temporal sequence is not clear, the most logical interpretation would be that the separation of the two essences and the creation of the idea of light is actualized simultaneously. The Demiurge separated the spirit, i.e. the psychic and luminous essence, from matter and it served as the intellectual basis for the angels as well as for the sun and the heavenly lights (ἡλιακὸν καὶ οὐράνιον φῶς). The psychic essence also contains epistemological and soteriological significance because it is created from Sophia’s longing for the Light. The psychic essence possesses intellectuality, albeit in a potential stage and therefore the psychic angels who ruled the seven heavens were called “intellects.”

5.5.2 The visibility of earth and the ancient theory of diakrisis

The Valentinian commentators saw the creation of heaven and earth in Gen. 1.1 as the separation of the psychic and hylic essences. The psychic heaven consisted of the seven heavens, which were ruled by the Demiurge and his angels. The psychic intellects do not belong to the world of aeons, although they were created as images of them by Sophia. The psychic intellects were invisible beings, whereas the earth belongs to the visible world. The discussion concerning the visibility of the earth is attested in Exc. Theod. 47.4:

But the one that is called in the beginning “invisible” allegorically means “incorporeal.” It was never “invisible” to anybody or to God, for he made it. But he has somehow declared its absence of form, shape and design.

The Valentinian teachers emphasized that the term ἀόρατος does not depict the invisibility of the earth but signify that the earth was unstructured and without form (ἄμορφον καὶ νειόδεον καὶ ἀσχημάτιστον). It seems that there were some commentators of Genesis, who argued that the creation of the earth in Gen. 1.1 describes the creation of the invisible cosmos because the earth was “unseen” (ἀόρατος). The Valentinian allegorists explicitly rejected this view. They say that the earth has never been unseen, but “invisibility” refers to the “formlessness” of matter. This is also attested in Iren. Haer. 1.5.2, according to which matter was in a stage of confusion before the Demiurge began to make bodies out of incorporeal substance (ἐξ ἀσωμάτων σωματοποιήσαντα). The term ἀσωματός can be interpreted also in this context as denoting matter, which is formless or in a stage of confusion.

It is rather likely that the criticism in Exc. Theod. 47.4 is directed towards a Platonizing reading of Genesis, which saw Gen. 1:1-5 as a description of the creation of the invisible and intelligible realm. It was actually a counter-argument to Philo, who maintained that the earth in Gen. 1:1 refers to the
intelligible earth. Philo’s view, however, was rather rare within patristic writings. Clement quotes a part of Gen. 1.2 in Strom. V.93.5-94.5 and says that the words of Genesis have inspired Plato and Aristotle to postulate the existence of matter, but the “invisible earth” was according to Moses a part of the archetypical monadic world. It is not clear, whether Exc. Theod. 47.4 was directed to Philo or those Christian Platonists such as Clement who followed Philo’s theory about the creation of the intelligible cosmos during “the day one” (Gen. 1:1-5). Evidently, the Valentinian teachers were aware of the teaching attested in Philo’s exegesis concerning the creation during “day one,” but they explicitly rejected it because they saw the creation narrative in Gen. 1:1-5 as a description of the creation of the visible cosmos.

The creation of the visible lights of heaven is not explicitly described in the Valentinian accounts. In the light of the allegorical commentary on Gen. 1:1-5 mentioned above, it seems that the Valentinian interpreters followed the temporal order of Genesis according to which the firmament and the visible lights of heaven were created during the second and fourth day. In Opif. 36-38 Philo explains how during the second day (Gen. 1:6-8) God made heaven, i.e. the firmament, which was the first among the visible things to be made. The earth and water were still in a confused stage before God began to form the earth during the second day of creation:

And after this, as the whole body of water in existence was spread over all the earth, and had penetrated through all its parts, as if it were a sponge which had imbibed moisture, so that the earth was only swampy land and deep mud, both the elements of earth and water being mixed up and combined, like one confused mass into one undistinguishable and shapeless nature...

The origin of this “watery matter” is not explained. It is simply supposed in Opif. 36 as the “raw material” for the Demiurge. Philo maintained that earth and water were mixed with each other, and they form “one undistinguishable and shapeless substance” (μίαν ἀδιάκριτον καὶ ἄμορφον φύσιν). The heaven is set as a boundary that separates pre-existent confused matter from the higher cosmic spheres. This is also mentioned in Plant. 3-4:

For, when the Framer of the World, finding all that existed confused and disordered itself, began to give it form, by bringing it out of
disorder into order, out of confusion into distinction of parts, He caused earth and water to occupy the position of roots at its center; the trees, that are air and fire, He drew up from the center to the space on high; the encircling region of ether He firmly established, and set it to be at once a boundary and guard of all that is within. Apparently, its name “Heaven” is derived from the former word.

Philo describes here how God began to shape the pre-cosmic matter and bring it from a state of “confusion” into a state of “separation”: ἐκ συγχύσεως εἰς διάκρισιν ἄγων ὁ κοσμοπλάστης μορφοῦν ἔρχεται. Heaven is not separated out of matter, but God set it as a boundary between the visible and the invisible world. Heaven, i.e. the firmament, is arranged as a boundary and “container” that divided the material creation and the regions of earth, water, air and fire from the divine world (τὸν δὲ αἰθέριον ἐν κύκλῳ τόπον ὁχυροῦτο τὸν ἐντὸς ὄρον τε καὶ φυλακτήριον αὐτοῦ τιθεὶς ἄφ’ οὗ καὶ οὐρανός ὀνομάσθαι δοκεῖ).

The separation of matter and the formation of the cosmic bodies (earth, water, air, fire) was not described in detail in Opif. 36 or Plant. 3-4, but in Her. 133-236, which investigates the principle of equality in the creation and the role of Logos. In Her. 136 Philo explains how the Logos divides matter according to its physical characteristics into four cosmic elements.373

The subject of division into equal parts and of opposites is a wide one, and discussion of it essential. We will neither omit nor protract it, but abridge as far as possible and content ourselves with the vital points only. Just as the great Artificer divided our soul and limbs in the middle, so too, when He wrought the world, did He deal with the being of all that is. This he took and began to divide as follows. First he made two sections, heavy and light, thus distinguishing the element of dense from that of rare particles. Then again He divided each of these two, the rare into air and fire, the dense into water and land, and these four he laid down as first foundations, to be the sensible elements of the sensible world.374

The proof-text for the separation of the cosmic elements out of pre-existent matter is Gen. 15:7-21, which describes dividing up the “covenant animals.” Philo allegorizes the phrase “and he divided them in the middle” (διείλεν αὐτὰ

---


374 Πολὺν δὲ καὶ ἀναγκαῖον ἐντα λόγον τὸν παντός οὐσίας καὶ περὶ ἕναντιστήν ὡς παρήσαμεν ὡς μηκινοῦμεν, ἀλλ’ ὡς ἔστιν ἐπείπτουν ἀξίωμα στις καρδίαις, καθάπερ γὰρ ἤμεν ἡμᾶς τὴν φυσιν καὶ τὰ μέχρι μέσα διείλεν ἀρχαιτής, ὡς τὸν τοῦ παντός οὐσίαν, ἤνικα τὸν κόσμον ἔδημιοῦργει. λαβὼν γὰρ αὐτὴν ἔρξεν διακρινόμενα διός: δόει τὸ πρῶτον ἐποίησε τιμίατα, τὸ τε βαρὸ καὶ κοῦρον, τὸ παρθεμέρες ἀπὸ τοῦ λεπτομεροῦς διακρινόμενον: ά’ ἐκάστην πάλιν διαφέρει, τὸ μὲν λεπτομερὲς εἰς ἄειμα καὶ πῦρ, τὸ δὲ παρθεμέρες εἰς ἰδόρα καὶ γῆν, ὡς καὶ στοιξεῖα αἰσθητὰ αἰσθητοῦ κόσμου.
μέσα) and says that God divides in this way all the bodies and the cosmic element according to equality (περὶ τῶν ἴσων). The birds flying on high are left undivided, which means that heaven, i.e. the firmament, and human reason are left undivided because they are the representations of the dividing Logos itself.\footnote{Cf. also Her. 227-236.}

Philo’s theory of separation is based on the well-known ancient theory of diakrisis. The Logos first divided up the heavy (τὸ βαρύ) and light (τὸ κοῦφον) essences of matter. After that, both of these essences were divided in turn into subtle portion (τὸ λεπτομερές) and a dense portion (τὸ παχυμερές). In that way, fire was separated from air and earth from water and the four cosmic elements were created according to the divine model. Heaven was not divided or separated from matter, but God placed it as a boundary between the earthly region and the intelligible cosmos.\footnote{Plant. 3-4.}

The following drawing will illustrate the diakiris -theory used by Philo in his allegorical exegesis.\footnote{In Gig. 22 Philo presents another theory of the separation of matter. “But the spirit of God is spoken of in one manner as being air flowing upon the earth, bringing the third element in addition to water. In reference to which, Moses says, in his account of the creation of the world, ‘The Spirit of God moved upon the face of the Waters.’ Since the air, as it is very light, is raised and borne aloft, having water, as it were, for its foundation; and, in another manner, unalloyed knowledge is said to be so, which every wise man naturally partakes of.” (Translated by David Winston). In this passage, Philo maintains that the spirit, which refers to the cosmic element of air, has its basis in the element of water (ὑδάτι βάσι χρώμενος). It seems that air is separated from the watery earth through evaporation and tends upwards. This passage differs from Opif. 26-35 according to which Gen. 1:2 describes the contents of the intelligible cosmos. Also, the spirit is not in Opif. 29-30 an archetype of air, but an idea of the life of all living beings and the idea of air has its biblical basis in the creation of darkness. Philo is therefore in Gig. 22 dependent on some exegetical tradition, which differs from Opif. 26-35, but may be compatible with Prov. 1.22 according to which water, darkness and the abyss form besides God the first principle from which the world came into being. These notions indicate that Philo was working with an exegetical tradition and in some cases it is impossible to form a coherent view if all conflicting teachings are brought together. Cf. Runia, Philo of Alexandria, 119.}

---

\footnote{Cf. also Her. 227-236.}
\footnote{Plant. 3-4.}
\footnote{In Gig. 22 Philo presents another theory of the separation of matter. “But the spirit of God is spoken of in one manner as being air flowing upon the earth, bringing the third element in addition to water. In reference to which, Moses says, in his account of the creation of the world, ‘The Spirit of God moved upon the face of the Waters.’ Since the air, as it is very light, is raised and borne aloft, having water, as it were, for its foundation; and, in another manner, unalloyed knowledge is said to be so, which every wise man naturally partakes of.” (Translated by David Winston). In this passage, Philo maintains that the spirit, which refers to the cosmic element of air, has its basis in the element of water (ὑδάτι βάσι χρώμενος). It seems that air is separated from the watery earth through evaporation and tends upwards. This passage differs from Opif. 26-35 according to which Gen. 1:2 describes the contents of the intelligible cosmos. Also, the spirit is not in Opif. 29-30 an archetype of air, but an idea of the life of all living beings and the idea of air has its biblical basis in the creation of darkness. Philo is therefore in Gig. 22 dependent on some exegetical tradition, which differs from Opif. 26-35, but may be compatible with Prov. 1.22 according to which water, darkness and the abyss form besides God the first principle from which the world came into being. These notions indicate that Philo was working with an exegetical tradition and in some cases it is impossible to form a coherent view if all conflicting teachings are brought together. Cf. Runia, Philo of Alexandria, 119.}
It is of note that the Valentinian teachers used the same theory of *diakrisis* in describing the separation of matter by the Demiurge.

**Iren. Haer. 1.5.2.**

Accordingly, they assert that he became Father and God of all things outside the Pleroma since he is the Maker of all psychic and hylic beings. For he distinguished the two substances that were confused and made corporeal out of incorporeal things. He made the heavenly and earthly things and became the Maker of the material and psychic beings, of the right-handed and the left-handed, of the light and heavy, of those that tend upwards and of those that tend downwards.378

**Exc. Theod. 47-48**

“And the Spirit of God was superimposed upon the water.” This speaks of the engagement of the two essences made by him; the pure and unmixed was superimposed and the heavy and hylic, the dirty and coarse were put under it [...] As the Demiurge discriminates pure things from the coarse (heavy), since he perceives each nature, he made light, that is he manifested and brought forth the idea of light,

---

378 Πατέρα οὖν καὶ Θεὸν λέγουσιν αὐτὸν γεγενέω· ὑπερήφανον τῶν ἐκτῶν τοῦ πληρώματος, ποιητὴν ὕνειν πάντων ψυχικῶν τε καὶ υλικῶν· διακρίνοντα γὰρ τὰς δύο οὐσίας συγκεκριμένας, καὶ εὐς ἀποκάλυπτος σωματοποιήσαντα, διδοκιστομένον τὰ τοῦ οὐράνιον καὶ τὰ γῆνα, καὶ γεγονέναι υλικῶν καὶ ψυχικῶν, δεξιῶν καὶ ἄριστων δημιουργῶν, κοῦφων καὶ βαρέων, ἀνωφερῶν καὶ κατοφερῶν.
but the heavenly light of the sun (i.e. physical sun) was made much later. 379

The terms used in the accounts of Philo, Irenaeus and Exc. C concerning the essences of the elements of the world are as follows (the terms “unmixed” and “pure” do not appear in Her. 133, but I include them in the table for the sake of comparison, because these terms appear in Opif. 31, and parallels with Exc. Thed. 48.1 are handled later in this chapter).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Philo Her. 133 (Opif. 31)</th>
<th>Iren. Haer. 1.5.2</th>
<th>Exc. Theod. 47-48</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(εἰλικρινής, καθαρά) αἰθέριον</td>
<td>psychic</td>
<td>εἰλικρινής, καθαρόν psychic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ἔπτωμερές</td>
<td>ἁνωφέρειν</td>
<td>image of light; heavenly minds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>κοῦφον</td>
<td>κοῦφον</td>
<td>hylic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>βαρύ</td>
<td>βαρύ</td>
<td>light: air</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>παχυμερές</td>
<td>κατωφέρειν</td>
<td>dense: earth</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is likely that the accounts in Exc. Theod. 47-48 and Iren. Haer. 1.5.2 were dependent on the same kind of *diakrisis* –theory that is attested in Philo. The source used by Irenaeus contains a more detailed version of the separation of matter than that attested in the allegorical commentary of Exc. C. Irenaeus may have omitted some parts of that account, which explains the differences between Exc. Theod. 47-48 and Iren. Haer. 1.5.2.

In Irenaeus’s account pre-cosmic matter – out of which the psychic essence was already separated – was divided by the Demiurge firstly into heavy (βαρύ) and light (κοῦφον) and after that into the elements which tend upwards (ἀνωφέρειν) and tend downwards (κατωφέρειν). Although the cosmic elements are not mentioned in this passage, it is rather evident that the elements which tend upwards refer to fire, which is distinguished from air. The element tending downwards refers to the earth, which the Demiurge separated from the water. This description of the separation of matter fits nicely with the *diakrisis*-theory attested in Philo.

---

379 “Καὶ Πνεῦμα Θεοῦ ἐπεφέρετο ἐπάνω τῶν ὑδάτων,” κατά τὴν συμπλοκὴν τῶν δύο οὐσιῶν τῶν αὐτῶν πεποιημένων, τὸ εἰλικρινὲς “ἐπιφέρεσθαι” εἰπών, τὸ δὲ ἐμβριθὲς καὶ ὑλικὸν ὑποφέρεσθαι, τὸ θολερὸν καὶ παχυμερές […] (48) Διακρίνας δὲ ὁ Ἰησοῦς τὰ καθαρὰ ἀπὸ τοῦ ἐμβριθοῦς, ὡς ἄν ἐνδιέλθη τὸν ἐκατέρτου φόσην, φῶς ἐποίησεν, τουτέστιν ἑφανέρωσεν καὶ εἰς φῶς καὶ ἰδέαν προσήγαγεν, ἐπεὶ τὸ γε ἦλιον καὶ οὐράνιον φῶς πολλὰ ὄστερον ἐργάζεται.
It is noticeable that the terms used in Clement’s and Irenaeus’s accounts differ from each other, but both of them have parallels in Philo’s theory of discrimination. *Exc. Theod.* 47-48 distinguishes the psychic essence from matter, which is depicted as the dense (παχυμερές) portion of thick (θολερόν) matter. The term παχυμερές is used by Philo to distinguish the earth from the water. Strikingly, in *Exc. C* the luminous psychic essence is called pure (καθαρά) and unmixed (εἰλικρινές), which in Philo’s *Opif.* 31 refers to the pure light of heavenly bodies created in Gen. 1:3.

5.6 The creation of the essence of light and cosmic intellects in Philo and Valentinian accounts

Philo says in *Opif.* 36-37 that the first thing to be created in the visible cosmos was heaven, which is called the firmament. In *Plant.* 3-4 it is also called the “boundary” which separates the visible cosmos from the ideal world. In *Opif.* 45-61 Philo describes the creation of the visible lights of heaven, i.e. the sun, the moon and the stars, during the fourth day. Philo says that heavenly bodies are not only substances but “mind of the purest kind,” “through and through immaculate and divine” and “insusceptible of evil.”

Although Philo describes the cosmic intellects as “without bodies,” they are not totally incorporeal. They only lack an earthly body similar to human bodies. In *Opif.* 55 Philo says that God made the bodies of the heavenly intellects from the purest part of a bodily substance (καθαρωτάτῳ τῆς σωματικῆς οὐσίας), which refers to the essence of ether. Philo follows Plato’s teachings in the *Timaeus* by saying that God located “divine images” (ἀγάλματα θεῖα) in heaven “as though in the Temple” (ὡς ἐν ιερῷ), which refers to the firmament created during the second day. In *Spec.* 1.66 Philo declares that heaven was the Sanctuary of the visible cosmos, which was called the highest and true Temple of God.

The highest and true Temple of God is, we must believe, the whole universe, having for its sanctuary the holiest part of all existence,

---

380 *Gig.* 8; *Opif.* 27, 73; *Somn.* 1.135; *Spec.* 1.39-40. Cf. Winston, *Logos*, 33-34

381 *Conf.* 176-177; *Somn.* 1.135; *Sac.* 5; *QE* 2.13.

382 The purest kind of substance out of which the stars and other cosmic bodies were created may refer to the fire or ether. In *Plant.* 3-4 and *Her.* 227-236 Philo evidently distinguishes heaven as the boundary from the realm of the four cosmic elements, which means that heaven was made from some other substance. In *Somn.* 1.14-39, however, Philo speculates that the “the well of the oath” (Gen. 28:12) is an allegory of the fourth cosmic element, i.e. fire, and could be identified with heaven. Philo says, however, that the essence of heaven is incomprehensible. Therefore, it is as fruitless to seek their substance as it is to understand the essence of the human mind. This may refer to the “essence” of the intellect, not the essence of the heavenly bodies. Cf. Tobin, *The Creation of Man*, 82-84; Winston, *The Logos*, 64-65; Runia, *The Creation of the Cosmos*, 174-175.

namely heaven, for its votive offerings the stars, for its priests the angels, who are servitors of his powers, unembodied souls, not mixtures of rational and irrational nature as ours are, but with the irrational eliminated, completely mind, pure intelligences, in the likeness of the Monad.  

Philo stressed, however, that heaven and the planetary gods should not be worshipped, but only God, who is the ruler of the heavenly spheres. As I noted in the previous chapter, Philo interpreted Gen. 1:3 in Opif. 31 as denoting the creation of light, which served as the source for the heavenly lights. Opif. 31 does not fit particularly well into Philo’s allegorical oeuvre in Opif. 26-35, and it may go back to some pre-Philonic exegetical tradition. The passage in Opif. 31 is as follows:

That invisible and intelligible light (τὸ δὲ άόρατον καὶ νοητὸν φῶς) has come into being as the image of the divine Logos, which communicated its genesis. It is a star that transcends (ὑπερουράνιος ἀστήρ) the heavenly realm, the source of the visible stars, and you would not be off the mark to call it “all-brightness” (παναύγειαν). From it, the sun and moon and other planets and fixed stars draw the illumination that is fitting for them in accordance with the capacity they each have. But that unmixed and pure gleam (τῆς ἀμιγοῦς καὶ καθαρᾶς αὐγῆς) has its brightness dimmed when it begins to undergo a change from the intelligible to the sense-perceptible (ἐκ νοητοῦ πρὸς αἰσθητὸν μεταβολήν), for none of the objects in the sense-perceptible realm is absolutely pure (εἰλικρινές).

Philo explains in Opif. 31 that Gen. 1:3 refers to the creation of light as an image of the Logos. This heavenly light is pure (καθαρά) and unmixed (εἰλικρινής), although its brightness weakens when it begins to undergo a change from the intelligible to the sense-perceptible. Although Opif. 26-35 describes the creation of the intelligible cosmos during the first day, it seems that Philo is in Opif. 31 dependent on the exegetical tradition according to

---

384 Translated by Winston in Philo of Alexandria, 279. The earliest reference in Greco-Roman literature to the notion of the cosmos as a Temple is in Ps.-Plato Epinomis 983E-984B. Cf. also Plutarch’s Moral. 477C and Seneca Ep. 90.28.

385 Translated by David Runia in On Creation, 53.

386 The term εἰλικρινής (sometimes in the form εἰλικρινές) appears 30 times in Philo in various contexts. In some cases εἰλικρινής refers to the pure human mind that alone can comprehend God (Leg. 1.88; Post. 134; Ebr. 101,189; Her. 98; Praem. 46) or the pure mind that is not infected by the senses (Leg.All 3.111). In these instances, Philo was clearly influenced by Plato. The term εἰλικρινής is used in Phaedo 66a3 (cf. also 67b1) in a sense of pure thought that is not mixed with the senses. In Tim. 45b7 the term is related to the mechanism of pure vision that involves the pure fire of the sun without any admixing with the other primary bodies. In some instances the term εἰλικρινής refers to the pure intellect of God (Opif. 8-9; Praem. 40; Contempl. 2) or the stars (Spec. 1.39-40).
which Gen. 1:3 describes the creation of the invisible intellects of the visible lights.

Philo makes two important distinctions concerning the essence of light. Firstly, he makes a distinction between visible light and intelligible light. The former depicts light through which sense-perceptible objects can be seen. The latter refers to the intelligible light through which God’s presence in the world can be comprehended. In Mut. 6 Philo says that God is the fountain (πηγή) of the purest light through which the human mind can comprehend God’s powers.\(^{387}\) In Abr. 157 Philo makes another distinction between perishable and everlasting lights. According to Philo, the visible light is two-fold. Perishable light proceeds from fire, whereas everlasting light descends from heaven as if the stars pour down their beams from an everlasting spring (ὡσπερ ἀπ’ ἀενῶν πηγῶν).

I suggest that the creation of light in Opif. 31 is related to the creation of the essence of the invisible and intelligible light, which served as the intellectual basis for the visible and everlasting lights of the heavenly bodies. The pure light in Opif. 31 belongs, however, to “the world of becoming” to be distinguished from the light in “the world of being,” i.e the realm of God, the Logos and the Ideas. The creation of the firmament and the heavenly bodies during the second and third day describes the creation of the luminous soul-bodies for the cosmic intellects. Thus, the everlasting and visible lights of heaven served as a soul-bodies for the invisible and pure light, which is created as an image of the Logos. Strikingly, the terms that are related to the pure and intelligent light in Opif. 31 appear in the aforementioned Valentinian allegory of the creation of light (Gen. 1:3) in Exc. Theod. 47-48.

“You and God are free to do what you want to do, and the pure light serves as the intellectual basis for the visible and everlasting lights of the heavenly bodies. The pure light in Opif. 31 belongs, however, to “the world of becoming” to be distinguished from the light in “the world of being,” i.e the realm of God, the Logos and the Ideas. The creation of the firmament and the heavenly bodies during the second and third day describes the creation of the luminous soul-bodies for the cosmic intellects. Thus, the everlasting and visible lights of heaven served as a soul-bodies for the invisible and pure light, which is created as an image of the Logos. Strikingly, the terms that are related to the pure and intelligent light in Opif. 31 appear in the aforementioned Valentinian allegory of the creation of light (Gen. 1:3) in Exc. Theod. 47-48.

In Exc. Theod. 47-48 the psychic (= spirit) and hylic (= watery earth) essences were intertwined with each other before the Demiurge separated them. The psychic essence differs from the rest of matter, because it was not mixed, but intertwined with matter. According to Irenaeus’s account the psychic essence was distinguished from other matter because it had its origin in Sophia’s longing for light and immortality. When the Demiurge separated the psychic essence from matter, he made light, which means that the idea of light came into being (φῶς ἐποίησεν, τούτου ἐφανέρωσεν καὶ εἰς φῶς καὶ ἱδέαν προσήγαγεν). The idea of light is depicted as “pure” (καθαρά) and “unmixed” (εἰλικρινῆς), which parallels Philo’s description of light in Opif. 31. It is also

\(^{387}\) Cf. also Somn. 1.115-116.

\(^{388}\) Abr. 157.
mentioned that the visible lights of heaven will be created later (τὸ γε ήλιακὸν καὶ οὐράνιον φῶς πολλῷ ὑστερον ἑργὰζεται), which most likely refers to the creation during the fourth day (Gen. 1:14).

In the Valentinian account, the pure light, which came into being through separation, was the intelligible basis for the visible and cosmic lights of heaven. The term “idea” does not refer to a “paradigm” or an “archetype” in the Platonic sense of these terms, but it depicts the form of light, i.e. the psychic essence, which serves as the basis for the luminous intellects (νοητοὶ) of the heavenly realm including the sun and the stars. The psychic and luminous essence can be compared with Philo’s pure light in Opif. 31, which is clothed in the everlasting light of heaven. This may refer to ether, which is also referred to as the finest essence of the cosmos in Valentinus’s Psalm 

Harvest.389

In the Valentinian system, Sophia made the psychic intellects in honor of the aeons of the Pleroma. The archetype of the Demiurge was the Father of the Pleroma. The psychic Christ was equated with His Only-Begotten Son. The psychic angels – and possibly the intellects of the heavenly bodies – were images of the rest of the aeons. Thus, the psychic realm was ruled by the intellects, who had their archetypes in the Pleroma.390 Although the Demiurge thought that he was the Father (Πατὴρ) and Maker (Ποιητής) who constructed the seven heavens and the angelic intellects, it was Sophia who made these things through the instrumentality of the Demiurge.

The theory concerning the visible heaven as an image of the intelligible world goes back to Plato’s Timaeus in which the Father and Maker of the world made a cosmic sanctuary (ἄγαλμα) for the everlasting gods, which are called the “gods of gods” (θεοὶ θεῶν). The term ἄγαλμα is a common phrase for the cult-statue, shrine or objects of worship in which the gods dwell. The eternal gods that dwell in the cosmic sanctuary are evidently the planetary gods who obeyed the motions of the ideal world. The sanctuary in question is not the visible world as such but the celestial sphere, the living and moving ἄγαλμα.391

Some Platonists understood the phrase “gods of gods” in the Timaeus as a reference to the Ideas, which served as archetypes for the planetary gods.392 The accounts in Iren. Haer. 1.5.1 and Exc. Theod. 47-48 describe the creation of the intellects, which were the rulers of the seven heavens. The essence of

---

389 Cf. chapter 6.4.
390 Iren. Haer. 1.5.1; Exc. Theod. 47.
392 Plotinus maintains that the intellectual level consists of “divine beings” and he makes a distinction between celestial gods and the gods of the intellectual realm, i.e. divine ideas. Cf. Plot. Enn. I 8.2; III 5.6; V 8.3.5. Proclus says that the cosmos is ἄγαλμα of the everlasting gods. The presence of gods in the cosmos channels the radiance which emanates from the intelligible gods, i.e. the Ideal world. Proclus calls the Demiurge ἄγαλματοποιὸς τοῦ κόσμου. For heaven as a shrine for the heavenly gods, see also Seneca Ep. 90.28 and Ar. De Phil. Fr. 14, 18 discussed in Runia, On the Creation, 204.
these heavenly intellects was based on Sophia’s longing for incorporeal light and immortality. This would mean that also in the Valentinian system the human mind can reach some knowledge from the Pleroma through the contemplation of the visible heaven, because it reflects the world of aeons. The *Tripartite Tractate* describes the etymology of the term “aeon” in the light of the order of the annual seasons:

*For just as the present aeon is single, yet divided into ages, ages into years, years into seasons, seasons into months, months into days, days into hours and hours into moments, in the same way, the true aeon also is single yet multiple.*

According to the *Tripartite Tractate*, the order of the seasons of the year was seen as an image of order in the intelligible realm. This idea was a commonplace in the Platonic-Aristotelian world view and it is also attested in Philo, who says that the annual seasons were an outcome of the rational circuits of the heavenly bodies, which reflect the harmony of the intelligible cosmos. Philo, however, did not make a distinction between the intelligible cosmos, heaven and the material realm, because the power of God’s Logos sustained all of creation. Philo interpreted the Logos of God as being the cosmic bond, which unites all things to God. The Valentinians limited the sympathy of the cosmos to the realm of the psychic heaven. The order of the annual seasons and the circuits of the heavenly bodies reflected the harmony of the Pleroma. This would mean that the heavenly spheres were not ruled by malevolent archons, but by rational intellects, who imitated the harmony of the Pleroma. It was only the material creation which was made from Sophia’s bad emotions that lacked a relation to the divinity. The parallelism between the intelligible cosmos and the visible cosmos is also attested in Valentinus’s fragment, which describes the creation of the visible cosmos according to the heavenly model.

*As much as the image is inferior to the living person (ἡ εἰκών τοῦ ζώντος προσώπου), so is the world inferior to the living aeon (ὁ κόσμος τοῦ ζώντος aeόνον).*

---

393 *Tri. Trac.* 73.18-74.18. Translated by Einar Thomassen.

394 *Opif.* 47, 55, 112-117. See Runia, *On the Creation*, 284-285. For Philo, the cosmic heaven was a living image of the intelligible cosmos. God created it on the fourth day, which is according to numerological mysticism related to the sacred number ten (1+2+3+4 = 10). Although there are beings whose essences are mixed with imperfection and evil, the heavenly sphere represents perfection, harmony and beauty in the cosmos. Philo did not accept, however, the common Hellenistic cosmic religion which can be found in the Hermetic writings and theology of Stoa and even in the transcendent theology of the Middle Platonic tradition. For Philo, the divination of the heavenly bodies should not lead to the worship of the cosmos. The visible gods, i.e. the heavenly bodies, are servants of one God apprehended only by the intellect (*Spec.* 1.13-20). For Hellenistic cosmic religion, see Runia, *On the Creation*, 207-209 and Franz Cumont, *Astrology and Religion among the Greeks and Romans* (New York and London: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1912), 101-138.
τοῦ ζῶντος αἰῶνος). What is the cause of the image? The greatness of the person who provided the model for the painter, so that he might be honored through his name. For the form was not regarded as equal to the original, but the name filled out what was lacking in the artifact. For the invisibility of God as well contributes to faith in the created work.395

The Platonic two-world model obviously influenced the parallelism between the visible cosmos and its intelligible model in Valentinus’s fragment. It has a parallel in Plato’s creation myth in the *Timaeus* in which the Father and Maker of the world gazes at the eternal model (πρὸς τὸ ἀίδιον ἔβλεπεν) in order to fashion the cosmos that contains visible copies of the intelligible living beings (τὰ νοητὰ ζῶα).396 Although Valentinus stated that the cosmos is an inferior copy of the intelligible world, it should be honored for the sake of its divine archetype.397 The term “aeon” in Valentinus’s fragment is in the singular, which evokes the common Middle Platonic usage of the term “idea” as a substitute for all ideas.398 It is not clear whether Valentinus portrayed the whole cosmos as a copy of the living aeon or only the most refined element, i.e. the psychic heaven, as in the Valentinian accounts described above. It possible, however, that also in Valentinus’s fragment the cosmos, which was compared with the image of the living model, refers not to the cosmos in totality but to the heavenly spheres as a cosmic image or shrine in which the psychic gods were located.399

5.7 Conclusions

In this chapter, I have investigated issues related to the creation of matter in Philo and in Valentinian sources which become comprehensible in the light of Neo-Pythagorean theories concerning the creation of matter. Eudorus of

396 *Tim.* 28c-30c. The comparison between a real model and painting vs. ideas and the cosmos is also Platonic. For the discussion concerning the Ideas, earthly representations and paintings, cf. Plato’s *Republic* 596ff.
397 Thomassen maintains that although the Platonic two-world model obviously influences parallelism between cosmos and the transcendent world, the choice of the word “living” was reasoned in Valentinus’s fragment by the analogy with the painting and its living model. The model for the cosmos is designated as “living” for the sake of the analogy with the “living” model of the painting. See Thomassen, *The Spiritual Seed*, 465-466.
398 It was a part of the doxological pattern in the Middle Platonic systems to describe the three ἀρχαί: God, the *Idea* and the matter. The *Idea* is mentioned in the singular form e.g. in *Timaios of Locri* 94c, Alc. *Didaskalos* 9-10, 14, Numenius fr. 16, and Aetius’ *Placita*.
399 The planetary spheres as a cult sanctuary for the heavenly gods can be compared with the statues made by Daedalus mentioned in Plato’s *Euthyphro* 11b, 15b and *Meno* 97d.
Alexandria was probably the first to present a detailed theory concerning the derivation of matter from the transcendent One. Eudorus’s protological innovations became the standard view among the second-century Middle Platonic teachers, although there were some prominent teachers who continued the dualist tendencies and postulated the pre-existence of matter as the second *arche* besides God. While Philo’s theory concerning the creation of matter is compatible with Eudorus’s view, the Valentinian teaching (*Exc. C* and *Iren. Haer.* 1.1.1-3) was closer to the theory of Moderatus of Gades who postulated a theory concerning the creation of matter through deprivation.

It is notable that the multiple relations between Wisdom and Plato’s Receptacle were in an initial stage present already in Philo’s cosmological allegories, even though they do not fit perfectly well with his overall Logos-theology. In some cases, Philo associated the Platonic Receptacle with the feminine and dyadic aspect of Wisdom. The Gnostics and the Valentinian theologians elaborated these Platonizing speculations and incorporated them into the myth of Sophia’s fall and restoration. The stages of Sophia’s salvation formed not only the origin of matter, but also served as the paradigm for the salvation of human beings.

The Valentinian commentary on Gen. 1:1-5 in *Exc. C* explicitly rejects the Philonic view that Gen. 1:1 depicts the creation of the invisible and intelligible earth. This means that the commentator must have known a similar kind of interpretation that is attested in Philo’s *Opificio Mundi*. Strikingly, he also knew an interpretation of Gen. 1:3 signifying the creation of the pure light, which parallels Philo’s interpretation in *Opif.* 31. It is not clear, however, whether the Valentinian teachers knew this interpretation through Philo, or whether they were dependent on some pre-Philonic tradition which was still influential among Alexandrian Platonists during the time of these Valentinian teachers.

The Valentinian accounts in *Exc. Theod.* 47-48 and *Iren. Haer.* 1.5.2 were dependent on the physical theory of *diakrisis*, which describes the division of matter into four cosmic elements (earth, water, air, fire) according to their physical characteristics. Philo also used this same theory in his description of the separation of matter by the Logos, the *cutter*. In the Valentinian accounts, the cosmic elements were linked also with the myth of Sophia and her emotions, which served as the basis for the creation of the cosmos.

Taking into account all these parallels, the derivation of matter, its association with Wisdom, the interpretation of Gen. 1:3 as denoting to the creation of the unmixed essence of the heavenly lights, and the separation of matter on the grounds of the theory of *diakrisis*, it is reasonable to suggest that the Valentinian teachers were working in the allegorical tradition in which many of Philo’s interpretation were adopted, rejected and reformed.
Valentinian anthropology is fundamentally connected to the protological and cosmological accounts presented in the previous chapters. The threefold cosmic structure and the division between hylic and psychic essences are incorporated as part of the interpretation of the creation of the first human being. The creation of Adam is, however, the reverse of the creation of the visible cosmos. Whereas the creation described in Gen. 1:1 is seen as a “separation” of the hylic and psychic essences, the creation of Adam (Gen. 1:26-27, 2:7) depicts how these essences – the spiritual, psychic and hylic – are brought together in Adam and his descendants.

The passages in Gen. 1:26 and Gen. 2:7 describe how the Demiurge created the hylic soul-body of Adam out of incorporeal matter into which he breathed the likeness of himself, i.e. the psychic essence. At the same time, Sophia deposited into the psychic soul a seed of her own, which she produced as an image of the Savior’s angels. Thus, the first human being contained all the cosmic elements in his soul. In the end, Adam was clothed in the garments of skin which denoted the sense-perceptible earthly body.

In Valentinian anthropology the three-fold structure of the soul of the first human being forms the basis for the tripartite division of humankind into hylic, psychic and spiritual categories of human beings. In Exc. C the division of humankind is based on the fact that Adam could not distribute all three essences equally to his descendants, but only the physical body and the hylic soul. The higher essences of Adam’s soul must be activated by philosophical practices. I will argue in this chapter that Valentinian anthropology drew upon Philo’s, although the Valentinians reformulated these teachings in the light of the myth of Sophia.

6.1 The philosophical background to Valentinian anthropology

Valentinian anthropology drew upon Middle Platonic theories of the human soul which were strongly influenced by Aristotelian transcendental psychology. The origin of these theories was evidently in Plato’s dialogues, especially in the *Timaeus*, which describes the human soul as a fragment from the world soul. In the famous passage of *Tim. 41d-e* Plato describes how the Demiurge shaped the rational part of the human soul out of the same “substance” as the world soul but it was “second or third in the degree of purity.” The creation of the body and those mortal parts of the soul which were connected to the bodily life were left for the “younger gods,” who

imitated the creative activity of the Demiurge. It is the rational part of the human soul only that the Demiurge creates by himself and is immortal.\footnote{Cornford, Plato’s Cosmology, 139-147.}

Thus, the human soul was a mediating principle between the purely rational world of Ideas and the material creation, because it was a fragment of the world soul which was a harmonious composition of Indivisible (“being”) and Divisible (“becoming”) kinds of Existence, Sameness, and Difference.\footnote{Tim. 35a. Cf. Cornford, Plato’s Cosmology, 59-66.}

The discussion concerning Plato’s anthrop学 began already during the Old Academy. The most famous critic for Plato’s anthropological conceptions was Aristotle, who found the relation between the physical body and the non-physical soul problematic. In De An. 412b 4-6 Aristotle maintained that the soul is not an ontologically different entity from the body but is its “first actuality of a natural body possessed of organs” (ἐντελέχεια ἡ πρώτη σώματος φυσικοῦ ὀργανικοῦ). The soul is an inseparable, functional principle of an individual body. Aristotle illustrates the relation between body and soul by comparing it with an eye and with sight. If an eye were the body, the faculty of “seeing” would be its soul. And as there is not a faculty of seeing without an eye, there is no soul without a body.

Aristotle solved the problem of causation in Plato’s psychology by postulating a mediating “soul-body” between the non-physical soul and the physical body. The soul-principle does not contact with the body and its organs directly, but there is a middle entity called pneuma between the soul and the body. It is a vehicle, instrument or shell of the soul, which is contained in the male semen before any bodily organs were produced.\footnote{Ar. Motu anim. 10, 703a4-b2; De Anima III, 10, 433b19. Cf. Abraham P. Bos, “Aristotelian and Platonic Dualism in Hellenistic and Early Christian Philosophy and Gnosticism,” VC (56), 2002, 278.}

\textit{Pneuma} functions as a mediator of the desire of the soul: it reacts to the powers proceeding from the soul and affects in turn to body.


Although the sensible and reasoning parts of the human soul together with its instrumental soul-body decay together with the body, the highest part of the human soul, the intellect, “seems to come about in us as being a sort of substance and seems...
not be destroyed.” 404 This distinction is based on Aristotle’s distinction between passive and active intellects. 405 Aristotle maintained that every object of thought consists of passive matter and active form. This distinction is also applied to operations of the human mind. 406 The reasonable human soul is capable of reasoning, planning, and imagination, but it also has the capacity to become conscious of itself as thinking. These two aspects—the mind as thinking and the mind thinking itself as thinking—refer to the passive and active parts of the human mind. The active intellect gives form to the passive mind “as the light that makes potential colors into actual colors.”407

The active mind not only gives intuitive knowledge for the logical reasoning of the soul, but it has the capacity to separate itself from the sense-perceptible world and contemplate the transcendent world. 408 There is, however, one crucial difference between the passive and active minds: while the reasoning of the passive mind functions naturally as the human being grows and learns, the active intellect comes from outside. 409 The human intellect must be “awakened” by the “cosmic mind” through the power of

404 De An. 408b18. Plato suggested already in Tim. 30b-c that nous was an ontologically independent entity from the soul. He maintained that the Demiurge set “an intellect (nous) within the soul and the soul within the body” as he fashioned the cosmos as an “ensouled living being with an intellect” (τον κόσμον ζώον ἐμψυχον ἔννουσον). At the microcosmic level, however, nous in Plato’s texts is identified mainly with the rational part of the soul. Aristotle elaborated the distinction between the soul and the intellect as an independent psychological entity which formed the basis for Middle Platonic anthropology.

405 De An. III 5. Cicero reports that Aristotle considered that immortal part of the soul consisted of a special divine, fifth element (quinta essentia) similar to that of the celestial bodies. As pneuma is the vehicle of the soul, ether is a vehicle for the eternal mind. For the essence of the heavenly bodies, cf. Ar. De Caelo 269a31; 270a12, b10; 289a15.

406 Victor Caston argues that the chapter in question “concerns two separate species of mind, and not divisions within a mind.” When comparing the attributes of the mind described in De An. III.5 with the cosmic Mind in Met. XII 7-9 the list of the attributes does not differ much. It is the cosmic Nous which is described in De Anima III.5 not a separate essence of the human mind. Cf. Victor Caston, “Aristotle’s Two Intellects: A Modest Proposal,” in Phronesis (XLIV/3; Leiden: Brill, 1999), 199-225.

407 De An. 430a10-25.

408 The relation between the passive mind, i.e. logos, and the active mind, i.e. nous, is not exclusive. Active thinking cannot exist without logical reasoning based on the sense perceptions and vice versa. The nous is able to be logical and logos is able to be noetic. The multi-dimensionality of nous and logos in Aristotle’s epistemology is described by Richard A. Lee and Christopher P. Long, “Nous and Logos in Aristotle,” in Freiburger Zeitschrift für Philosophie und Theologia (54-3), 348-349.

attraction and love.\footnote{Met. A 7, 1073a6-8; Physics 8.10, 266a25; 29; b5; b14; b19; 267b22; \textit{Politica} H 4, 1326a32-34. Cf. Bos, \textit{The Soul and Its Instrumental Body}, 226-229 and Bos,“A Platonist in the Likeness of Aristotle,” 73-73.} Therefore, Aristotle says that the active intellect is not a part of the soul, but “seems to be a different \textit{genus} of the soul.”\footnote{De An. II 2, 413b24-27.}

Aristotle made a distinction between two stages of the human soul: a state of sleep and a state of being awake.\footnote{De An. II 1.} When the soul is sleeping it possesses higher intellectual capacities potentially (\textit{nous-in-potency}), but when it is awakened these potencies are actualized (\textit{nous-in-action}). These two modes of intellect do not depict two different intellects, but one intellect in two stages. In the Middle Platonic tradition, the awakening of the soul goes back to Aristotle and it also takes the form of awakening the World Soul by the cosmic Mind.\footnote{The awakening of the World Soul was a common idea in Middle Platonism (e.g. Alc. \textit{Didask.} XIV; Pl. \textit{Procr. anim.} 1026EF). The awakening of the individual soul is also mentioned in the Hermetic sources: “cease your inebriation intoxicated as you are by an irrational sleep” (C.H. I 27, X 5).} In the Valentinian teachings the awakening of the individual mind has its paradigm in the salvation and awakening of Sophia. The awakening of the individual soul is mentioned in \textit{Exc. Theod.} 3.1-2:

\begin{quote}
\textit{When the Savior came, he awakened the soul and kindled the spark. For the words of the Lord is power. Therefore, he said: “Let your light shine before men.” And after the resurrection, by breathing the Spirit on the apostles he was blowing off and removing dust like ashes, but kindling and giving life to the spark.}
\end{quote}

This model of spiritual awakening of the soul is also mentioned in the \textit{Gospel of Truth} (29-30):

\begin{quote}
\textit{Until the moment when they who are passing through all these things – I mean they who have experienced all these confusions – awake, they see nothing because the dreams were nothing. It is thus that they who cast ignorance from them as sleep do not consider it to be anything, nor regard its properties to be something real, but they renounce them like a dream in the night and they consider the knowledge of the Father to be the dawn. It is thus that each one has acted as if he were asleep, during the time when he was ignorant and thus he comes to understand as if he were awakening. And happy is the man who comes to himself and awakens. Indeed, blessed is he who has opened the eyes of the blind.}\footnote{Translated by Bentley Layton in \textit{The Gnostic Scriptures}.}
\end{quote}
Philo also considers the salvation of the soul as an awakening. He compared the rejection of the false doctrines of “Chaldean philosophy” with awaking from a deep sleep:

In this creed Abraham had been reared, and for a long time remained a Chaldean. Then opening the soul’s eye as though after profound sleep, and beginning to see the pure beam instead of the deep darkness, he followed the ray and discerned what he had not beheld before.

Also, Aristotle’s speculations concerning the different kinds of soul-bodies and two-fold intellect had a great impact on Middle Platonic teachers. While the passive mind perishes together with the body and its pneumatic soul-body, the active mind is eternal as it contemplates the supra-cosmic mind, i.e. God. It became common in the Middle Platonic tradition to think that the soul experiences a sort of “double liberation” during death. In the first stage, the soul together with its pneumatic body is liberated from the body. In the second stage the active mind, i.e. the intellect, is separated from the pneumatic soul-body. These notions concerning the afterlife can be found in different versions in the Middle Platonic sources, Gnostic schools, and the Hermetic tradition.

---


416 The strict distinction between the soul and the intellect is also found in Plutarch, who not only made a distinction between rational and the irrational parts of the soul but also between the rational soul and nous (Pl., De Fac. 943A ff). Plutarch maintained that there were two conjunctions: the first is about the soul and the body but the second is about the soul and the mind. There were according to Plutarch three classes of humankind. The first group lacked the mind altogether, and they were mixed with bodily passions. The second group had a mind, but they struggle with passions and divine impacts. The third group possessed the mind in perfect fashion, which lifted them above all bodily passions. Plutarch criticized those who regarded the mind as a part of the soul. In reality, the mind is a demon that exists externally outside the soul and the body and whose task is to guide the human soul towards its home in heaven (Pl., On the Demon of Socrates 591D ff.) The association of the nous with a daemon comes from Plato, who says in Tim. 90A that a daemon is “the most authoritative element of soul” whose task is to raise the human soul to heaven. For the analysis of Plutarch’s view, cf. Dillon, The Middle Platonists, 211-212.

417 Aristotle talks in his lost dialogue Eudemus about the soul’s return home after death. This means that at least some part of the soul continues to exist after the death of the individual. It is not clear, however, whether the immortal part of the soul is able to keep its individuality after death. Cf. Eudemus fr. 1 and 6 in Aristotelis Fragmenta Selecta, recog. brevique adnotatione instruxit W.D. Ross (Oxford, 1955; repr. 1964).

418 For the double liberation of the soul in the Hermetic tradition, cf. CH X 16-17. Aristotle’s theory of the soul formed the basis for the Middle Platonic theories concerning different kinds of soul-bodies and it became also popular among Early Christian teachers. Irenaeus supposes in the light of 1 Cor. 15:44 the existence of two-fold soul bodies, the animal ones, which remain in life after death and
In Plato’s *Timaeus*, the rational part of the soul imitates the world soul, being a fragment from it. Plato’s view concerning the rationality of the soul was rather optimistic and it could not give a logical answer to the reality of human suffering and erroneous choices. There emerged, thus, different theories among the Platonic teachers concerning the relation of the individual soul and the world soul, which were supposed to explain the reality of suffering. Some Platonists, like Numenius and some gnosticizing Platonists, taught that the reason for human suffering and erroneous choices was the pre-cosmic fall of the world soul. The imperfection of the human soul can be derived from the fact that it was a fragment of the fallen soul of the world. Some other Platonists taught that the suffering of the human soul resulted from the embodiment, because the soul lost its rationality periodically as a result of incarnation. There was, however, also the third option according to which some part of the soul was seen as undescended. This view became dominant in the school of Plotinus. The theory of the undescended soul was commonly seen as Plotinus’s own innovation and deviation from the pure doctrine of Plato. Plotinus taught that even above the rational part of the soul existed “the second self,” which could not sin and served as a paradigm for the “earthly self.” Human suffering was an outcome of the fact that the rational soul could not integrate itself into the higher self.\(^{419}\) Gregory Shaw presents these different views as follows:\(^{420}\)

1. Gnostics (as described in *Ennead* II, 9)
   a) The suffering of individual souls is due to the fall of the World Soul
   b) Individual souls (collectively) = the World Soul
2. Plotinus (A) (against the Gnostics)
   a) The suffering of individual souls is *not* due to the fall of the World Soul because the World Soul cannot fall [Enn. II, 9, 7, 9-19]. The relation of individual souls to their bodies included a temporary period of suffering and confusion [Enn. II, 9, 7ff.], which can be overcome by education and an increasing mimesis of the gods [Enn. II, 9, 18, 32-35].
   b) The World Soul *is not equal* to the sum of individual souls [Enn. II, 9, 8, 36-29].
3. Plotinus (B)

spiritual bodies, which are put on after the resurrection (Iren. *Haer.* 5.7.1-2). In addition to the Valentinians, the idea of the luminous, instrumental soul-body of the intellect is attested in the writings of the Alexandrian theologians Origen and Didymus the Blind (cf. Orig. *Cels.* II 60; *In Mt.* XVII 30).


\(^{420}\) Shaw, *Theurgy and the Soul*, 65.
a) The World Soul does not fall and neither do individual souls. The suffering of individual souls, therefore, is merely the suffering of their “images”; in truth, individual souls remain above, at the level of the World Soul.

b) The World Soul = unfallen individual souls.

The anthropological teaching in the Valentinian sources contains features that link it to the first and third positions, which were fused together on the grounds of Aristotelian psychology. Although the irrationality of the soul was an outcome of the fall of Sophia, the rational and spiritual parts of the soul were connected to Sophia’s repentance and enlightenment. Sophia created the spiritual seed as images of the Savior’s angels after she has been purified of her erroneous thoughts and pernicious emotions. The spiritual seed had their divine archetype in the “ecclesia above” but these supra-cosmic spiritual identities did not incarnate. They remained intact in the realm below the Pleroma together with Sophia. The relation between the spiritual seed and their divine archetypes can be understood on the grounds of the Aristotelian theory of “passive” and “active” intellects. In Valentinian anthropology, the passive intellect becomes active when it is integrated to its heavenly self, i.e. its angelic archetype.

6.2 The creation of the first human being and the three-fold structure of the human soul in Valentinian sources

I will next present the description of the creation of the first human being according to Exc. C which is included in Clement’s Excerpta ex Theodoto. The main section is in Exc. Theod. 50-51, which has a parallel in Iren. Haer 1.5.5. The sequence of the creation of Adam is as follows:

1. Sophia generates the spiritual seed as images of the angels of the Savior (Gen. 1:27).
2. The Demiurge and his assistants create the irrational and hylic soul of Adam out of matter (Gen. 1:26/2:7).
3. The Demiurge breathes the likeness of himself into the hylic soul, which serves as a soul-body for the rational soul. (Gen. 2:7)
4. Sophia inserts the spiritual seed into the psychic soul of Adam.
5. The Demiurge clothes the hylic-psychic soul together with the seed of Sophia with the garments of skin, which refers to the fleshly body (Gen. 3:21).

The creation of humankind began at the supra-cosmic level as the Savior descended to the suffering Sophia. After the Savior had purified Sophia from her erroneous thoughts, she began to contemplate the angels who
accompanied the Savior.\textsuperscript{421} It was this joyful contemplation which formed the basis for the creation of the spiritual seed as images of the angels. This is attested in Irenaeus’s account as follows:

\emph{They teach, too, that when Achamoth had been freed from passion and had with joy received the contemplation of the lights which were with him, that is, of the Angels that were with him, and had yearned after them, she brought forth fruits after their image, a spiritual offspring, born after the likeness of the Savior's bodyguards.}\textsuperscript{422}

There is some confusion concerning the biblical proof-text in this passage. It seems that the creation of the seed of Sophia is based on Gen. 1.26 (“she brought forth fruits \emph{after their image}, a spiritual offspring, born \emph{after the likeness} of the Savior’s bodyguards”). The same text is used, however, as a proof-text later in Iren. \textit{Haer.} 1.5.5 when the Demiurge creates Adam’s soul-body (cf. below). It is rather unlikely that the same biblical text (Gen. 1:26) would have served as the basis for the creation of the spiritual seed of Adam and his material-psychic soul as well. I suggest that Irenaeus paraphrased his source material carelessly. The biblical allusion to Gen. 1:26 may come from Irenaeus himself. It is also noteworthy that Gen. 1:26 does not fit well in the description of the creation of the seed of Sophia. Although there was a multiplicity of models, i.e. angels, there were not a plurality of creators. The spiritual seed was created by Sophia alone. It is more likely that the original proof text in Iren. \textit{Haer.} 1.4.5 was Gen.1.27, which was commonly found in other Valentinian sources.

The creation of the seed of Sophia as images of the Savior’s “army” is also attested in the \textit{Tripartite Tractate}.\textsuperscript{423} As the Savior revealed himself to the Logos-Sophia, he was filled with inexpressible joy and she brought forth living images of the living beings that accompanied the Savior.\textsuperscript{424} The proof-text for the creation of the spiritual seed is evidently Gen. 1:27 and it was stressed that the spiritual offspring of Logos-Sophia were male beings.\textsuperscript{425} Clement has also preserved in \textit{Exc. Theod.} 21.1 information about teaching

\textsuperscript{421} In the Pseudo-Aristotelian \textit{De Mundo}, the power of God is diversified into a multitude of subordinate executive powers called “bodyguards” (δορυφόροι). This has a close parallel in Philo who states that the powers accompanied God as “bodyguards” (Sac. 59). Strikingly in Irenaeus’s account (Iren. \textit{Haer.} 1.4.5) the angels who were created together with the Savior Jesus as representatives of the aeons are called “bodyguards” (δορυφόροι). It is possible that the Valentinian teachers were dependent on the same Aristotelian tradition. Cf. Bos, “A Platonist in the Likeness of Aristotle,” 77-78.

\textsuperscript{422} Iren. \textit{Haer.} 1.4.5. Epiphanius’s Greek text is close to Irenaeus’s Latin version in this passage. There is only a slight difference in the Greek wording “after their image,” which in Latin is “after his image.”

\textsuperscript{423} In \textit{Tri. Trac.} 86.23-87 the aeons produce not only the Savior as an expression of the Father but an army of beings who were images of themselves.

\textsuperscript{424} \textit{Tri. Trac.} 90.14-91.

that describes the creation of the seed of Sophia explicitly on the ground of Gen. 1:27:

_The Valentinians say that the finest emanation of Sophia is spoken of in “He created them in the image of God, male and female created he them.” Now the males from this emanation are the election, but the females are the calling, and they call the male beings angelic and the females themselves the dispersed spirit [or seed]. _426

The creation of the spiritual seed was depicted in this passage as Sophia’s finest emanation (προβολή ἡ ἄριστη). This would mean that there were some other emanations of lower rank by Sophia. Although the temporal order in the light of Theodotus’ fragmentary passages is difficult to explain, it is likely that the lower beings were the powers on the left, which Sophia created earlier from the powers on the right. 427 The finest emanation of Sophia is depicted as “images” but angels as archetypes of Sophia’s production are not mentioned. It is stated, however, that the seed of Sophia is split into two parts, the male and the female seed, and it is the former part of the seed that is depicted as “angelic.” Therefore, this passage does not describe the creation of the seed of Sophia as images of the angels, but the creation of angels themselves, which were separated from the unitary seed before its incarnation. 428

---

426 Τὸ ‘κατ’ εἰκόνα θεοῦ ἐποίησεν αὐτόν, ἄρσεν καὶ θῆλυ ἐποίησεν αὐτούς τὴν προβολὴν τὴν ἄριστην ἀρσενικὰ καὶ τὰ θελυκὰ καλοῦσι, τὰ δὲ θελυκὰ καὶ κλησις, καὶ τὰ μὲν ἀρρενικὰ καλοῦσι, τὰ γυναῖκα δὲ ἐαυτούς, τὸ διαφέρον πνεῦμα [σπέρμα]. ExC. Theod. 21.1. The first sentence contains an interesting textual variance compared with the text of Septuagint: the first pronoun αὐτόν in the sentence “He created him...” (LXX) was supposedly intentionally changed to αὐτούς (“He created them...”) The generation of the sexes in Gen. 1:27 was seen as a biblical typology for the twofold emission of the seed by Sophia. The sexes were not understood biologically, but as an allegory of the spiritual rupture within Sophia’s seed, which was sowed into the earthly soul. In the passages which go back to Theodotus, the female seed, depicted as dispersed seed, was compared with an aborted fetus (ExC. Theod. 67-68). For the relationship of the Valentinian myth with ancient conceptions of sexual intercourse, birth and embryology cf. Richard Smith, “Sex Education in Gnostic Schools” in _Images of the Feminine in Gnosticism_ (ed. by Karen L. King; Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 2000), 345-369.

427 ExC. Theod. 34.1-2.

428 The female part of the seed was sowed into the world, while the angelic male part of the seed was drawn together with the Logos, i.e. the Savior. The angelic seed of Sophia formed the spiritual body of the Savior as he emptied himself and descended to the world to save the dispersed seed ExC. Theod. 26.1-3. Thomassen points out that the accounts in Theodotus and the Tripartite Tractate are in accord in that the seed of Sophia-Logos is divided into two parts. Some part remains in the realm of Sophia-Logos while the other part is incarnated into the world. The remaining part will be incarnated later together with the Savior during his baptism as his spiritual body. See Thomassen, _The Spiritual Seed_, 29-58.
It is not explained in Exc. C how Sophia produced her offspring. In Exc. Theod. 50-51 the angels as archetypes for Sophia’s offspring are not explicitly mentioned. It is stated, however, that the Savior was accompanied by male angels as he visited the suffering Sophia.429 The male angels are also mentioned in the context of the implantation of the spiritual seed into Adam’s soul.430 It is rather likely, then, that Sophia produced her seed as images of the male angels of the Savior or the Savior himself. The biblical proof-text may have been Gen. 1:27, because Gen. 1:26 was used as the basis for the creation of the hylic-psychic soul of Adam.

The consensus among Valentinian theologians in these sources seems to be that Sophia produced the spiritual seed, which had the Savior’s angels or some other living beings as heavenly archetypes. In Ireanaeus’ account the seed of Sophia is depicted as the “inner man” and an image of the “ecclesia above,” which refers to the last pair of the Ogdoad in the Pleroma, i.e. the man-ecclesia.431 Thomassen has pointed out that rather than a separate member of the Pleroma, the aeon “man-ecclesia” may be seen as an aspect of the Pleroma as a whole.432 “Man-ecclesia” was also included in the Savior, because the whole Pleroma dwelled in the Savior that is referred in Col 2:9 (ἐν αὐτῷ κατοικεῖ πᾶν τὸ πλήρωμα τῆς θεότητος σωματικῶς).433 We can conclude that in the Valentinian model the Savior and his angels served collectively as an archetypical man for Sophia’s spiritual emanation.434 After the creation of the spiritual seed by Sophia in the realm below the Pleroma, the focus is shifted to the creation of the first human being by the Demiurge. This process of creation is described in Iren. Haer. 1.5.5 and Exc. Theod. 50-51.1:

**Exc. Theod. 50-51**

Taking dust from the earth: not of the dry land but a portion of matter varied constitution and color, he fashioned a soul, earthly and material, irrational and consubstantial with that of the beasts. This is the man “according to the image.” But the man who is according to the likeness of the Creator himself is he whom he has breathed into and inseminated into

**Iren. Haer. 1.5.5**

Having thus formed the world, he also created the earthly [part of] man, not taking him from this dry earth, but from an invisible substance consisting of fusible and fluid matter, and then afterward, as they define the process, breathed into him the psychic part of his nature. It was this latter which was created after his image and likeness. The hylic part, indeed, was very near to

---

429 Exc.Theod. 44.1.
430 Exc.Theod. 53.3.
431 Iren. Haer. 1.5.6.
432 Thomassen, *The Spiritual Seed*, 441.
433 Iren. Haer. 1.3.4; Col. 1:15.
434 For the relation between the heavenly ecclesia, the Savior and the hidden identities of the saved in the Tripartite Tractate, cf. Thomassen, *The Spiritual Seed*, 52.
the former, placing in him by angels something consubstantial with himself. Since he is invisible and immaterial, he called his substance “the breath of life,” but that which was given form became a “living soul” and he confesses that it is so in the prophetic writings.\textsuperscript{435} God as far as the image went, but not of the same substance with him. The psychic, on the other hand, was so in respect to likeness; and hence, his substance was called the spirit of life because it took its rise from a spiritual outflowing.\textsuperscript{436}

In both of these accounts the creation of the soul of an earthly human being is interpreted in the light of a combination of Gen. 1:26 and Gen. 2:7. The human being created “according to the likeness” of the Demiurge is breathed into the material soul (Gen. 2:7), which is depicted as the human being “according to the image.” In \textit{Exc. Theod}. 50-51 the angels are mediators of the psychic element, which may refer to the plurality of the creators in Plato’s \textit{Timaeus} to whom God delegated the creation of the lower parts of the human soul.\textsuperscript{437} In Irenaeus’s version, the collectivity of the creators is not explicitly mentioned. However, the Demiurge is called in Irenaeus’s account Hebdomad.\textsuperscript{438} This may refer to a personification of the collective planetary powers, which are also depicted as angels. It is thus possible that in Irenaeus’s account there is an allusion to the collectivity of the creators of the

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{435} “Λαβὼν χοῦν ἀπὸ τῆς γῆς”, —οὐ τῆς ἡμας, ἀλλὰ τῆς πολυμεροῦς καὶ ποικίλης ὅλης μέρος, — ψυχήν γεωδή καὶ υλικὴν ἐπεκτήσατο ἄλογον καὶ τῇ τῶν θηρίων ὀμοούσιον· οὗτος [ὁ] “κατ’ εἰκόνα” ἀνθρωπος. Ὁ δὲ “καθ’ ὁμοίωσιν,” τὴν αὐτοῦ τοῦ Δημιουργοῦ ἐκεῖνος ἐστιν ὃν εἰς τοῦτον “ἐνεφύσησέν” τε καὶ ἐνέσπειρεν, ὀμοούσιον τι αὐτῷ δι’ Ἀγγέλων ἐνθείς. Καθ’ μὲν ἀόρατος ἔστι καὶ ἀσώματος, τὴν οὐσίαν αὐτοῦ “πνεῦμα ζωῆς” προσέπεσεν· μορφωθὲν δὲ, “ψυχή ζῶσα” ἐγένετο· ὥστε εἶναι, καὶ αὐτὸς ἐν ταῖς προφητικαῖς γραφαῖς ὀμολογεῖ.
\item \textsuperscript{436} Δημιουργήσαντα δὴ τὸν κόσμον, πεποίηκέναι καὶ τὸν ἄνθρωπον τὸν χοϊκὸν· οὐκ ἀπὸ ταύτης δὲ τῆς ἡμας γῆς, ἀλλ’ ἀπὸ τῆς ἡμας οἰσίας, ἀπὸ τοῦ κεχρυμένου καὶ μεσοτότι τῆς ἡμας λαμβάνει· καὶ εἰς τοῦτον ἐμφυσῆσαι τὸν ψυχικὸν διορίζονται. Καὶ τοῦτον εἶναι τὸν κατ’ εἰκόνα καὶ ὀμοούσιον γεγονός· κατ’ εἰκόνα μὲν τὸν ὑλικὸν ὑπάρξειν, παραπλήσιον μὲν, ἀλλ’ οὐκ ὀμοούσιον τῷ Θεῷ· καθ’ ὀμοούσιον δὲ τὸν ψυχικὸν ὅθεν καὶ πνεῦμα ζωῆς τὴν οὐσίαν αὐτοῦ εἰρήσθαι, ἐκ πνευματικῆς ἀποῤῥοίας οὖσαν.
\item \textsuperscript{437} The psychic soul was infused into the soul of Adam by the Demiurge with the help of angels (cf. \textit{Exc. Theod}. 50.2). This may refer to the idea of a plurality of creators in Gen. 1:26 that goes back to the teaching attested in Valentinus’s fragment in \textit{Strom}. II 36.2-4. The idea of a plurality of creators of the human soul is also mentioned in the \textit{Tripartite Tractate} (105-106). The powers were co-creators of God, and they have a similar role in the creation of human beings as the younger gods in Plato’s \textit{Timaeus}. The powers imitated the creative activity of the Logos. While the powers created the hylic and psychic souls, the “living soul” was produced by the Logos. The role of the powers differs in the \textit{Tripartite Tractate} from Philo’s account in \textit{Opif}. 69-70. In the \textit{Tripartite Tractate}, the powers are archons that lust for power, but in \textit{Opif}. 69-70 God’s assistants are positive cosmic powers. Philo maintains that the moral vagueness of the earthly soul is the motif for the use of assistants in the creation process: God alone is the creator of the good. This motif is lacking in the \textit{Tripartite Tractate}.
\item \textsuperscript{438} Iren. \textit{Haer}. 1.5.2.
\end{itemize}
hylic and psychic parts of Adam’s soul. It is noteworthy that it is the creation of the hylic soul of Adam that is described in these accounts, not that of Adam’s corporeal body. It is explicitly mentioned that unlike the physical body, the hylic-psychic soul of Adam was created in the fourth heaven.

**Exc. Theod. 51.1**

Therefore, he was created in the Paradise in the fourth heaven. There the earthly flesh does not ascend, but it served as hylic flesh for the divine soul.

**Iren. Haer. 1.5.2**

Likewise, Paradise is above the third heaven and is the fourth Archangel with power. From him, Adam received something [or his substance] while he dwelt in it.

In *Exc. Theod.* 51.1 χοῖκη σάρξ and σάρξ ἡ υλική are synonyms. The “hylic flesh” (σάρξ ἡ υλική) depicted the material body, which could not ascend to the fourth heaven, where the immaterial hylic-psychic soul was created. The hylic soul was also referred to as the “flesh,” which served as the body (σῶμα) for the psychic and divine soul, referred as the “bone.”

This is the meaning of “This is now bone of my bones,” – he mentions the divine soul which is hidden in the flesh firm and hard to suffer and very potent, – and “the flesh of my flesh” – the hylic soul which is the body of the divine soul.

According to Irenaeus’s account, the hylic soul of Adam was not taken from the “dry earth” (ζηρὰ γῆ) but from an “invisible substance consisting of fusible and fluid matter” (ἀπὸ τῆς ἀοράτου οὐσίας, ἀπὸ τοῦ κεχυμένου καὶ ρευστοῦ τῆς ὑλῆς λαβόντα). Clement’s account says practically the same thing: the Demiurge did not take matter for the hylic soul from the dry land

---


440 The distinction between the terms χοῖκος and υλικός is possibly based on the “double-reading” of the text, which says: καὶ ἔπλασεν ὁ Θεὸς τὸν ἄνθρωπον χοῖον ἀπὸ τῆς γῆς καὶ ἐνεφύσησεν εἰς τὸ πρόσωπον αὐτοῦ πνοὴν ζωῆς, καὶ ἐγένετο ὁ ἄνθρωπος εἰς ψυχήν ζῶσαν (LXX; Gen. 2:7). The Valentinian commentators made a distinction between the earthly man (τὸν ἄνθρωπον χοῖον) and the human being which was made out of earth (ἀπὸ τῆς γῆς). The former describes the human being consisting of the fleshly body and the latter refers to the hylic soul. In Irenaeus’s account, Adam was created above the third heaven, where he received “something” (τι) which refers to the essence of the Demiurge.

441 Ὡθὲν ἐν τῷ Παραδείσῳ, τῷ τετάρτῳ οὐρανῷ, δημιουργεῖται. Ἐκεῖ γὰρ χοῖκη σάρξ οὐκ ἀναβαίνει, ἀλλ’ ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ τῇ θείᾳ αὐτῶν σάρξ ἡ υλική.

442 ὡς καὶ τὸν Παραδείσου ὄπερ τρίτον οὐρανὸν ὄντα, τέταρτον Ἀγγέλου λέγουσι δυνάμει ὑπάρχειν, καὶ ἀπὸ τοῦτο τι εἰληφέναι τὸν Λόγον διατεταραφητά ἐν αὐτῷ.

443 *Exc. Theod.* 51.2. Ταῦτα σημαίνει: Ὡθέν ἐν τῷ Παραδείσῳ, τῷ τετάρτῳ οὐρανῷ, δημιουργεῖται. Ἐκεῖ γὰρ χοῖκη σάρξ οὐκ ἀναβαίνει, ἀλλ’ ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ τῇ θείᾳ αὐτῶν σάρξ ἡ υλική.

444 *Iren. Haer.* 1.5.5. The term “invisible” may refer to the unstructured essence of matter (cf. the discussion concerning term “invisible” in the preceding chapter).
but from a "portion of matter varied constitution and color" (τῆς πολυμεροῦς καὶ ποικίλης ὑλῆς μέρος). The hylic soul was made out of confused matter to be distinguished from the dry earth in its present stage. The Demiurge breathes the likeness of himself, i.e. the psychic essence, into the hylic soul of Adam, but at the same time, he unknowingly mediates the spiritual seed. This is described in the following passages:

**Exc. Theod. 53:2-3**

But Adam had in his soul the spiritual seed, which was sown by Sophia. He says: “Established through angels by the hand of a mediator. And the mediator is not of one, but God is one.” Therefore, the seed is assisted through the angels that are put forth by Sophia.445

**Iren. Haer. 1.5.6**

Furthermore, they declare that the Demiurge himself was ignorant of the offspring of Achamoth, their Mother, which was conceived by virtue of her contemplation of the angels who surround Savior and which were spiritual like the Mother. Secretly without his knowledge, she deposited this offspring in him that through him it might be planted as a “seed” in the soul which came from him, and thence in this material body; and having been borne in them as in a womb and grown, it might become fit for the reception of perfect knowledge.446

There is a slight difference between these accounts. Firstly, in Iren. Haer. 1.5.6 it is not the “spiritual seed” (σπέρμα τὸ πνευματικόν) as in Exc. Theod. 53, but “the offspring of the mother” (κύημα τῆς μητρός) that is deposited into the soul of Adam through the instrumentality of the Demiurge. There is no difference between these statements because it is also stated in Irenaeus that the offspring of Sophia is of the same substance as the mother, i.e. spiritual. Secondly, in Iren. Haer. 1.5.6 the spiritual seed was deposited by Sophia into the Demiurge, who was used as an instrument by her. It is the breath of the

---

445 Ἔσχεν δὲ ὁ Ἀδὰμ ἀδήλως αὐτῷ ὑπὸ τῆς Σοφίας ἐνσπαρὲν τὸ σπέρμα τὸ πνευματικὸν εἰς τὴν ψυχήν, “διαταγείς”, φησί, “δὴ Ἀγγέλων, ἐν χειρὶ Μεσίτου· ὁ δὲ μεσίτης ἑνὸς οὐκ ἔστιν· ὁ δὲ Θεὸς εἷς ἐστίν”. “Δὴ Ἀγγέλων” οὖν τὸν ἀρρένων τὰ σπέρματα ὑπηρετεῖται, τὰ εἰς γένεσιν προβληθέντα ὑπὸ τῆς Σοφίας, καθὸ ἐγχωρεῖ γίνεσθαι

446 Τὸ δὲ κύημα τῆς μητρός αὐτῶν τῆς Ἀχαμώθ, δὲ κατὰ τὴν θεωρίαν τῶν περὶ τὸν Σωτῆρα ἀγγέλων ἀπεκύησαν, ὁμοούσιον ὑπάρχον τῇ μητρὶ, πνευματικὸν, καὶ αὐτὸ ἠγνοεῖται τὸν Δημιουργὸν λέγουσι· καὶ λεληθότος κατατεθέναι εἰς αὐτῶν, μὴ εἰδότος αὐτῶν, ἰνα δὴ αὐτὸ εἰς τὴν ἀναφορὰν τστὶ ἀναφορὰν τστὶ ἱστορίαν καὶ εἰς τὸ ὑλικὸν τοῦ ὅμοιον σῶμα, κυοφορηθέν ἐν τούτῳ καὶ αἰτηθῇ ἔτοιμον γένεσιν πρὸς ὑποδοχὴν τοῦ τελείου [Λόγου]. In Epiphanius’ Greek text there is only ...ἔτοιμον γένεσιν πρὸς ὑποδοχὴν τοῦ τελείου < Λόγου>. The Latin version has perfectae rationis and Tertullian sermo perfecto (Adv. Val. 25.2). Cf Unger&Dillon, Against the Heresies, 163.
Demiurge which mediated the spiritual seed to Adam. In *Exc. Theod.* 53 the seed of Sophia was deposited directly into the psychic soul of Adam, without mentioning the instrumentality of the breath of the Demiurge, but only the angels.\(^447\) Although the breath of the Demiurge may be the most logical means of the mediation of the seed of Sophia, it is not excluded that it was inserted into the soul of Adam during his sleep.\(^448\) Be that as it may, in both accounts, the soul of Adam finally consisted of hylic, psychic and spiritual elements. In the end, the Demiurge clothed Adam with the garments of skin (τὸ δερμάτινον χιτῶνα), which was also depicted as a sense perceptible body (τὸ αἰσθητὸν σαρκίον).\(^449\)

The three essences of Adam were distributed to his descendants, which forms the basis for the anthropological division of humankind into hylic, psychic and spiritual human beings. Irenaeus mentions this in *Iren. Haer.* 1.7.5: “these three natures [of Adam] are no longer found in one person, but constitute various kinds [of men].” Irenaeus does not give us any explanation why the three essences of the first human were distributed unequally and caused the division of all humanity.\(^450\) The account in *Exc. Theod.* 55-56.2 gives a more detailed description. It is stated that the higher essences of the soul, i.e. the psychic and spiritual elements, were mediated *through* Adam, but not *by* him. This means that Adam was only an instrumental cause (ὁ αὑτὸν) concerning the psychic and spiritual essences, not an efficient cause.

\(^{447}\) *Exc. Theod.* 53.2-3.

\(^{448}\) In *Exc. Theod.* 2.1-2, the Logos implants the male seed (σπέρμα ἀρρενικόν) into the psychic soul of Adam while he is sleeping. The term “male seed” does not appear anywhere in Clement’s account and it seems to be a sort of combination of the terms τὸ διαφέρον σπέρμα and τὰ ἀρρενικά mentioned in *Exc. Theod.* 21.1-2, which both depict different kinds of seeds by Sophia. Although the name Logos may be a variant for Sophia, as in the *Tripartite Tractate*, Logos is not here a synonym for Sophia, but represents besides Sophia, another agent in the creation of Adam. Also, the idea of Sophia as an agent of the creation of the material parts of a human being is not mentioned in any other Valentinian sources. It is therefore likely that these discrepancies are an outcome of Clement’s careless paraphrasing of the source material. It is possible, however, that the idea of Adam’s sleep as a place for the implantation of the spiritual seed is authentic. That kind of view is mentioned in the *Gospel of Philip* (70:22-34) in which the soul that was given to Adam through breath was replaced with the spirit of the Mother: “Adam’s soul came from a breath. The soul’s companion is spirit and the spirit given to him is his mother. His soul was [taken] from him and replaced with [spirit]. When he was united with spirit, [he] uttered words superior to the powers and the powers envied him. They [separated him from his] spiritual companion...hidden...bridal chamber...” (Translated by Marvin Meyer in *The Nag Hammari Library*).

\(^{448}\) In Hippolytus’s account, the Demiurge fashioned bodies out of material essence which can be a domicile for the soul or souls and demons or souls and the logoi. The logoi represented the spiritual seed which was created by Sophia and Jesus in the Ogdoad. It is not explicitly mentioned when and how the logoi were inserted into the material soul-body.

\(^{449}\) *Iren. Haer.* 1.5.5; *Exc. Theod.* 55.1.

Only the hylic soul of Adam was capable of mixing with the semen of Adam to be mediated to the later generations. The psychic and spiritual essences were not mediated by Adam but through him, which means that they were only potentially present in the hylic soul of his descendants.

Valentinian anthropology can be located quite easily in Middle Platonic views about different kinds of soul-bodies and the role of the intellect as a distinct element of the soul. The hylic soul of Adam (Gen. 2:7) served as an instrumental soul-body for the psychic soul (Gen. 1:26), which contained an element of the higher essence, i.e. the spiritual seed. The highest part of human soul was created by Sophia as an image of the Savior’s angels (Gen. 1:27) and it is depicted as the marrow of the psychic bone or fetus inside the psychic womb, which must be nurtured to gain its perfection. The distinction between the psychic soul and the spiritual seed parallels the Aristotelian theory about “nous in potency” and “nous in action.” The psychic soul is only potentially spiritual because it contains the seed of Sophia, which is not yet perfectly integrated to its higher self, i.e. the angelic archetype. The psychic soul serves as an instrumental body for the spiritual seed:

For just as the Demiurge moved by Sophia without his knowledge thinks that he is self-motioned (αὐτοκίνητος) so also do human beings. Therefore, Sophia put forth first the spiritual seed into Adam that the bone – the reasonable and heavenly soul – would not be empty but full of spiritual marrow.

The psychic soul is not self-motioned, which resonates with the Aristotelian criticism of the Platonic theory of the self-moving soul. As the cosmic intellect, i.e. the Demiurge, is put into motion by Sophia, the psychic soul is put into motion by the spiritual “marrow” of the soul. It is noteworthy that

---


452 Exc. Theod. 55-56.2 has a parallel in Philo’s Cher. 128. The distribution of the essences of Adam to the later generations is investigated in the next chapter in the context of the division of humankind.

453 Iren. Haer. 1.5.6.

454 Exc. Theod. 53.4-5. Casey’s translation is misleading. He translates that the spiritual seed is the bone, although it is explicitly stated earlier in the text that the psychic soul was the bone of Adam while the hylic soul is the flesh. The spiritual element is not the bone, but the “marrow” of the bone. “At first Sophia put forth the spiritual seed so that the bone, i.e. the reasonable and divine soul, would not be empty but full of spiritual marrow” (…ἐν τῷ ὀστεώ, ἡ λογικὴ καὶ οὐρανία ψυχή, μὴ κενὴ ἀλλὰ μυελοῦ γέμουσα πνευματικοῦ). Casey also translates the bone in Exc. Theod. 62.3 as though it referred to the spiritual nature of Christ, although it evidently says that the spiritual element is inside the bone (τὸ δ’ ἐν τῷ ὀστεώ).
both the psychic soul and its spiritual component are divine. The spiritual seed is not an independent entity, but it is breathed into Adam together with the psychic soul, and it is also inherited by Adam’s descendants within the psychic soul. We can conclude that the implantation of the psychic-spiritual element into the hylic soul of Adam’s descendants occurs simultaneously with physical procreation through divine providence, although human beings are unable by themselves to mediate the divine parts of their souls to later generations.455

Each of the elements of Adam’s soul contains epistemological and soteriological significance, which can be comprehended in the light of Valentinian protological myth. The fall and salvation of Sophia do not only form the origin of the creation of the cosmos but the soteriological paradigm for all human beings. The psychic soul-substance has its origin in Sophia’s conversion and seeking for the light. This innate movement must be perfected through the awakening of the spiritual seed hidden in the psychic soul, which transforms the potential intellect into actuality. The hylic soul, on the other hand, which served as a body for the psychic soul, has its origin in the hylic passions of Sophia after she was exiled into the darkness of ignorance. It is irrational and consubstantial with the beasts while the psychic soul was luminous and similar to the angels, who rule the planetary spheres together with the Demiurge. The psychic soul is not labeled as a negative entity, but it is a necessary means to receive the seed of Sophia and reach perfection.456

There was, however, different opinions among the Valentinian teachers concerning the degree of the incarnation of the seed of Sophia. In Iren. Haer. 1.5.5 and Exc. Theod. 50-51 the spiritual seed did not incarnate into the flesh, but only into the level of Adam’s psychic soul.457 In Theodotus and the

455 Theodotus says in Exc. Theod. 67.1-3 that the seed of Sophia (Gen. 1:27) was reckoned before the foundation of the world, and childbirth lasts until all the spiritual seed has been incarnated in the world. In Tri. Trac. 104:18-106:25 the Demiurge and the two ranks of powers created souls of their own which are incarnated into the world. Therefore, humankind was divided in the beginning into three categories. Some human beings contained the spiritual seed in their soul while some others possessed only the psychic and hylic or only the hylic soul.

456 For the same kind of Aristotelian background of anthropology in the Gnostic Apocryphon of John see, Gerard P. Luttikhuiizen, Gnostic Revisions of Genesis Stories and Early Jesus Traditions (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 37-42.

457 Hipp. Haer. 6.34:3-4 may represent another Valentinian teaching, which differs both from Iren. Haer. 1.5.5 and Exc. Theod. 50-51 as well as from Theodotus and the Tripartite Tractate. Hippolytus describes how Sophia and the Savior produced seventy logoi “which are heavenly angels who live in the Jerusalem above, which is in heaven.” The angels of heaven were not called images, but the offspring of Sophia and the Savior, and they have been “set right” (διόρθειν) already before their incarnation. In addition, the creation of the first human being is presented solely in the light of Gen. 2:7. The Demiurge fashioned bodies from the hylic and “devilish essence” for the souls to be breathed into the hylic body by the Demiurge. Dunderberg is of the opinion that the body mentioned in Hippolytus’s
Tripartite Tractate, the seed was incarnated fully into the flesh of Adam. There was no mediating psychic soul, as in the accounts of Irenaeus and Exc. C, which would have served as the soul-body for the spiritual seed. In these accounts, the condition of the spiritual seed can be compared with the condition of the hylic soul in Irenaeus and Exc. C. In Thedotus's fragments the seed of Sophia was depicted as “abortion” (ἔκτρωμα), which had lost its rationality completely. The different opinions concerning the degree of incarnation evidently caused some soteriological differences among these Valentinian teachers. In Thedotus and the Tripartite Tractate, the seed must be saved from the fleshly existence by the Savior, which means that the Savior had to adopt a real body. In Tri. Trac. 113:31-114:22 the Savior was not recognized because he was clothed in flesh, and “all the instruments necessary for entering into life and with which he descended.” In Iren. Haer. 1.1-7 and Exc. C, it was the seed itself, which saved the soul as it was awakened and integrated to its “second self” through the knowledge. The seed of Sophia was a fetus as in a womb and it had capability to receive form through gnosis, which means that all human souls contained within themselves, as copies of Adam’s soul, the needed power to achieve immortality, although this gift was not taken in advance by many.

6.3 The traditions of exegesis concerning the creation of Adam in Philo and Valentinian sources

Philo’s anthropological teachings contain elements from various philosophical and exegetical traditions. Philo mentions explicitly some other interpreters and occasionally criticizes their views. In some cases, Philo has modified and refined his interpretations in different texts. The anthropology in the Opificio Mundi is apparently different compared with the theories attested in his allegorical commentaries. Therefore, there are some difficulties in forming a coherent view about Philo's teaching concerning the creation of the first human being if all these traditions are put together and interpreted as a whole.

Thomas Tobin has made an attempt to define the pre-Philonic philosophical and exegetical traditions which Philo adopted and readjusted in order to create his “allegory of the soul.” Although Tobin’s method helps to form a reasonable picture on the grounds of Philo’s anthropological account depicts the earthly body drawn together from material and diabolic essence because the garments of skin as a symbol of the earthly body are not mentioned. Cf. Dunderberg, Beyond Gnosticism, 141.

458 Exc. Theod. 68.
459 Cf. Thomassen, The Spiritual Seed, 52-58.
teachings, it cannot be used as an absolute guide. Philo may have intentionally changed his teaching depending on the level of his audience. As I have noted earlier in this study, Philo was a proponent of multiple exegesis. Therefore, the discrepancies in his writings do not necessarily indicate the use of different kinds of preceding traditions. The teachings of the higher allegorical level can even conflict with those teachings, which Philo directed to a more literal-minded audience. I will, however, use Tobin’s study in my research as a working tool to categorize hermeneutical approaches in Philo’s works.

Tobin detects two main theories concerning the creation of the first human being in Philo’s writings. These theories are the single creation theory and the double creation theory. In the single creation theory the biblical narratives Gen. 1:26-27 and Gen. 2:7 describe the creation of a single human being philosophically from two different points of views. Gen. 1.26-27 represents a Platonic view in which the first human being is created according to the image of God. Philo stressed, however, that it was not the visible body which God created according to the image of God, but the ruling part of the soul, namely the rational mind. Moreover, the archetype for the human mind was not God, but his Logos, which was itself an image of God. Therefore, the human mind was “an image of an image.”

The other branch of the single creation theory made use of Gen 2:7 and presented the creation of Adam in the light of Stoic theories about the rational soul as a divine fragment (ἀπόσπασμα). The Stoics maintained that the human soul parallels the cosmos as a living being that has ether for its ruling part (ἡγεμόνικόν). Philo could say that God breathed the ethereal spirit (αἰθέριον πνεῦμα) into the ruling part of the soul (ἡγεμονικόν), which was the divine fragment (ἀπόσπασμα θείον). Philo was not, however, pleased with Stoic materialism, and he modified Stoic anthropology on the grounds of Platonic view. For Philo, the human mind is a non-material intellect, because it is an image of the cosmic non-material intellect, i.e. the Logos. Therefore, Philo says that the human mind is not only a fragment of ether but something better, even a radiance (ἀπαύγασμα) of the thrice-blessed nature of the Godhead.

According to the single creation models Gen. 1:26-27 and Gen. 2:7 could be seen as complementary descriptions of the creation of the same human being from philosophically different point of views. In many cases Philo

462 For criticism of Tobin’s research cf. Runia, Philo of Alexandria, 556-559; On the Creation, 19-20.
463 Opif. 69.
464 Opif. 24-25, Leg. All. 3.95-96, Her. 230-1, Spec. 1.80-1, Spec. 3.83, Spec. 3.207, Q.G. 2.62.
465 D.L. 7.138-139.
466 Leg. All. 1.36-40, Leg. All. 3.161, Her. 281-83, Somn. 1.33-34, Spec. 4. 123, Q. G. 2.59.
467 Spec. 4.123.
468 Tobin, The Creation of Man, 77.
combined these views with each other. This means that it was the image of God (Gen. 1:26-27) which was breathed into Adam’s soul, although the image was not mentioned in Gen. 2:7. The double creation theory was based on the fact that Genesis contains two creation narratives of Adam, which was easily integrated into a Platonic two-world model. In this model Gen. 1:26-27 and Gen. 2:7 were no longer compatible descriptions of a single human being, but the former was seen as the archetype for the latter. The opposed characteristics of these “two human beings” can be presented as follows.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gen. 1:26-27</th>
<th>Gen. 2:7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>object of thought</td>
<td>object of sense perception</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>idea or genus or seal</td>
<td>participating in quality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>incorporeal</td>
<td>composed of body and soul</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>neither male nor female</td>
<td>either man or woman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>by nature immortal</td>
<td>by nature mortal</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The relation between these two human beings is not clear. Runia is of the opinion that the human being created “according to the image” hardly represents an idea of a human being in a strict “Platonic” sense being a model for countless earthly human beings. The term seal (σφραγίς) is used conventionally as a technical term for the relation of model and copy in the Platonic tradition. Runia maintains, however, that Philo’s expression “a kind of idea” (ἰδέα τις) implies that Philo did not locate the human being created in Gen. 1:26-27 in the realm of Ideas. That would have contradicted Philo’s hermeneutical œuvre according to which the Ideas were created during day one (Gen. 1:1-5), but the intelligible pattern of the humanity was created during the sixth day (Gen. 1:26-27).

---

469 Opif. 139, Her. 55-57, Det. 80-90, Plant. 13-27, Mut. 223.
470 Opif. 134-35, Leg. All. 1.31-32, Q.G. 1.4; 8a.
471 Tobin, The Creation of Man, 109; Runia, On the Creation, 321.
472 Baer suggests that the most natural interpretation for the expression οὔτ' ἄρρεν οὔτε θῆλυ in Opif. 134 is that the rational soul created after the image of God is asexual and lacks according to Philo the characteristics of the sexes. See Richard Baer, Philo’s Use of Categories of Male and Female, 21; Tobin, The Creation of Man, 109-110 and Runia, On the Creation, 325.
473 Runia, On the Creation, 322-323; Runia, Philo of Alexandria, 336-338. Plato did not mention in his dialogues the idea of a human being or the idea of the soul. It was rather common, however, within Middle Platonist tradition to postulate the idea of a human being within the intelligible cosmos (cf. the fragment of Arios Didymus On the Doctrines of Plato attested in Eusebius's Praep. evang. 11.23). It is not impossible that Philo could have accepted in his teaching the idea of a human being within the intelligible realm. Philo may have expanded the hermeneutical model according to which the ideas were created during day one in Gen. 1:1-5. The demarcation between “day one” (Gen. 1:1-5) and the days that follow (Gen. 1:5/6) is compensated by a new demarcation in Gen. 2:5/6. This would mean that the whole of Gen. 1 describes the creation of the ideal world. Cf. Tobin, The Creation of Man, 114-119, 125-132 and also Winston, Logos, 29-30.
These various pre-Philonic exegetical traditions – the single creation theory and the double creation theory – could not be easily harmonized with each other. Philo did not solve the discrepancies within previous exegetical traditions by modifying them in a strictly literal manner, but by creating above them a higher allegorical level in which the conflicts could be solved. In this model, the heavenly man, who was born as an image of the Logos, was not an archetype of the earthly soul in a strict Platonic sense, but he became an ethical goal for the earthly mind or the personification of the virtuous soul. Strikingly, the Valentinian accounts in Iren. Haer. 1.5.5 and Exc. Theod. 50-51 contain the closest parallels in those sections which are related to Philo’s exegetical working on the grounds of preceding exegetical traditions concerning the creation of the first human being.

6.3.1 The creation of earthly mind and the garments of skin

Philo made some hermeneutical innovations to combine the preceding allegorical traditions of the creation of Adam with his allegorical framework. Firstly, he distinguished Gen. 1:27 and Gen. 1:26 from each other. This is attested in Fug. 71-72.

Wherefore also, while in the former case the expression used was “let us make man,” as though more than one were to do it, there is used afterward an expression pointing of One, “God made the man.” For the real man, who is absolutely pure Mind, One, even the only God, is the Maker; but a plurality of makers produce man so-called, one that has an admixture of sense-perception. That is why he who is the man in the special sense is mentioned with an article. The words run “God made the man,” that invisible reasoning faculty free from the admixture. The other has no article added; for the words “let us make man” point to him in whom an irrational and rational nature are woven together.

Philo remarks that Gen. 1:27 is mentioned with an article (ἐποίησεν ὁ θεὸς τῶν ἄνθρωπον), whereas the human being mentioned in Gen. 1:26 does not have an article (ποιήσωμεν ἄνθρωπον). This gave room for an allegorical view that they did not describe the same beings, but two distinct beings. The former was created as an image of God and identified with the heavenly man, whereas the latter refers to the earthly human being, who was a mixture of rational and irrational faculties. Secondly, Philo combined Gen. 1:26 and Gen. 2:7 with each other as complementary descriptions of the creation of the earthly mind. It was not the creation of the body, but the creation of the earthly mind that was a mixture of rational and irrational impulses. The physical body was not made until Adam was clothed with the garments of

skin in Gen. 3:21. The creation of the heavenly man and of the earthly mind is attested in *Leg. All.* 1.31-32:

“And God formed the man by taking clay from the earth and breathed into his face a breath of life and the man became a living soul.” There are two races of men; the one a heavenly man, the other an earthly. The heavenly man being made after the image of God is altogether without any participation with corruptible and earthlike essence; but the earthly one was made of matter scattered here and there, which he calls clay. For this reason, he says that the heavenly man was not molded, but was stamped with the image of God; while the earthly is molded work of the Artificer, but not His offspring. We must account the man made out of earth to be “mind” mingling with, but not yet blended with the body. But his earthlike mind is in reality also corruptible, were not God to breathe into it a power of real life; when he does so, it does not any more undergo molding, but becomes a soul, not an inefficient and imperfectly formed soul, but one endowed with mind and actually alive; for he says “man became living soul.”

Philo distinguished the heavenly man from the human being created in Gen. 1:26. The heavenly man (ὁ οὐράνιος ἄνθρωπος) does not participate with any corruptible essence, whereas the human being created in Gen. 1:26 was a mixture of rational and irrational impulses. In addition, Philo says that the earthly man in Gen. 2:7 does not refer to the earthly body, but to the earthly mind (νοῦς γεώδης), which God created out of dispersed matter (ὁ δὲ γήϊνος ἐκ σποράδος ὕλης). It is supposed to be infused into the body, although it is not yet infused (νοῦν εἰσκρινόμενον σώματι, οὔπω δ’ εἰσκεκριμένον).

Tobin suggests, however, that the mind in question refers to a composite of the soul and the body. This would mean that the mind is blended with the body, but is not yet absolutely blended. It is notable that the term εἰσκρινεῖν appears three times in Philo’s texts. In all cases, Philo uses it in describing the incarnation of the soul. In addition to *Leg. All.* 1.32, it is used in *Plant.* 14 and *Somn.* 1.31. In both cases, the context of the term depicts the mixing of the pre-existent soul and the body. In *Somn.* 1.31 Philo describes the cooling process of the soul when it is mixed with the body. In *Plant.* 14 Philo speaks about incorporeal souls in the air that are infused into the mortal bodies and will come back after some period. It is evident that the mind in *Leg. All.* 1.31-32 refers also to the earthly mind, which does not have a fleshly body yet. It was not given to Adam until he was clothed with the garments of skin.

Thus, Philo fused Gen. 1:26 and Gen. 2:7 as complementary descriptions of the creation of the earthly soul of Adam, which is a mixture of rational and irrational impulses. Therefore, God could not create the human soul in Gen. 1:26 directly, but only through his assistants. Evidently, Philo followed

---

475 Tobin, *The Creation of Man*, 111.
Plato’s description in the *Timaeus* in which the creation of the irrational soul and the mortal parts of a human being was left for the “younger gods.” Philo says that the assistants were needed because it was not suitable for God’s goodness to create by himself a human mind which is dominated by morally vicious irrational impulses. However, Philo’s explanation of the co-creators is not found in Plato. These Philonic innovations parallel the Valentinian accounts, which describe the creation of the hylic-psychic soul of Adam in the light of the combination of Gen. 1:26 and Gen. 2:7. It was not the physical body of Adam, which the Demiurge created in Gen. 2:7, but his fine-material soul-body.

**Exc. Theod. 50**

*Taking dust from the earth: not of the dry earth but a portion of matter varied constitution and color, he fashioned a soul, earthly and material, irrational and consubstantial with that of the beasts.*

"Λαβὼν χοῦν ἀπὸ τῆς γῆς,” —οὓ τῆς ξηρᾶς, ἀλλὰ τῆς πολυμεροῦς καὶ ποικίλης ὑλῆς μέρος, —ψυχὴν γεώδη καὶ υλικὴν ἐτεκτήνατο ἄλογον καὶ τῇ τῶν θηρίων ὁμοούσιον.

---

476 *Opif.* 69-70. Philo says that Moses is speaking philosophically (ἐφιλοσόφει) in Gen. 1:26. It is rather likely that Philo had specifically in mind the cosmic myth described in Plato’s *Timaeus*. The plurality of the creators in Gen. 1:26 can be easily combined with Plato’s “younger gods” to whom the Demiurge delegated the task of creating the irrational soul and the material body. The “conversation with his powers” (διαλέγεται μὲν οὖν ὁ τῶν ὅλων πατὴρ ταῖς ἑαυτοῦ δυνάμεσιν) parallels Plato’s statement about the “speech” of the Demiurge to the younger gods. In his speech, the Demiurge delegates the task of creation of all the mortal genera, including the body and the irrational part of the human soul, to his assistants. In Philo’s account the motif of imitation of God’s skill (μιμουμέναις τὴν αὐτοῦ τέχνην) by the assistants of God comes from Plato’s cosmic myth where the “younger gods” imitated the Demiurge’s power in their creation (μιμούμενοι τὴν ἐμὴν δύναμιν περὶ τὴν ὑμετέραν γένεσιν). Philo’s teaching differs, however, from Plato’s cosmological myth. Firstly, in Plato’s system the creator God delegates a large part of the creative task to the “created gods” who create not only the irrational soul but all the mortal genera. In Philo, the powers have only a marginal role in the creation of the mortal part of the soul. God created the human body without any assistance. Secondly, the reason for making use of powers was according to Philo the fact that God cannot be the creator of the human soul, which can choose evil. God is according to Philo the source of good alone. In Plato’s cosmic myth there was no moral reasoning for the use of assistants of the creator. Thirdly, Philo maintained that the soul that was created by the powers of God contained both rational and irrational faculties, not only irrational ones as in Plato. Fourthly, the conception of the “powers” as co-creators of God is not explicitly mentioned by Plato. However, this can be deduced rather easily from Plato’s text in the *Timaeus*, which says the younger gods imitated the power of the Demiurge.
Having thus formed the world, he also created the earthly man, not taking him from this dry earth, but from an invisible substance consisting of fusible and fluid matter.

Δημιουργήσαντα δὴ τὸν κόσμον, πεποιηκέναι καὶ τὸν ἄνθρωπον τὸν χοϊκόν· οὐκ ἀπὸ ταύτης δὲ τῆς ἔφρας γῆς, ἀλλ’ ἀπὸ τῆς ἀοράτου οὐσίας, ἀπὸ τοῦ κεχυμένου καὶ ρευστοῦ τῆς ὑλῆς λαβόντα·

The term “earthly soul” (ψυχὴν γεώδη) attested in Exc. Theod. 50 parallels Philo’s earthly nous (νοῦς γεώδη), which was created from “dispersed matter” (σποράδος ὕλη). The term σποράς refers to “confusion” and “disorder.” Matter out of which the “earthly mind” was created was in a stage of confusion. In the conventional Platonic view, matter was in confusion before the cosmic elements were separated out of it by the Demiurge. This also parallels with Valentinian accounts which maintain that matter out of which the material soul was created was in a fusible stage. In Philo and Valentinian sources, Adam did not have a corporeal body until the female part of his soul was separated out of him and he was clothed with the garments of skin (Gen. 3:21). The allegory of the “garment of skin” is mentioned by Philo in QG 1.53:

Accordingly, the tunics of skin, if we judge truly, are to be considered a more precious possession than varicolored sides and purple stuff. So much, then, for the literal meaning. But according to the deeper meaning the tunic of skin is the natural skin of the body. For, when God formed the first mind, He called it Adam; then he formed the sense, which he called Life; in the third place, of necessity He made his body also, calling is symbolically a tunic of skin, for it was proper that the mind and sense should be clothed in the body as in a tunic of skin, in order that His handiwork might first appear worthy of the divine power.

The garment (χιτών) refers according to Philo to the “physical skin of the body.” The same allegory is attested in the Valentinian accounts of Clement and Irenaeus. The leather garment is mentioned in Exc. Theod. 55.1 in the list of categories of humans, i.e. the spirituals, psychics, and hylics. In addition to these, there is the fourth element of human beings, i.e. the garments of skin, which refers to the earthly body. In Irenaeus’s account, the garment of skin is mentioned at the end of the description of the creation of the first human being, which depicts the visible body.

---

477 Leather as a synonym for the body is attested in Leg. All. 3.69 (“a leather mass which covers us namely the body”), Post. 137 (“a leather bag of reasons that is to say the body”).
**Exc. Theod. 55.1**

Τοὶς τρισὶν ἀσωμάτοις ἐπὶ τοῦ Ἀδὰμ
tέταρτον πενδύεται ὁ χοῖκος, τοὺς
“δερματίνους χιτῶνας”.

**Iren. Haer. 1.5.5**

"Ὑστερον δὲ περιτεθεῖσθαι λέγουσιν
αὐτῷ τὸν δερμάτινον χιτῶνα· τοῦτο δὲ
tὸ αἰσθητὸν σαρκίον εἶναι λέγουσι.

The allegory of the garments of skin as a reference to the corporeal body is also attested in Hipp. Ref. 10.13.4 as a saying from Valentinus, although the authenticity of the saying is not sure: “He [Valentinus] supposes that flesh will not be saved and calls it ‘the garment of skin’ and ‘the corrupt human being.’” Also, Origen knew the same allegory, and it is mentioned in some rabbinic sources as well. It is rather likely that Origen got to know the allegory of the garment of skin from Philo’s writings, and there is no reason to suggest that the Valentinian teachers would have any other source for their teaching.

It is notable that in Philo the separation of the sexes, i.e. the separation of the mind and the sense perceptions, was not the reason for the embodiment of the soul, but Adam’s assimilation with the irrational soul, i.e. Eve. The embodiment was not the fall but the result or punishment of the fall of the rational soul. The return to pre-lapsarian unity was the reverse of the embodiment when the mind stops following the fleshly passions. This general framework parallels Valentinian anthropology in that the salvation was not seen as a return to the pre-lapsarian bodily existence but as a return to the pre-lapsarian non-bodily existence. The human soul was not saved in the body but from the body, when the rational soul is integrated to its heavenly counterpart.

**6.3.2 The heavenly man and the allegory of the soul in Philo**

Philo of Alexandria is the first ancient author who mentioned the heavenly man (ὁ οὐράνιος ἄνθρωπος) as an archetypical human being. It is not likely, however, that Philo would have invented the idea of the heavenly man, but got to know this teaching from the preceding Hellenistic Jewish tradition.

In Philo’s writings both the heavenly man and the Logos were located within the intelligible cosmos as paradigms for the earthly mind and both of them

---


479 The Jewish heavenly man -tradition had its basis in the mystical speculations of the throne vision in Ezek. 1:26, 28 according to which on the heavenly throne sat a figure “like that of a man” (εἶδος ἀνθρώπου) representing the likeness of the glory of the LORD. This led to a belief by some Jews of the anthropomorphic second power in heaven. See Ian K. Smith, *Heavenly Perspective: A Study of the Apostle Paul’s Response to a Jewish Mystical Movement at Colossae* (London: T&T Clark, 2006), 42-47. For the Jewish Merkabah-tradition see Gershom Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (New York: Schocken Books, 1995).
were not made, but born. This created some tension concerning the status of the heavenly man alongside of the Logos. The heavenly man was born as an image of the Logos, which means that also the Logos was “the archetypical man,” as explicitly stated in Conf. 146:

But if there be any as yet unfit to be called a son of God, let him press to take his place under the First-Born Logos, who holds the eldership among the angels, their ruler as it were. And many names are his, for he is called “Beginning,” and the Name of God and his Logos, and the Man after his image and “he that sees,” that is Israel.

Philo says that it was the Logos of God who is the “man” according to the image of God. He is also called “God’s man,” and the “Logos of the eternal God.” Therefore, the image of the Logos is also “man,” because the archetypical pattern, i.e. the Logos, was the “man” as well. Philo maintains, however, that the heavenly man was not a paradigm or archetype for the earthly soul, but “anagogic, that is, the guiding divine power by which the human mind is enabled to ascend toward God.” The heavenly man himself remains undescended, and the soul of Adam contains only a fragrance of him through the breath of God, which connects the earthly mind to the heavenly yearning of the Logos. As the heavenly man desires and imitates his model, i.e. the Logos, this desiring becomes an ethical paradigm for the earthly mind. Thus, the innate desire for the heavenly model, i.e. the Logos, was mediated to Adam’s soul through the breath of God (Gen. 2:7). Philo says, however, that the spirit of God was not “air in motion but a certain impression and character of divine power, which Moses calls by an appropriate name image.” Philo made, however, a distinction between the spirit and the breath. While the heavenly man participated in the spirit perfectly, the earthly mind participated only as a breeze of the spirit or fragrance of the divinity. This distinction would imply that the image of

---

480 Philo says in Leg. All. 2.4 (cf. Leg. All. 1.31-32 above) that there are two races of men: one born according to an image and the other created out of earth (δύο γὰρ ἀνθρώπων γέγονεν καὶ τὸ πεπλασμένον ἐκ γῆς).

481 Conf. 40-41.

482 Tobin, The Creation of Man, 141. Tobin maintains that Philo identified the heavenly man with the Logos. In my opinion the passages referred to by Tobin do not confirm this interpretation (cf. Conf. 40-41, 62-63, 146-147). I suggest that the heavenly man and the Logos were two distinct beings. The fact that Philo also calls the Logos “man” does not mean that the Logos and the heavenly man are identical, but the former was an image of the latter. It is notable that in Leg. All. 1.43 Philo also associates Wisdom with the heavenly man. For Tobin’s argument, cf. Tobin, The Creation of Man, 102-108, 118-119, 139-142. Dillon notices similarities between Philo’s heavenly man and the “essential man” in the Hermetic Tradition in Poimandres, 12-15. Cf. Dillon, The Middle Platonists, 174-176.

483 Tobin, The Creation of Man, 118-119.

484 The metaphor of fragrance as a representation of spiritual presence is also found in Tri.Trac. 71.35-72, which describes how the Spirit of the Father is breathed through the members of the
the heavenly man was not mediated through the rational spirit to Adam in its entirety, but it was present in the soul of Adam, and his descendants as well, only potentially to be perfected through learning and practice.485

These exegetical innovations formed the basis for Philo’s allegory of the soul. The heavenly man, who was born as an image of the Logos, was not an archetype of the earthly soul in a strict Platonic sense, but he became an ethical goal for the earthly mind or the personification of the virtuous soul. Philo formulates the allegory of the soul in Leg. All. 53-55, Q.G. 1.8 and Plant. 44-46. In these passages, he distinguishes the human being who was placed in the garden to guard it (Gen. 2:15) from the one who was only placed in the garden (Gen. 2:8). The former was identified with the human being according to the image (Gen. 1:27), who “is in need of nothing, but is self-hearing and self-taught and self-instructed.” The latter was identified with the “molded mind” (ὁ πλαστὸς νοῦς), the “earthly and perishable mind” (ὁ γήνικος καὶ φθαρτὸς νοῦς) and the middle mind (ὁ μέσος νοῦς). He is progressing to become the human being according to the image, who is the real cultivator of the trees of wisdom in Paradise.486

6.3.3 The heavenly man and the free speech of Adam in Valentinian sources

The Valentinian accounts investigated above do not explicitly mention the heavenly man as an archetype for the mind of the earthly Adam. The Valentinian accounts mention the angels of the Savior as archetypes for the spiritual part of the human soul. There is, however, one fragment from Valentinus in which the figure of the pre-existent man appears in the context of creation of Adam by the angels. Clement of Alexandria has preserved this passage in Strom. II 36.2-4.487

Pleroma. The fragrance of the Spirit gave an innate inclination for searching the source of the fragrance. The Father revealed himself through the spirit and presented himself as something to be reflected upon and sought after, but he did not want the aeons to know him perfectly. Fragrance as a metaphor for the children of the Father is also attested in the Gospel of Truth. 1.3.34. (cf. Dunderberg, “The Stoic Tradition,” 224). In 2. Cor. 2:14-16 Paul also used the metaphor of fragrance denoting the spiritual essence of the believers.

485 Det. 83; Leg. All. 1.42.

486 In Somn. 1.150 Philo compares the person who practices virtue with the person who goes up and down on a ladder. The wise are continually going upwards even though they may sometimes fall, but the wicked will receive their share in Hades “having been from their infancy to their old age familiarized with destruction.” The soteriological issues are handled in the next chapter.

487 Clement says that the fragment is a direct quotation from Valentinus’s letter. Thomassen suggests that Valentinus is possibly referring to an already existing and well-known narrative or he may have explained the story earlier in the letter. Cf. Thomassen, The Spiritual Seed, 431.
And just as in the presence of that modelled figure fear fell on the angels when it emitted sounds that surpassed its modelling, because of the one who had invisibly deposited in it a seed of the substance above and openly spoke, thus also among the generations of cosmic humans the works of humans become objects of fear for those who make them, as in the case of statues, images and everything that have been fashioned in the name of God. For having been modeled in the name of the Man, Adam caused fear of the pre-existent Man, since he in fact was present in him. So they were terrified and quickly did away with their work.488

The biblical context of this teaching is evidently Gen. 2:7 which describes the creation of a human being out of earth. Neither the plurality of the creators nor of angels is mentioned in this passage. This implies that Gen. 2:7 is connected to the creation narrative of Gen. 1:26, where the plurality of the creators (“Let us create...”) appears.489 It seems, thus, that Valentinus’s teaching parallels with the teaching attested in Exc. Theod. 50-51 and Iren. Haer. 1.5.5, which connects Gen. 1:26 and Gen. 2:7 as complementary descriptions of the creation of the earthly soul.490 There are, however, some elements in Valentinus’s fragment that distinguish it from these accounts. Firstly, Valentinus does not mention the Demiurge as the creator of Adam, but the angels alone. Secondly, the generation of the seed of the higher essence is not mentioned, and it is not told, how the seed was inserted into the soul of Adam and who was in charge of the implantation of the seed.491

488 Translated by Einar Thomassen in The Spiritual Seed, 430-431 with slight modifications.
489 In the accounts of Clement and Irenaeus, the co-creators of the Demiurge are not explicitly mentioned. In Irenaeus’s version, the Demiurge is called the Hebdomad, which refers to the ruler of the seven heavens, also depicted as angels (Iren. Haer. 1.5.2; Hipp. Haer. 6.32.7.) It is, then, possible that the Demiurge created the human hylic-psychic soul of Adam together with his planetary powers. In Exc. C the angels are mentioned as mediators of the psychic essence, but not its creators. In the Tripartite Tractate (105-106) the two ranks of powers, the ones on the right and the ones on the left, created the soul of Adam together with the Demiurge, but it was the Logos who breathed life into the soul. In addition to Adam, who possessed all soul-elements within himself, the Demiurge created human beings of his own as well as those on the left according to imitation, which may refer to the motif of “imitation” of the younger gods in Plato’s Timaeus.
490 It is not clear what Valentinus meant by saying that the angels “did away” their work (τὸ ἐργὸν ἠφάνισαν). The most probable interpretation would be that the angels sent their psychic protoplast into the lowest region of matter, which means that Adam was clothed with a body made out of elements of the world. This parallels not only the Valentinian accounts of Irenaeus and Clement but the corresponding creation account in the Sethian Apocryphon of John.
491 Although the context of Valentinus’s fragment is evidently Gen. 2:7, the breath of the Demiurge is not mentioned. The seed is inserted in Adam’s soul by the male agent, which quite likely refers to the pre-existent man himself. Thomassen suggests that Valentinus’s fragment parallels Exc.Theod. 2:3 according to which a male figure – not Sophia – is the one who deposits the seed into Adam’s soul. Cf. Thomassen, The Spiritual Seed, 434-435, especially note 18.
Thirdly, in the later Valentinian tradition, the motifs of fear, envy or any hostile reaction toward Adam by the Demiurge or his co-creators faded away as well as the role of the angels in the formation of Adam’s earthly soul-body.492

Valentinus’s fragment can be interpreted according to the double creation model attested in the writing of Philo. Although the angels were unable to create the copy of the pre-existent man, their task was perfected by the man himself, who deposited the seed of the higher essence in angel’s protoplast. In Philo’s double creation theory, the comparison is made between two categories of human beings (διττὰ ἀνθρώπων γένη): the heavenly man (ὁ οὐρανιὸς ἄνθρωπος) that is not made (οὐ πεπλάσθαι), and the earthly man (ὁ γῆινος). The latter is a protoplast which is not born but is instead created by the maker (τὸ πλάσμα, ἀλλ’ οὐ γέννημα, εἶναι τοῦ τεχνίτου). In Valentinus’s fragment, the comparison is made between the human being that is made in the name of “man” (ὄνομα ἄνθρωπον πλασθείς) and the pre-existent man (προόντος ἄνθρωπος) who has his existence in Adam through the seed of higher essence (σπέρμα τῆς ἄνωθεν οὐσίας).493

Although Valentinus’s fragment lacks most of the characteristics of the Valentinian anthropological accounts in Iren. Haer. 1.1-7 and Exc. C, it is, however, compatible with them. It is rather easy to notice that the pre-existent man in Valentinus’s fragment parallels the Savior and his angels, which served as archetypes for the seed of Sophia. The Savior himself was an offspring of the Pleroma and he can be considered together with his angels as

492 The expression “to model in the name of man” does not refer to creation according to the image of man, but to make something in honor of somebody. Whereas works and statues are made in the honor of God, the angels made the protoplast in honor of the pre-existent man. This would mean that the angels knew the existence of the pre-existent man, but they were not aware of his spiritual substance as the pre-existent man revealed himself in the angels’ creation. The modeling of the protoplast and the depositing of the seed of the higher essence was actualized simultaneously. Although Valentinus compares the idols and their makers, it is not likely that he would have meant that the cult statues contain spiritual power. Valentinus’s intention was to show that the objects of the statues are higher than those who made them. Therefore, an awe can be felt before them, not because of the statues themselves, but because of the gods they represent. Cf. Dunderberg, Beyond Gnosticism, 48; Thomassen, The Spiritual Seed, 435-436.

493 According to Schenke’s analysis, the Gnostic texts can be divided into two groups in terms of the conception of the Primal Anthropos. In some texts God is regarded as Primal Anthropos and the earthly human beings are fashioned as copies of it. In some other texts there is in addition to these figures the “second” Primal Anthropos that serves as an archetype for the earthly anthropoi. H-M Schenke, Der Gott “Mensch” in der Gnosis, 23 and the discussion in Tobin, The Creation of Man, 102-108. For the Jewish origin of the idea of Primal Anthropos, cf. C. H. Dodd, The Bible and the Greeks (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1934), 146; R. McL. Wilson, “The Early History of the Exegesis of Gen. 1:26,” Studia Patristica I (eds. K. Alan and F. L. Cross; Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1957) 420-437.
an image of the aeon “man-ecclesia.”494 The Savior and his angels represented collectively the “archetypical man” who served as an archetype for Sophia’s emanation. The aeon “man-ecclesia” represented the whole Pleroma, which dwelled in the Savior as he descended to the suffering Sophia. It can be said that the Pleroma is a multiple entity, which manifests itself simultaneously as one and many and in some Valentinian systems the Pleroma is depicted simply as Man.495 In Irenaeus’s account the spiritual seed is called an “inner man” and an “image of the ecclesia above” and it can be equated with the seed of the higher essence in Valentinus’s fragment.

The patterns of interpretation in these Valentinian accounts parallel Philo, who considered the heavenly man as an image of the Logos, which is also depicted as Man. In the Valentinian system, the Savior and his angels can be equated with Philo’s heavenly man, and the aeon “man-ecclesia” with the Logos. As in Philo, the presence of the heavenly man, i.e. the Savior and his angels, was mediated to Adam’s soul through the breath of the Demiurge. In Philo’s system, the breath of God mediates the fragrance of the spirit, which means that the image of the heavenly man was only partially present in Adam’s soul. This parallels the Valentinian model according to which the breath of the Demiurge mediates only an image of the heavenly man, i.e the spiritual seed, which must be perfected through knowledge. Both in Philo and Valentinian sources, the archetypical identities, i.e. the heavenly man and the angels of the Savior, were undescended but remained in the heavenly realm as higher identities for the earthly minds.

In addition to the affinities with the Jewish heavenly man —traditions, Valentinus’s fragment parallels the creation of Adam in the Sethian Apocryphon of John.496 It is rather likely that both Valentinus and the author of the Apocryphon of John made use of a similar kind of Jewish exegetical tradition which taught that Adam was spiritually superior to the angels that fashioned his body.497 There are, however, noticeable differences about the

494 Exc. Theod. 43.2-5; Iren. Haer. 1.2.6. The joint fruit of Pleroma is Jesus, but he is also called the Savior, the Christ, the Logos and the All. In Tri. Trac. 66.10-12 the Savior is the image of the Father and the whole.

495 Iren. Haer. 1.4.5; 1.5.6. Cf. Thomassen, The Spiritual Seed, 437-442.

496 A similar kind of account concerning Adam’s creation is found in the Gospel of Philip 70:22-30. In both Ap.John and Gos.Phil. the creator angels became envious of Adam. In Ap.John, the reason for envy was Adam’s intelligence, whereas in Gos.Phil. the reason was the fact that Adam’s words were superior to their powers. In both cases, it was not Adam’s frank speech as such which created fear, but the intelligence or intellectual nature of his speak which caused envy. It is quite likely that these motifs circulated in the Hellenistic Jewish exegetical tradition, which were taken over both Gnostic and Valentinian groups without literal dependency. The motif of the fear of the angels in the creation of Adam is also attested in Orig.World II 115:11-30. The reason for fear was not, however, Adam’s intelligence or his speech, but his ability to move. Cf. Thomassen, The Spiritual Seed, 445-447.

497 Dunderberg, Beyond Gnosticism, 51-52; Thomassen, The Spiritual Seed, 450-451. It is highly unlikely that the Apocryphon of John would have been dependent on Valentinus. There are some

reason for the angels’ malevolent acts in Valentinus’s fragment and the Apocryphon of John. In Valentinus’s fragment, the angels feared Adam, while in the Sethian narrative they were jealous. Furthermore, in the Apocryphon of John the jealousy was caused by Adam’s better understanding, while Valentinus maintained that it was Adam’s “free speaking” that caused the fear of angels.498

Ismo Dunderberg has pointed out that the differences between Valentinus and Sethian mythology can be explained as Valentinus’s modifications that go back to the vindication of the righteous in the Book of Wisdom (5:1-2). The righteous people speak boldly in the presence of those who suppress them, which parallels the idea of frank speech in Valentinus’s fragment.499

There is not, however, a notion of frank speech in front of suppressors as in the Book of Wisdom, but it is the frank speech itself that caused the fear and suppression of Adam.

The motif of parrhesia is also frequently mentioned in Philo’s writings. In Philo, frank speech is a divine virtue that belongs to God (Sac. 66), whose “words can outstrip and overtake everything,” but it also characterizes a virtuous soul who is “filled with the graces of God” (Ebr. 150). Philo maintained, however, that frank speech is not so much about speaking boldly in front of enemies but speaking freely among friends of God. (Her. 6, 21, 24). Philo says that it is not wise to speak boldly or arrogantly in front of suppressors. It is wise to be silent in front of enemies (Somn. 2. 83-85, 92). Philo maintains that it is the lack of fear that made Abraham capable of free speech when he asked boldly from God: “what do you give to me” (Gen. 15:1-2). Noble souls possess something authoritative within them, which is not obscured even before those who are high in rank. Philo mentions Calanus, a gymnosophist, and Choereas, a zealous follower of Diogenes the cynic, as examples of freedom of speech and human equality (Prob. 95, 125-126).

It is possible that Valentinus elaborated the Gnostic creation narratives in the light of the Hellenistic Jewish Wisdom theology attested in the Book of Wisdom and Philo’s writings. However, Valentinus might have known a somewhat different kind of Gnostic myth, which predated the Sethian version of it in the Apocryphon of John and related texts. In particular Valentinus expounded the motif of the fear of the creator angels, which the “free speech” of Adam caused. The parrhesia of Adam caused fear among the creator angels because they were not equal to the pre-existent human, who

498 Dundeberg, Beyond Gnosticism, 49-52. It is not clear who was the agent of the “free speaking”. The two possibilities are the seed and the one who was charged with the implantation of the seed. Thomassen suggests that the latter option is the most probable (cf. Thomassen, The Spiritual Seed, 443). I would suggest that the former view is more likely: the agent of free speaking was the molded human being, who possessed higher authority as a result of his spiritual essence.

499 Dundeberg, Beyond Gnosticism, 50.
was present in Adam and who could speak as freely with God as if he were with friends. Adam’s speech was not directed to the creator angels, but he talked friendly with the highest God which caused fear among the angels. Free speech was a mark of divine virtue and co-substantiality with the supreme God who was present in Adam’s soul. This kind of free speech revealed the inferior rank of the angels and caused fear. They were fearful before God, but at the same time they were jealous of Adam, who possessed the seed of higher essence in his soul.

6.4 Valentinus’s psalm *Harvest* and its intellectual background

There is still one further fragment from Valentinus which should be handled in an anthropological context and which indicate the use of Hellenistic Jewish exegetical traditions. It is the fragment called *Harvest*, which was composed by Valentinus and is in Hipp. *Ref. VI 37:7.*

Θέρος

πάντα κρεμάμενα πνεύματι βλεπω, πάντα δ’ ὀχούμενα πνεύματι νοῶ· σάρκα μὲν ἐκ ψυχῆς κρεμαμένην, ψυχὴν δ’ ἀέρος ἐξεχομένην, ἀέρα δ’ ἐξ αἰθρῆς κρεμαμένον· ἐκ δὲ βυθοῦ καρποὺς φερομένους, ἐκ μήτρας δὲ βρέφος φερόμενον

*Harvest*

*All things hanging in Spirit I see. All things carried in Spirit I know.*

*Flesh from soul hanging. Soul from air proceeding. Air from ether hanging. Fruit borne from the deep. Child borne from the womb.*

As a literary work, the composition of the psalm reflects artistic skill and the conventions of Greek meter. The consensus is that the psalm itself is an authentic literary work of Valentinus. According to patristic evidence, Valentinus wrote psalms and the author of the Canon Muratori mentions


501 McGowan has pointed out that the “mouse-tailed” verses indicate a somewhat inspirational intensity or, at least, a certain spontaneity. It is possible that the psalm was an outcome of prophetic inspiration experienced within communal service or composed to be used in that kind of context. (McGowan, “Valentinus Poeta,” 159). The spirit mentioned in the opening two lines must be interpreted as an instrumental dative, but it is not clear whether it depicts the bond described in lines 3-5 or a mode of “seeing” and “understanding” in lines 1-2. I suggest that the former alternative is more credible. The author of the psalm describes how things are (“I see all things are carried in/through spirit”), not the way he sees them (“I see in spirit”). Layton interprets the sentence according to the latter option: “I see in spirit…I know in spirit.” Cf. Layton, *Gnostic Scriptures*, 246-8.
Valentinus’s psalm book, which was banned from the list of canonical Scriptures.\(^502\) It is not clear, however, whether the commentary that follows the psalm comes from Valentinus. It may come from the followers of Valentinus or from Hippolytus himself.\(^503\) In the commentary the “growing of the fruits” and “generation of a child” depict allegorically the generation within transcendent reality. Valentinus’s psalm would parallel the *Tripartite Tractate* in which the themes of “womb,” “fruits” and a “child” are used as metaphorical descriptions of the generation of the aeons of the Pleroma.\(^504\) I suggest, however, that the main message of the psalm is fundamentally anthropological. Rather than describing the generation of the aeons within the transcendental level, Valentinus’s psalm describes the condition of the human soul which is associated with the structure of the cosmos.\(^505\) The closest parallels with Valentinus’s psalm are Philo’s allegories of the Temple and the High Priest in which the human soul is seen as a microcosmic representation of the cosmos. As the cosmos is harmoniously bound together through the Logos, at an anthropological level the same function has been

---

502 Thomassen, “Going to Church with the Valentinians,” 185-186.
503 Einar Thomassen suggests that it is difficult to believe that Valentinus or anyone within his school could have confused the immaterial Pleroma with the ether as is the case in the commentary that follows Valentinus’s psalm (cf. Thomassen, *The Spiritual Seed*, 480, note 124). Dunderberg does not rule out the possibility that someone within the school of Valentinus may have written the commentary that follows the psalm. Cf. Dunderberg, *Beyond Gnosticism*, 62-63; McGowan, “Valentinus Poeta,” 166-167.
504 The expression ἐκ δὲ at the beginning of lines 6-7 indicates that they are contrasted with the preceding text (cf. Thomassen, *The Spiritual Seed*, 484-485). Also, the change of the term κρεμαννύναι to φέρειν implies that there is an ontological difference how the certain elements depended on each other. While the flesh and air were both “hanging” from the “higher” elements and the spirit carries all the elements, the fruits from the depth and a child from the womb were “brought forth” as a process of generation. McGowan suggests that the verbs used in the opening lines 1-2 describe the ontological shift between lines 5-6. The participle κρεμάμενα implies suspension from above (lines 3-5), whereas ὀχούμενα describes support from below (lines 6-7). These two modes of “dependency” necessitate different kinds of intellectual activity: the author of the psalm sees the things that are hanging (βλέπειν) while he knows the things carried (νοεῖν). The latter phrase refers to the intelligible realm which can be known, although it is not perceptible. Although this interpretation may contain some credibility, it is noticeable that the verbs κρεμάμενα and ὀχούμενα are closely connected with each other in the account of Philo in *Mos. 2*. 121 – as Thomassen correctly observes (cf. also McGowan, “Valentinus Poeta,” 161-163). Although these notions indicate that the last two sentences describe something different than the previous lines, it does not refer necessarily to transcendent reality. It is just as possible that the end of the psalm is grammatically distinguished from the other part of the text to separate the ethical cultivation of human soul (lines 6-7) from the speculation of the bond within the elements of human beings (lines 3-5).
reserved for the Spirit. The bearing of fruit and producing offspring does not depict the generations within the transcendent realm, as is suggested in the commentary that follows the psalm, but they can be understood in the light of Philo’s allegories concerning the cultivation of trees of wisdom within the human soul, producing fruits and bearing children by the spirit.

6.4.1 The cosmic sympathy of the soul

Although Valentinus’s psalm contains some well-known cosmic elements, it is not likely that he would have intended to describe solely the structure of the cosmos. This would have meant that Valentinus had changed the ancient theory of the cosmic elements significantly. Flesh takes the place of water and earth, and the world soul is set below air and ether. It is difficult to find any reason for such a confusion. It is unlikely that Valentinus would have mistakenly confused these elements.506

The key elements in Valentinus’s psalm are the flesh, the soul, ether, and the Spirit. It is noticeable that the flesh and air both hung (κρεμάννυμι) from higher elements – the flesh from the soul and air from ether – but the soul is not hanging, but it is proceeding (ἐξεχομένη) from air.507 It is unlikely that Valentinus thought that the essence of the soul is air from which it comes. It is more likely that air in Valentinus’s psalm refers to the cosmic region of air. Valentinus may have been influenced by the theory mentioned in Philo’s writings according to which the location of pre-natal souls before their incarnation was not the firmament as in Plato (Tim. 41d) but the region of air (Plant. 14; cf. also Somn. I 135-136).508

506 Ismo Dunderberg has pointed out various similarities between Valentinus’s psalm and some Hermetic passages that describe the cosmic bond that is carried by the spirit. In CH 12.14 “the finest matter is air, the finest air is soul, the finest soul is mind, and the finest mind is god.” It is likely that Valentinus may have had some knowledge of Hermetic cosmology in addition to Philo’s teachings that he used for his poetic vision of the structure of the world and its microcosmi representation. Cf. Dunderberg, Beyond Gnosticism, 66.

507 The term ἐξέχειν in Valentinus’s psalm is used e.g. for the shining of the sun (cf. McGowan, “Valentinus Poeta,” 175 note 51). In Philo, it is used to describe how the branches of the Menorah project out on each side (Her. 218) and for Onan’s spilling seed upon the ground (Post. 180).

508 The region of air as an abode of spiritual beings is also attested in some Stoic sources. David Winston points out that Sextus Empiricus (Math. 9.87) also reports that the Stoics were of the opinion that if there are living beings in the air, there must also be living beings in the ethereal realm as well, and it is from the ether that human beings derive their intellectual power. Sami Yli-Karjanmaa points out that the notion of the air being filled with souls may be originally Pythagorean. The idea was known already during the Old Academy, but it seems not to have attained a position of an essential doctrine. Cf. Yli-Karjanmaa, Philo and Reincarnation, 134. It was common in the Platonic tradition to suggest that the soul adopts different kinds of instrumental bodies during its prenatal descent into the world (cf. Plot. Enn. IV 3:15). The “body” of the soul becomes heavier and visible when it descends from the firmament through the regions of ether and air into the corporeal body. During the incarnation, the
Of twofold kind were the beings which the great Maker made as well in the earth as in the air. In the air He made the winged creatures perceived by our senses, and other mighty beings besides which are wholly beyond apprehension by sense. This is the host of the bodiless souls. Their array is made up of companies that differ in kind. We are told that some enter into mortal bodies, and quit them again at certain fixed periods, while others, endowed with a diviner constitution, have no regard for any earthly quarter, but exist on high nigh to the ethereal region itself. These are the purest spirits of all, whom Greek philosophers call heroes, but whom Moses, employing a well-chosen name, entitles “angels,” for they go on embassies bearing tidings from the great Ruler to His subjects of the boons which He sends them, and reporting to the Monarch what His subjects are in need of.

In Valentinus’s psalm the Spirit is not dependent on any of the cosmic elements, but it binds all things flesh, soul, air, and ether together. This parallels Philo’s anthropological teachings according to which the intellect of the soul, i.e. its rational Spirit (λογικοῦ πνεύματος), rules human beings, the body and the soul, and binds the elements of the soul into a harmonious whole. For Philo, the spirit is a synonym for the intellect, because it is able to generate thoughts. In the human soul the task of the Spirit is to vivify the soul experiences a cooling process when it mingles with the air. The Greek word for the soul (ψυχή) can be derive from the word “cold” (ψῦχος) or “to make cool” (ψυχεῖν). The theory of the cooling down of the soul is also attested in Philo (Somn. 1.31) and Origen (Princ. 2.8.3). Cf. Dunderberg, “The Stoic Traditions,” 223.

509 In Det. 82-84, Philo divides the soul of human beings into two parts according to the sacred number two. On the one hand, human beings possess an irrational soul similar to that of the animals. On the other hand, they have a rational soul, which is an image of God’s mind. While the irrational part is related to the vivifying (ζωτική) power and it has blood for its essence, the rational (λογική) faculty is spiritual and it is associated with ether. In QG 2.59 Philo divides the soul into three parts. The soul has nutritive, sensitive and rational parts. The nutritive and sensitive soul parts are related to the flesh and blood, which contain the senses and passions. These lower elements of the soul lack intellectuality and thoughts, which belong to the rational soul alone. The blood of the flesh contains air, which is mingled with blood in different degrees. The amount of air in the blood has an influence on the temperament of human being. Philo explains that there are different kinds of blood vessels through which the blood is mingled with the air. The veins with a pulse, i.e. the arteries, contain less blood and more pure and unmixed air, whereas the veins that lack the pulse contain less breath, i.e. air, and more blood. The differences concerning the amount of air in the blood also have an ethical dimension. Courage is related to the warm and fiery blood, which contains more air. The soul which is full of courage despises all food and the luxuries of life. The one who has a low amount of spirit in the blood is a wanderer, who becomes lazy and inactive because of an interest in the luxurious life. The same kind of teaching is attested in the Hermetic passage in CH 10.13 according to which it is erroneous to think that the soul is the blood, but it is “the breath passing through veins, arteries and blood that sets the living being in motion and in a manner supports it.” Cf. Dunderberg, Beyond Gnosticism, 65.
mind, which in turn vivifies the subordinate parts, i.e. the irrational soul and body.\textsuperscript{510} In Leg. All. 3.161 Philo say that the soul is of ether, being a fragment (ἀπόσπασμα) of the Deity. It was common among Middle Platonic philosophers to suppose that the intellect of the human soul was made out of \textit{quinta essentia}, i.e. ether, out of which also the heavenly bodies were made.\textsuperscript{511} In most cases Philo adopted this view. The soul-bodies of the cosmic intellects, i.e. the stars and planets, were made out of ether.\textsuperscript{512} Also the intellect of the human soul was clothed with the ethereal soul-body similar to that of the heavenly bodies.\textsuperscript{513} Thus, the sympathy of the soul has an equivalent in the sympathy of the cosmos. While the soul is ruled by the Spirit, the cosmos is ruled by the Logos. These notions can be found in Philo’s allegories of the Tabernacle and the High Priest, which signify allegorically the structures of the cosmos and the human soul.

\section*{6.4.2 The soul as a Temple of God}
Philo maintained that the creation of the Tabernacle was a symbolic re-enactment of the creation of the world.\textsuperscript{514} Philo says in Spec. 1.66 that the highest and truest Temple of God is the whole universe. The sanctuary, i.e. the Holy of Holy, is heaven, the votive offerings are the stars, and priests are the angels, who are pure intelligences in the likenesses of the Monad.\textsuperscript{515} In

\begin{footnotes}
\footnote{510}{Leg. All. 1.40.}
\footnote{511}{Merlan, “Greek Philosophy,” 40ff; Luttikhuizen, \textit{Gnostic Revisions}, 37-39. The identification of the essence of the intellect of the soul with the \textit{quinta essentia} of the celestial gods is mentioned by Cicero: “If there is a kind of fifth nature, first introduced by Aristotle, this is the nature of gods and souls” (\textit{Tusc} I 10,22; 26, 65-66).}
\footnote{512}{In addition to the four cosmic elements (earth, water, air and fire) Philo supposed the existence of a fifth element, ether, although, according to Philo the exact essence of that element is mysteriously hidden from humans. The old Stoa parted from Aristotle by suggesting that ether was not a cosmic element of its own, but simply a purer form of fire. It became, however, common within Middle Platonic circles since Antiochus of Ascalon to regard ether as \textit{quinta essentia} that forms the \textit{substratum} of the soul or \textit{nous}. For Philo, ether was the substance of the visible heaven, the boundary that separates the intelligible world from the visible cosmos. The heaven and the cosmic bodies were made out of pure and unmixed ethereal essence (cf. Cher. 21-24; Opif. 27). Although Philo taught that the moon is made out of ether, the black – or dark blue – spots consist of air. Cf. Winston, \textit{Logos}, 64-65, note 3; Tobin, \textit{The Creation of Man}, 82-84; Wolfson, \textit{Philo I}, 394-395.}
\footnote{513}{Philo says, however, that the rational spirit as the effulgence of the nature of God himself was something even more divine than ethereal substance (Spec. 4.123). Cf. Tobin, \textit{The Creation of Man}, 92.}
\footnote{514}{Mos. 2.74-76. Cf. Stefan Nordgaard Svendsen, \textit{Allegory Transformed. The Appropriation of Philonic Hermeneutics in the Letter to the Hebrews}. Ph.D. Dissertation, Biblical Studies Section, Faculty of Theology, University of Copenhagen, 2007, 158-162.}
\footnote{515}{Winston, \textit{Philo of Alexandria}, 279, cf. also notes 640-641. Although Philo did not neglect the importance of the cultic observances in the Temple, it is evident that it became rather common among the Jewish communities in Diaspora to regard prayer and virtuous life as a replacement for the}

Her. 112-113 Philo explains that the Tabernacle is a representation of the soul. Philo interprets the phrase “the tabernacle was set up in the midst of our uncleanness” to mean the purification of the soul “after washing off and purging away all that sullies our life.” The highest part of the human soul can become an animate Shrine of the Father if he is properly initiated. Accordingly, Philo states in QE 2.54 that the inner part of the Ark of the Covenant in the Holy of Holies is equated with the rational mind, which adorns and controls the outer, i.e. the body and sense perceptions.

In Fug. 72 Philo says that the High Priest is the representation of the Logos that is clothed with the elements of the world, being the bond of everything that holds all things together and prevents them from being loosened. Philo also compares the pure mind to the High Priest, whose physical perfection refers to the purity of the soul. The High Priest is a symbol of the perfect sage, who is free from grief and any other passions and who worships the “Truly Existent” on behalf of the whole world. Philo equates the High Priest with the angels who are pure intellects serving God. Philo maintains that everyone who obeys right reason has the potential of becoming the High Priest of his own soul.

Valentinus’s psalm can be understood in the light of Philo’s allegories of the Tabernacle and the High Priest in which the sympathy of the soul and the sympathy of the cosmos are intertwined. In Mos. 2.121-127 Philo explains that the vestments of the High Priest depicts the harmony of the cosmos. The tunic of the High Priest symbolizes the element of air, being the color of the hyacinth. In the hem of the tunic is attached a fringe of pomegranates, and flowers and bells, which symbolize earth and water. The mantle over the tunic is a representation of heaven, i.e. ether, and the breast-plate (τὸ λογεῖον) is a symbol of the firmament and an emblem of reason, which regulates the whole universe. In Philo’s allegory of the vestments of the High Priest, the lowest cosmic elements, earth and water, hang from air, for air is their chariot (καὶ ἀτ’ ἀέρος τρόπον τινὰ γῆ καὶ ἰδωρ ἐκκρέμαται, τὸ γὰρ ὅχημα τούτων ἐστὶν ἄρπ). This is reflected in Valentinus’s psalm in which “flesh hangs from the soul” (σάρκα μὲν ἐκ ψυχῆς κρεμαμένην), which proceeds from the region of air (ψυχὴν δ’ ἀέρος ἐξεχομένην). Air, in turn, hangs from ether (ἄερα δ’ ἐξ αἰθρῆς κρεμάμενον). The Spirit is not a separate essence of the soul, but it

sacrifices of the Temple. The human mind can be in contact with the Creator without entering into the Temple of Jerusalem by contemplating himself and the universe. Cf. Wolfson, Philo II, 237-252. Philo is not consistent in his allegories, because in QE 2.68-69 the Holy of Holies does not depict heaven as in Spec. 1.66, but is a symbol of the world of Ideas. The Holy Place refers to heaven and the outer section the world below the moon.

516 Fug. 72, 108-112.
carries the flesh and the soul into harmony like the High Priest, who clothes
the whole cosmos through his vestments.

Although Valentinus’s psalm does not explicitly mention the Temple, it is
attested in Heracleon’s allegory concerning the purification of the Temple by
the Savior.\textsuperscript{519} For Heracleon, the Temple of Jerusalem serves as an image of
the human soul which is seized by bodily passions. The purification of the
Temple means annihilation of bodily passions through the Spirit and
entering into the Holy of Holies, where the union with the Pleroma will be
actualized. This parallels the passage in the \textit{Gospel of Philip} according to
which the Holy of Holies refers to the Bridal Chamber, where the soul is
married to her angelic counterpart.\textsuperscript{520} These notions parallel Philo who
maintained that the virtuous soul can become the Shrine of the Father when
it controls fleshly passions through the enlightened intellect. It is rather
likely that Heracleon draws from similar kinds of allegorical traditions which
saw the structure of the Temple as an image of the soul and the ruling part of
the soul as an image of the High Priest. It is not contrary to reason to suggest
that Valentinus’s psalm was also composed in the light of these Hellenistic
Jewish archetypes attested in Philo’s works or it can at least be interpreted
rather successfully in that way.

\subsection*{6.4.3 The Spirit as a bond of the human soul and the cultivator of the
trees of virtue}

Philo divides the functioning of the \textit{Logos} into two realms. The division was
based on the creation of the intelligible cosmos in \textit{Opif}. 30 according to
which the \textit{intelligible light} and \textit{intelligible spirit} were given predominance

\textsuperscript{519} Orig. \textit{In Jo. X}; fragments 11-16 Vö. Heracleon taught that the resurrection of the Savior was a
symbol of the spiritual resurrection of the \textit{ecclesia}, which replaced the psychic Temple in Jerusalem.
Thomassen stresses that “it would not be justified to infer that Heracleon attributes to the resurrection
of Jesus only a symbolic significance, with no redemptive effect in itself ... In fact we have already seen
how the incarnation, the passion and the death of Jesus possess a salvific effect for Heracleon by virtue

\textsuperscript{520} \textit{GPhil} 69-70. Strikingly, the Temple is not divided in this passage into two sections (the Holy
building and the Holy of Holies) as usual, but there are three chambers, which refer to baptism (the
Holy Building), ransom (the Holy of the Holy) and the bridal chamber (the Holy of Holies). It is likely
that the porch is counted here as a separate room. Philo also mentions three sections in \textit{Mos}. 2. 101,
but he describes the Tabernacle, not the Temple in Jerusalem, like the passage in the \textit{Gospel of Philip}.
In \textit{Exc. Theod}. 38 the allegory of the Temple is related to the ascent of the pneumatics to the Pleroma.
Jesus is identified with the High Priest who is allowed to enter into the Holy of Holies. Strikingly, the
Holy of Holies does not depict the Pleroma, but the throne of the Demiurge, which has a veil so that the
spiritual human beings are not destroyed by the sight of it. The task of the Savior is to subdue the
flames and to provide an entrance for the pneumatics to the Pleroma. For the allegory of the Temple in
the \textit{Gospel of Philip}, see Ronald McL. Wilson, \textit{The Gospel of Philip. Translated from the Coptic Text,

(προνομία) in the world. This distinction refers to the role of the Logos in the heavenly sphere and the human mind. While the intelligible light rules the heavenly spheres, the intelligible spirit controls human souls. Both of them were created as images of the eternal Logos, which binds all the elements of the world firmly together, being the bond of the all (δεσμός τοῦ παντοῦ) in the cosmos and the human soul.521

In Valentinus’s psalm, the spirit not only carries and brings together the faculties of human beings but its role is connected to making the soul fertile and producing fruit. This idea has a parallel in Philo, who maintains that the spirit of God is a teacher of wisdom and the source of good works. Philo calls the Spirit of God “the divine spirit of wisdom” (τὸ σοφίας πνεῦμα θεῖον) and depicts it as “wise, the divine, the invisible, the good spirit that is diffused to fill all” (πνεῦμα ἐστὶ τὸ σοφὸν, τὸ θείον, τὸ ἀτμητὸν, τὸ ἀδιαίρετον, τὸ ἀστεῖον, τὸ πάντη δὴ δῶν ἐκπεπληρωμένον). The spirit of God also has a role as a prophetic spirit through which the soul frees itself from all bodily influences and becomes filled with the knowledge of God.522 The spirit mediates, thus, the presence of the Logos in an earthly mind and makes it virtuous and productive. Therefore, Philo uses the metaphors of producing fruit and generating children as descriptions of the cultivation of the human mind through the spirit of wisdom. Philo interprets the verse “God planted a Paradise in Eden” as referring to the plantation of trees of virtue within the human mind.523

521 Einar Thomassen has proposed that Valentinus’s psalm combines some Greek cosmological notions with the “widespread Jewish and Christian idea of the divine Spirit as a creative agent, in which role the Spirit is, moreover, frequently identified with Wisdom.” Furthermore, the spirit in Valentinus’s psalm can be consistently identified with “the demiurgic and world-sustaining figure of Sophia, who residing in the Ogdoad, exerts her spiritual power on the orderly organization of the lower world, although it is uncertain whether Valentinus intended his psalm to be understood in that way” (cf. Thomassen, The Spritual Seed, 484). It is uncertain, however, whether there was any widespread Jewish idea of the Spirit as a creative agent in the macrocosmic scale. Strikingly Philo does not give any role for the spirit as an instrument in cosmic creation. The role of the spirit in creation was limited to the creation of human beings (Gen. 2:7). Philo interprets the spirit in Gen. 1:2 as denoting the “idea of the principle of life of the living beings” (Opif. 29). In addition, Philo connects the Spirit and Wisdom only in the context of ethical cultivation when the spirit takes the form of “the Spirit of Wisdom” or “the Spirit of prophecy.” It is likely that the identification of Wisdom/Logos and the Spirit as an instrument of creation were innovations of later Christian theologians. Although the Spirit and Wisdom are identified in some Valentinian sources, there is no consensus regarding the identification of Wisdom with the Spirit mentioned in Gen. 1:2. As I pointed out in the previous chapter, the spirit that is moving upon the waters in Gen. 1:2 does not refer to Wisdom or the Spirit but it designates allegorically the intertwining of the psychic (“spirit”) and hylic (“water”) essences before the Demiurge separates them.

522 Gig. 22, 27, 47. See Wolfson, Philo I, 24-36.

523 Plant. 37-38; par. Leg. All. 1.43-47
And these can be no growths of earthly soil, but must be those of the reasonable soul, namely its path according to virtue with life and immortality as its end, and its path according to evil ending in the shunning of these and death. We must conceive therefore that the bountiful God plants in the soul as it were a garden of virtues and of the mode of conduct corresponding to each of them, a garden that brings the soul to perfect happiness.

Philo maintains that God placed the first human being in Paradise, which means allegorically that trees of Paradise, i.e. trees of wisdom and virtue, are planted in the human soul through the spirit. The bodily influences and irrational impulses should be guarded and cultivated to produce good fruit. Philo also says that the works of the human being are the offspring, or fruit, of the soul. He explains in Gig. 4 that those who failed to cultivate their soul become parents of female children, whereas the fruits of the “tree of virtue” are “male beings.” The metaphors of “depths” and “womb” can be integrated rather consistently with the ethical interpretation of Valentinus’s psalm. The metaphor of the womb is also attested in Iren. Haer. 1.5.6 according to which the spiritual seed of Sophia is deposited into the psychic soul of Adam as in a womb in order to reach perfect rationality. Fruit and children are thus metaphors for ethical cultivation which are brought forth when the spirit rules the essence of the human soul. It would seem that if someone tried to compose a psalm on the ground of Philo’s anthropological allegories, it would be a fairly similar kind of literary work as we have in Valentinus’s Harvest.

524 QG 1.6.
525 Gig. 4. The idea of the human intelligence as a plantation in Paradise is also attested in the Valentinian Gospel of Truth. The perfect human beings are verbal expressions of the Father’s thoughts that are planted in Paradise “He is acquainted with His plants, for it is He who has planted them in His paradise garden. Now His paradise is His realm of repose: it is the perfection within the Father’s thought, and they are the verbal expressions of His meditation. Each of His verbal expressions is the product of His will and the manifestation of His speaking.” Cf. Layton, Gnostic Scriptures, 262.
526 The term “depths” is in the plural, and the offspring that is brought forth from the womb is in the singular form, which makes the association with the unitary source of and the connection to the multitude of aeons that are produced from this source problematic. The terms “depths” and “womb” serve as metaphors for the spiritual darkness and lack of understanding that is contrasted with producing the fruit of the spirit. In Plato, the human soul lost all its cognitive capacities when it was bound in a mortal body (Tim. 43b). It is possible that the womb is a metaphor for forgetfulness that is corrected through education as the child grows. Also, the ground out of which the harvest is gathered is dark and deep, and it is light as a metaphor for “wisdom” that makes the ground fertile.
6.5 Conclusions

The anthropological comparison between Philo and the Valentinians has revealed some of the closest parallels in these texts. Both Philo and the Valentinians were dependent on Plato’s anthropology in the *Timaeus* and on Aristotelian psychology, which suggested the existence of the fine-material soul-body in which the intellect was enclosed. The intellect of the soul was not a part of the soul but a distinct *genus* which must be awakened through the contemplation of the transcendent reality.

The closest parallels between Philo and the Valentinian sources can be found especially in those sections which are related to Philo’s allegorical innovations. Firstly, Philo made a distinction between Gen. 1:27 and Gen. 1:26. The former describes the creation of the heavenly man, while the latter describes the earthly mind, which is a mixture of rational and irrational impulses. Secondly, Gen. 2:7 was no longer a description of the creation of the *body* of the earthly man, but the creation of the earthly *mind*, a sort of soul-body for the intellect. Thus, human beings in Gen. 1:26 and Gen. 2:7 represented the same earthly soul, which was a mixture of rational and irrational essences. The physical body was not created until Adam was clothed with the garments of skin (Gen. 3:21).

These Philonic hermeneutical innovations are found in the Valentinian anthropological accounts in *Exc. Theod.* 50-51 and *Iren. Haer.* 1.5.5. In these accounts the term “earthly soul” parallels Philo’s “earthly mind,,” which was not taken from the earth in its present stage, but from “dispersed matter.” Adam did not have a corporeal body until he was clothed with the garments of skin. In the Valentinian accounts, the image of the Savior was breathed into Adam’s earthly soul by the Demiurge, which parallels the implantation of the fragment of the heavenly man in Adam’s soul in Philo’s accounts. The heavenly man was not an archetype of the earthly soul in a strict Platonic sense, but he became an ethical idealization of the earthly mind. The Valentinian exegesis elaborated these Philonic exegetical innovations and combined them with their protological myth of Sophia.

In this chapter, I also discussed two fragments of Valentinus. The first fragment dealt with the creation of Adam’s body by the angels. Valentinus was evidently dependent on the Hellenistic Jewish heavenly man –traditions and Gnostic anthropology but he reformulated the distinctively Gnostic motifs in the light of the concept of “free speech” mentioned in the Book of Wisdom and in Philo’s writings as well. Ptolemy’s disciples elaborated these traditions and associated the “archetypical man” with the Savior and his angels as a collective representation of the Pleroma. At the same time, the Gnostic motifs of fear, envy or any hostile reaction toward Adam by the Demiurge faded away as well as the role of the angels in the formation of Adam’s earthly soul-body.

The second fragment was Valentinus’s psalm *Harvest*, which describes the structure of the human soul in a way which has a close parallel in the
anthropological speculations in the writings of Philo. Valentinus’s psalm can be interpreted in the light of Philo’s allegories of the Tabernacle and the High Priest in which the sympathy of the soul and the sympathy of the cosmos are intertwined. Valentinus may also have been influenced by Philo’s theory according to which the location of pre-natal souls was not the firmament as in Plato but the region of air. The metaphors of fruit and children can be seen in Valentinus’s psalm as allegories of the cultivation of the soul and producing good works. It would seem that if someone tried to compose a psalm on the ground of Philo’s anthropological allegories, it would be a fairly similar kind of literary work as we have in Valentinus’s *Harvest*.
The focus in this chapter is on soteriology, which is based on the protological, cosmological, and anthropological teachings handled in the previous chapter. In Valentinian soteriology, the history of salvation consists of subsequent chains of creation processes and their corrective operations, which began when the Father of All started to create intelligent beings in order to be loved and known. At the lowest level of intelligent beings was Adam, whose descendants were only conditionally immortal. Adam did not have the capability to create copies of himself, but only to procreate. This means that he could mediate only the body and the irrational soul to his descendants, whereas the psychic and spiritual parts of the soul were mediated through divine providence. The divine essence must be activated, but this option was not taken in advance by many, which led to the division of humankind into hylic, psychic and spiritual categories of human beings.

Philo and the Valentinians were dependent on Aristotelian transcendental psychology, which was integrated into Platonic anthropology. In this model, the intellect is present in the human soul only potentially, and must awaken and be integrated into the “higher self” through the meditation of the transcendent mind. Aristotle declares that the contemplative life (θεωρία) is related to self-sufficiency, which is the main characteristic of happiness.\footnote{Ar. Nich. 1 1097b6–20} The contemplative life is the exercise of wisdom, and it fulfills the criterion of self-sufficiency because the sages could always turn their notions to the objects of contemplation. Therefore, the sages were not in need of aid from anybody or anything to be perfectly happy.\footnote{Ar. Nich. 1177a27–b1. According to the definition of perfection, a thing’s perfection corresponds to the extent to which it is chosen for its own sake (Ar. Nich. 1097a30–b6). See Anthony Kenny, \textit{Aristotle on the Perfect Life} (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), 87-102.}

These Aristotelian ideals of the contemplative life and self-sufficiency were taken over by the Stoics and the Middle Platonic teachers. It seems, however, that the ideal of the wise man as self-taught and self-sufficient came to Philo through the Stoic teachers, because Philo’s portrait of the wise man was identical with the Stoics’ description.\footnote{David Winston, “Sage and Supersage in Philo of Alexandria,” in \textit{Pomegranates and Golden Bells: Studies in Jewish and Near Eastern Ritual, Law and Literature in Honor of Jacob Milgrom} (D. P. Wright, D.N. Freedman, and A. Hurvitz; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1995), 815-24.; Winston, \textit{Philo of Alexandria}, 24-30.} While some perfect human beings were born as sages, like Isaac, some others were re-born as sages after...
a long and laborious spiritual journey, as with Abraham and Jacob. The distinction between perfect and progressive humans forms the basis for the various allegories concerning biblical names, themes and stories in Philo and the Valentinian sources, which are dealt with in this chapter.

### 7.1 Philo’s mystical theology

According to Philo, the contemplative life and knowledge of God are the highest goal of human life.\(^{530}\) This fundamental goal was not derived from the Jewish Scriptures, but from Platonic mystical monotheism.\(^{531}\) Philo frequently stressed in his writings that the human mind can achieve knowledge only about God’s existence, but not his essence, which remained unknowable even to the perfect soul.\(^{532}\) The doctrine of the unknowability of God goes back to Plato’s *Parmenides* according to which the supreme principle, the One, is unknown.\(^{533}\) The unknowability of God comes clear in a passage where Philo discusses the answer of God to Moses’s petition that he may see the glory of God (*Ex. 33:18*):

*Do not, then, hope to be ever able to apprehend Me or any of My powers in our essence. But I readily and with right goodwill will admit you to a share of what is attainable. That mean that I bid you come and contemplate the universe and its contents, a spectacle apprehended not by the eye of the body but by the unsleeping eyes of the mind.*\(^{534}\)

Although God’s essence remains hidden, the impressions of his acts and powers in the creation can be experienced and perceived. The knowledge of God’s existence is based on the realization of the Logos in the cosmos and the human mind, which is a fragment of the cosmic mind.\(^{535}\) There are, however, two different ways of achieving knowledge of God, which are the way of

---


\(^{531}\) Winston, *Philo of Alexandria*, 21. I use the term “mysticism” in the sense Winston defines as a “timeless apprehension of the transcendent through a unifying vision that gives bliss or serenity and normally accrues on a course of self-mastery and contemplation.”

\(^{532}\) *Praem. 44; Post. 168-169; Cher. 77.* The intention to comprehend the essence of God is according to Philo absolutely “silly.” There is, however, at least, something, which can be told about God’s essence. Philo states that God’s essence is single and one. In addition, Philo reduced God’s property to one single property, i.e. acting. Unlike the human being, whose thinking and acting are two distinct things, God’s thinking and acting are simultaneous, and it comprises all creation.

\(^{533}\) This view was adopted also by Clement of Alexandria, who evidently was dependent on Platonic transcendental monotheism and Philo (*Strom. 2.6.1; 4.156.1; 5.65.2; 5.71.5; 5.81.4; 5.82.4*). Cf. Lilla, *Clement of Alexandria*, 212-226.

\(^{534}\) *Spec. Leg. 1.47-48*

\(^{535}\) *Leg. All. I 34, 38; Det. 86*
philosophy (reason) and the way of wisdom (faith). The way of wisdom is associated with prophecy, which refers to the direct knowledge of God. The distinction between philosophy and wisdom was also known in Hellenistic philosophical schools. Wisdom represents intuitive knowledge while philosophy stands for discursive reasoning. Philo maintained that the latter type is to gain knowledge of God from the created things through the natural capacities of the human soul “as one may learn the abiding thing from the shadows (σκιαί).” The former type refers to intuition as the mind rises “above and beyond creation and obtains a clear vision.” Philo refers to 1 Sam. 9:9 and says that the sages are prophets and seers.

They then do but make a happy guess, who are at pains to discern the Uncreated and Creator of all from His creation, and are on the same footing as those who try to trace the nature of the monad from the dyad, whereas observation of the dyad should begin with the monad which is the starting-point. The seekers for truth are those who have a vision of God through God, light through the light.

---

536 The distinction between philosophy and wisdom was common among many Stoic teachers (cf. e.g. Seneca Ep. 89,4-9). Winston suggests that when Philo defines philosophy as devotion to wisdom he means that philosophy is identical with the revelation of the Torah. Philo does not mean that philosophy is something inferior compared with the Law, but the distinction was made between imperfect and perfect (= wisdom) modes of knowledge. Philo writes in Leg.All. 1.22: “And what is more godlike...than reason, which once it is full grown and brought to perfection is rightly called wisdom”. Cf. Winston, Philo of Alexandria, 25. Philo’s view concerning the union of philosophy and gnosis was adopted by Clement of Alexandria, although he taught that the ultimate perfection could be achieved only through Christ. Cf. Lilla, Clement of Alexandria, 169-173.

537 Leg. All. 3.99-103; Her. 78; Gig. 60. Wolfson, Philo II, 7-11, 83-84, 92. Harry Wolfson points out that Philo’s terms related to the direct and indirect ways of knowing God evoke the vocabulary used by Plato in his “parable of the cave” (Republic VIII, 514 A ff.; 532 B). Plato suggests that the indirect knowledge rests upon the “shadows” perceived by the senses. Direct knowledge is based, instead, on the vision of the Ideas when the mind ascends above the subterranean cave. Philo differs, however, from Plato in that he called direct knowledge a prophecy whereas in Plato it was ἀνάμνησις. Erwin Goodenough suggests that these two types of knowledge, philosophy and wisdom, reflect two kinds of mysteries, the lesser and the higher. The former represents the mystery of Aaron and it is connected to the worship of God through the creation represented in the cult of the Temple. The latter represents the mystery of Moses which was based on direct knowledge of God through God’s Logos (Goodenough, By Light Light, 95ff.). Although these two ways of knowing God can be found in Philo’s texts, there is no historical evidence that there had been corresponding institutionalized cults, as Goodenough suggests.

538 στοιχαστὶ μὲν οὖν οἱ ἀπὸ τῶν γεγονότων τὸν ἀγένητος καὶ γεγνητὴν τῶν ὀλον σπεύδοντες θεωρεῖν, ὡμοίως τί δρῦντες τούς ἀπὸ δυαδὸς μονάδος φόσαν ἐρευνῶσι, δέον ἐμπαίλην ἀπὸ μονάδος ἀρχή γὰρ αὕτη δυαδὰ σκοπεῖν· ἀλλήλων δὲ μετίσσαν οἱ τῶν θεὸν θεῷ φαντασιωθέντες φορὶ φός (Praem. 46) David Winston has pointed out that the formula “seeing light by light” is the same as that used by Plotinus in Enneads 5.3.17-34-37; 5.5.10. Winston suggests that both Philo and Plotinus were dependent on Plato’s sun image in Republic 507c-509b. See Winston, Logos, 43-44 note 8.
That is why we are told not that the sage saw God, but that God appeared to the sage. For it was impossible that anyone should by himself apprehend the truly existent, did not He reveal and manifest Himself.\textsuperscript{539}

This intuitive knowledge was based on the “analytical illumination of the human mind” in which one realized that all human mental capacities come from God, and that human beings are themselves fragments of the divine mind. While discursive philosophy contemplates the visible cosmos, mental self-examination offers perfect knowledge. These methods of knowledge were not in contrast with each other, but intuition made the philosophy and the contemplation of the cosmos perfect.

In the allegory of Abraham’s wives, Hagar represents knowledge through philosophy and Sarah signifies the knowledge through prophecy. The offspring of these unions represent the result of these methods: Ishmael is a sophist, whereas Isaac is a God-born man, a true friend of God, who sees God.\textsuperscript{540} Philo explains that Abraham must first be in union with Hagar, i.e. encyclical studies and philosophy, and purify himself from the passions of the flesh and errors of philosophy before he was ready for the union with Sarah, i.e. the wisdom of God. Philo says that just as encyclical studies were the handmaiden of philosophy, philosophy was the handmaiden of wisdom. Philosophical knowledge is like milk for babes, allowing human beings to drink directly from the fountain of wisdom.\textsuperscript{541}

The intuitive knowledge and vision of God can be achieved only through laborious preparations, which purify the soul of the bodily passions. For Philo, the passions are the greatest enemy of the human mind because they prevent mental self-examination and intuition. Therefore, one must achieve the state of \textit{apatheia}, a freedom from bad emotions, by converting them into rational ones. The battle with passions forms the prerequisite for the mystic experience of God. Philo maintained that all human beings were able to live a virtuous life and reach happiness “even if the employment that good is

\textsuperscript{539} διὸ λέγεται, οὐχ ὑπὸ τὸ σοφὸς εἶδε θεόν, ἀλλ’ ὑπὸ τὸν θεὸς ὧφθη τῷ σοφῷ. καὶ γὰρ ἦν ἀδύνατον καταλαβεῖν τινα δι’ αὐτοῦ τὸ πρὸς ἀλήθειαν ὄν, μὴ παραφήναντος ἑαυτὸν καὶ ἐπιδείξαντος (Abr. 80).

\textsuperscript{540} Cher. 8, Sobr. 8, Fug. 208. Goodenough, \textit{Introduction}, 178-181. Wolfson stresses the distinction between wisdom and philosophy. He argues that the revelation of the Scriptures and the Law of Moses supersedes philosophy. At the same time, Wolfson made a distinction between faith and reason. It was the former that gives the human mind perfect knowledge, while reason provides mere shadows and images. Wolfson, \textit{Philo I}, 149-51.

\textsuperscript{541} Congr. 79-80 Philo maintained that the human mind can gain knowledge directly through “prophetic intuition,” which is not based on the use of obscure, empty, plausible arguments or unreliable assumptions. There is, thus, the “safer way” to God and knowledge, which does not have the errors and shortcomings of discursive philosophy, but derives knowledge from intuition. \textit{Leg. All.} 3.228-229; \textit{Praem.} 28-30; \textit{QG} 4.125.
beyond the reach of some people.” 542 There is, however, in all human souls
the inclination to evil and bodily passions, which are able to annihilate
rationality and destroy one’s life.543
According to Philo, the first step in the process of salvation was to confess
one’s nothingness and devote oneself to God. This involves the realization
that it is God alone who acts and is the power underlying the mind’s mental
capacities. For Philo, nothing can be more impious than to think that virtues
and the human cognitive capacities were our own achievements and gifts.544
Philo criticized philosophers for regarding the human faculties as their
property. The ancient saying “Know thyself” refers to knowing that the
external senses and the human cognitive dispositions (senses, speech,
memory, and reasoning) were gifts of God and were guided by the Logos.545
The nothingness of the soul is associated with its passivity and femininity.
Philo sees the rational soul which receives the seed of virtue to be feminine,
because it is passive and “it is put in motion by another and is instructed and
benefited, and, in short, is altogether the patient, as its passive state is its
own safety.” Virtue, on the other hand, even though grammatically feminine,
is seen as masculine, because “it puts things in motion, and arranges them,
and suggests good conceptions of noble actions and speeches.” 546 Philo says
that unlike a man, who makes a virgin a woman, the Father of All makes a
woman, which means a soul polluted by passions, again a virgin, by sowing
the seed of wisdom.547
After the confession of one’s nothingness, devotion to God and extirpation
of the passions the human mind can be engaged in intellectual prayer, a sort
of analytical meditation of God’s presence firstly in the mind and secondly in
all creation. Abraham’s migration from Chaldea to Harran – which means
“holes” – was seen as an allegory of the soul’s migration from the vain
thoughts of philosophy to the meditation of one’s inner self. Instead of
meditating the visible cosmos, one must meditate one’s sense organs and
their function to understand that there is a mind in us, which is distinct from
the sense organs, and this mind rules and controls the sense perceptions just
as the divine Mind controls the whole creation without assimilating to it.548

542 Leg. All. 1.34-41.
543 Leg. All. 1.45.
544 Leg. All. 1.49, 45-52; Sac. 56-58.
545 Her. 105-110; Fug. 46
546 Abr. 102; Leg. 2.38.
547 Cher. 49.
548 Migr. 184-195. The etymological basis for Harran is not clear. According to Philo the term
“holes” refers to the sense organs which are in “holes” (eyes, nostrils, ears, mouth). Bad emotions (fear,
distress, desire, and delight) come from these “holes,” i.e. from the sense perceptions and therefore it is
important to learn that there is a mind in us, whose task is to control and convert these bad emotions
into good ones.
In that way, one learns to control the passions and experience timeless union with the divine mind, which is full of passionless joy. There are, however, only a few perfect human beings who have succeeded in their path to salvation already during their lifetime. Most humans are those who are making progress just like Philo himself. Philo makes thus a difference between human beings who are perfect and those still making progress towards perfection. The perfect men have eliminated the fleshy passions completely, whereas those making progress, are merely controlling them. In the end, after the soul has departed from the body, the human mind is transformed into the likeness of the angels, even though the perfect ones may have died to the body before their physical death. Although Philo’s use of different metaphors can be seen as an innovative elaboration on Platonic discourse concerning the body-soul relation, Philo suggested that not only the body, but the human soul too, can die if it loses contact with its heavenly archetype, i.e. the heavenly man.

The Christian Platonists of Alexandria belonged to the same tradition of Platonizing mystical monotheism as Philo. For them, the Platonic philosophy and gnosis revealed by Christ were practically the same thing. The Valentinians maintained that the Father of All wanted to be known and loved through the “Spirit of knowledge” and the “Spirit of love,” although the knowledge of his essence is beyond all understanding. The “Spirit of knowledge” does not only provide information about the divine realm, but it has the power to transform the essence of the soul. Just as Sophia was re-formed through knowledge, knowledge makes the potential mind in the soul active and integrates it into one’s higher self, i.e. the archetypical angel. The “Spirit of knowledge” also heals the passions of the soul. As a result, the soul becomes joyful, which is the greatest spiritual gift, and it makes the soul productive.

In Valentinian anthropology, the highest part of the human soul was created as an image of the ecclesia in the Pleroma. Valentinians saw salvation as a unification of the soul with one’s angel, which was a distinctively Valentinian idea among teachers in Early Christianity. The unification with an angel denotes the assimilation of the soul among the Aeons of the Pleroma. The angelic part of the human soul is only potentially present in the psychic soul as it is in the womb. It must be awakened and strengthened in order to make it capable of the final unification with the Pleroma. Therefore,

549 Abr. 236.
550 Her. 275.
551 Leg. 3.140; Somn. 2.234. Satlow, “Philo on Human Perfection,” 504-506.
552 Sac. 5.
554 Lila, Clement of Alexandria, 56-59.
555 Exc. Theod. 6-7.
human beings exist in different phases in their process of salvation. There are those who are perfect since their birth, some others, who have made themselves perfect during their lifetime and those still making progress and waiting to be made perfect after their death. The material human beings will be destroyed during their physical death together with their bodies.

7.2 The embodiment of the soul and the school for controlling passions

The myth of Sophia was the basis for Valentinian ethics and soteriology. The healing of the emotions of Sophia was paradigmatic for all humans. The origin of the Sophia myth is not clear. A similar kind of myth was evidently taught in other Gnostic schools. It is reasonable to suggest that some Platonizing myth of Sophia preceded both the Valentinian myth of Sophia and the one attested e.g. in the *Apocryphon of John*. While the author of the *Apocryphon of John* linked the four primary emotions (distress, delight, desire, and fear) to four primary demons, the Valentinian teachers moved the discussion of emotions to the tale of Sophia, where the emphasis is placed on the therapy of emotion. In the Valentinian version of the myth the role of the healing of emotions is a distinct feature of the myth. The analysis of the emotions was also prominent in the three major Hellenistic philosophical schools, although the most influential theory of emotions comes from Stoicism. Ismo Dunderberg has pointed out “that what the Valentinians had to offer in the intellectual marketplace of their time was a distinctly Christian theory of how desire can be cured. For them, Christ was the healer who came to restore the emotions of the soul.”

There was no consensus among the Valentinian teachers regarding the categories of emotions that Sophia felt after her exclusion from the Pleroma. The description of Sophia’s emotion in *Exc. Theod.* 48 parallels the one attested in Iren. *Haer.* 1.5.4. In these accounts the emotions of Sophia were distress (λύπη), fear (φόβος), perplexity (ἀπορία), ignorance (ἄγνοια) and consternation (ἐκπληξις/πλῆξις). The counter emotion for these bad emotions was the conversion or will to turn back (ἐπιστρόφη). In addition, Sophia began to experience “joy” (χαρά) when the Savior visited her and healed her emotions through knowledge. In the Valentinian anthropology the

---

556 For details, cf. chaper 1.2.
559 For a detailed analysis of the emotions of Sophia in the Valentinian sources, see chapter 5.3.
560 Dillon translates ἐπιστρόφη as “amendment.” The term ἐπιστρόφη became a key technical term in Neoplatonism. It means that all things came into being from the One, and they have a desire to revert to that from which they proceeded. Cf. e.g. Proclus, *Elements of Theology* 31-32; Simplicius *Physics* 147.9.
various emotions of Sophia were related to the corresponding parts of the soul of the first human being. Fear, distress and perplexity belonged to the hylic soul and their counter-emotion “conversion” to the psychic soul. Joy was the essence of the spiritual part of the soul.

The Valentinian teachers were evidently influenced by the Stoic theories of the emotions of the soul. There are, however, some striking differences compared with the main categories of the emotions in the Stoic sources. Although the emotions of fear (φόβος) and distress (λύπη) are found in the Stoic four-fold category of emotions, the other two main emotions, desire (ἐπιθυμία) and delight (ἡδονή), are not mentioned in the Valentinian sources. It is noticeable, however, that joy (χαρά), which Sophia felt after her enlightenment, was also one of the good emotions in the Stoic analysis of the emotions.561 Therefore, the Valentinian theory of emotions comes rather close to Stoic theories of emotions and the ideal of apatheia, which is based on the correct knowledge.562 Sophia’s passions and bad emotions resulted from the erroneous opinion that the Father of All can be comprehended and she is able to be created by herself without consort like the Father. These bad emotions were corrected by right knowledge, which made Sophia a spiritual and joyful being.

Philo was also dependent on Stoic theories of emotions. Philo maintained that a sage must achieve a state of apatheia because he imitates God, who is free from irrational emotions. For Philo, the only divine emotion was joy. Philo was apparently confused with the anthropomorphic descriptions of God in the Bible. He says that the anthropomorphic language is for the masses, who cannot comprehend God otherwise. However, Philo did not hesitate to apply the emotion joy to God, although wise man’s joy is never the equal of God’s pure emotion. Philo states that the angels, the stars, and the whole cosmos shares a portion of the divine joy, which is not mixed with sorrow or fear.563 All irrational passions must be converted to rational emotions (εὐπάθειαι). There was, however, a difference between the perfect man and those who are still making progress regarding control of the emotions.564 Those who have not yet reached perfection, have not totally eradicated their passions but are merely controlling them. They behave in a

561 Exc. Theod. 45.1-2. For the fourfold division of the passions in Valentinian, Stoic and Sethian source, see Dunderberg, Beyond Gnosticism, 112
564 Leg. All. 3.7; Plant. 53; Leg. All. 3.129. Dillon suggests that it is not clear whether Philo taught the Stoic extirpation of the passions (apatheia) or merely Aristotelian control of the passions (metriopatheia). Antiochus of Ascalon, for example, interpreted the Stoic ideal of apatheia in the light of the Peripatetic ideal of metriopatheia. If a certain passion is under the control of moderation, it is no longer an immoderate passion. Cf. Dillon, The Middle Platonists, 77-78; also Baer, Philo’s Use of the Categories of Male and Female, 89-93.
moderate manner because of the commandments of the Law. The perfect ones have transformed their passion into good states of mind without being prompted by any command to do so.565

In the categorizing of the passions, Philo followed the Stoics, who maintained that there were four generic passions (desire, fear, pleasure, grief) which were contrary to nature. For Philo, the passions were not merely unhealthy mental states but were God’s punishments for the mind’s idolatry.566 In describing Cain’s punishment, Philo uses Stoic categorization of passion, although God increases Cain’s torment by removing the pleasurable false opinions in pleasures.567 Philo follows the Stoics, also suggesting the three corresponding “good emotions” (εὐπάθειαι) for “bad emotions,” which were “the will,” “caution” and “joy.”568 These notions are explained in a passage where Philo explains Gen. 9:3 (“Every reptile that lives shall be to you for food”):

*The passions resemble unclean reptiles, equability (εὐφροσύνη) the clean. And answering to the passion of delight (ἡδονή), there is joy (χαρά) and happiness; answering to desire (ἐπιθυμία), there is will (βούλησις) and counsel; answering to distress (λύπη), there is compunction (δῆγμος) and irritation; and answering to fear (φόβος), there is caution (εὐλάβεια).*569

Philo made a distinction between “unclean” and “clean” passions. For every unclean passion a corresponding clean passion exists. Philo differs, however, from the conventional Stoic theory in that he also postulates a corresponding emotion for distress. The Stoics were of the opinion that there cannot be a reasonable form of distress. Philo maintains, however, that δῆγμος, i.e. compunction, is a positive form of distress, because it “bites” the soul and recommends it to seek the virtuous life. Compunction is a necessary emotion for those who are making progress because it indicates that the human being is not yet perfect. The perfect ones do not experience sorrow or irritation because they are free from any form of distress.

It is noteworthy that the Valentinian teachers also postulated a counter-emotion for distress, fear, perplexity and ignorance, which is repentance or conversion (ἐπιστροφή). This counter-emotion is depicted not only as a mental disposition (διαθέσις) but as a strong emotion (ἐμπαθή).570 This good

---

565 Leg. All. 3.140-144. Philo maintained that while Moses practiced absolute freedom from passions, Aaron practiced only their moderation.

566 Conf. 23-25.


569 QG 2.57. Translated by Dillon in *The Middle Platonists*, 151 with slight modifications taken from Winston’s translation in *Philo of Alexandria*, 252.

570 Iren. Haer. 1.4.1; 1.4.5.
emotion appeared after Christ had abandoned Sophia and she was prevented from following him by the Limit. The emotion of conversion was associated with the condition of the psychic soul, which was not yet perfect, but was praying and seeking for the light. The emotion of conversion was not, however, labeled a negative stage of the mind, but a necessary condition for the vision of God and the healing of the emotions by the Savior. As in Philo, distress had a positive role in the ethical progress, because it causes a good emotion that “bites” the soul and forces it to seek immortality.

The theory of the passion forms the background for Philo’s allegory of the separation of the sexes in Gen. 2:21-23. Philo did not interpret the separation biologically, but allegorically as a description of the division of male reason (the rational part of the soul) and female sense perceptions (the irrational part of the soul). Philo says that the literal interpretation would have been absurd and, therefore, the allegorical interpretation was not only possible but obligatory.

Philo interpreted the phrase “filling the space with the flesh” in Gen. 2:21 as denoting a process in which the soul of Adam becomes passionate. Philo maintains that “bone of my bones” means “power of my power” because the bone is a symbol of strength and domination. The saying “flesh of my flesh” means according to Philo “suffering of my sufferings” because all suffering caused by the senses also affects the mind, which is the basis of the senses:

For he says, “This now is a bone of my bone”; that is power out my powers; for bone is here used as power and strength. And “passion of my passions”; that is “flesh out of my flesh.” For not without the mind does the perceptive faculty bear anything that if suffers, for the mind is to it a fountain-head and a basis on which it rests.

A strikingly similar kind of allegory is attested in the Valentinian account attested in Exc. Theod. 52.2:

This is the meaning of “This now bone of my bones,” – he hints as the divine soul which is hidden in the flesh firm and hard to suffer and

---

571 The Tripartite Tractate mentions prayer and repentance as means to conversion. The Logos repented that his presumptuous thought had produced evil powers. The Logos turned away from evil toward the good. He prayed and remembered his brothers in the Pleroma and these prayers produced a new order of psychic powers, who realized that something greater than themselves existed before them. The psychic powers and all they produced were made out of the good intention of the Logos, and they had the ability to seek what is glorious (Tri.Trac. 80.11-83.33).

572 Leg. All. 2.19.

573 τοῦτο” γὰρ φησίν “ἐστὶν ὀστοῦ τῶν ἐμῶν ὀστῶν” τοιεῦται δύναμις ἐκ τῶν ἐμῶν δυνάμεων ἐπὶ γὰρ δυνάμεως καὶ ἰσχύος τὸν παθεῖται τὸ ὀστέον καὶ πάθος ἐκ τῶν ἐμῶν παθῶν· “καὶ σὰρξ” φησίν “ἐκ τῆς σαρκὸς μου”· πάντα γὰρ ὧν πάσχει ἡ ἀίδηθες, οὔκ ἀνευ νοῦ ὑπομένει, πετῇ γὰρ ὦτός ἐστιν αὐτῆ καὶ θεμέλιος ὃ ἐπερείδεται (Leg. All. 2.41)
very potent, – and “flesh of my flesh” – the hylic soul which is the body of the divine soul.574

In both accounts, the “bone” is a symbol of power. In Philo the “bone” is powerful and has strength (δυνάμεως καὶ ἰσχύος), and in the Valentinian account the “bone” is firm and very powerful (στερεὰν καὶ δυνατωτέραν). Although flesh is not explicitly referred to as a symbol of suffering as in Philo (πάθος ἐκ τῶν ἐμῶν παθῶν), the “bone” is contrasted with the “flesh” as an essence that is not capable of suffering (δυσπαθῆ). In both accounts, the bone of Adam is understood allegorically as a symbol of power and domination and the flesh as a symbol of suffering and passions.

Philo made a distinction between the existence of the irrational faculties of Adam’s soul according to habit (καθ’ ἕξιν) and according to actualization (κατ’ ἐνέργειαν).575 Philo maintains that the irrational faculty was habitually part of the mind before the separation of the sexes. The irrational faculty was made active as the female part of the soul, i.e. the sense perceptions were separated out of Adam. The sense perceptions are not good or bad themselves, but they become bad if the rational mind loses control over them, and pleasures attach to them. It is noticeable that Philo interpreted God’s speech to Adam in Gen. 2:24 as denoting the negative condition of human existence. Philo explains that when the mind (Adam) leaves his father, i.e. God, and mother, i.e. Wisdom, and cleaves to his wife (Eve), he will be dissolved into flesh and passions:

For the sake of sense perception the Mind, when it has become her slave abandons both God the Father of the universe and God’s virtue and wisdom, the Mother of all things, and cleaves to and becomes one with sense-perception and it served into sense-perception so that the two become one flesh and one passion.576

According to Philo, the separation of the mind from its divine origin was the cause of misery and mortality because it causes the dissolving of the mind into the flesh. The freedom from passion is achieved again when Eve, i.e. sense perception, is brought back to the dominion of Adam, i.e. the mind. Then the mind is no longer divided and corrupted by the sense perceptions, but the mind controls the senses and it will be integrated into its original unity.577 This same logic of separation and unification as soteriological paradigm is attested in the Valentinian Gospel of Philip:

---

574 Τοῦτο νῦν ὀστὸν ἐκ τῶν ὀστῶν μου” τὴν θείαν ψυχὴν αἰνίσσεται τὴν ἐγκεκρυμμένην τῇ σαρκί καὶ στερεάν καὶ δυσπαθῆ καὶ δυνατωτέραν,”καὶ σὰρξ ἐκ τῆς σαρκός μου” τὴν ὑλικὴν ψυχὴν σῶμα οὖσαν τῆς θείας ψυχῆς.
575 Leg. All. 2. 35 ff, esp. 45. (cf. also Leg. All. 2.19ff.)
576 Leg. All. 2.49; Leg. All. 1.50; Opif. 151-152
577 Leg. All. 2.50.
When Eve was still with Adam, death did not exist. When she was separated from him, death came into being. If he enters again and attains his former self, death will be no more. [---] If the woman had not separated from the man, she should not die with the man. His separation became the beginning of death. Because of this, Christ came to repair the separation, which was from the beginning, and again unite the two, and to give life to those who died as a result of the separation, and unite them. But the woman is united to her husband in the bridal chamber. Indeed, those who have united in the bridal chamber will no longer be separated. Thus, Eve separated from Adam because it was not in the bridal chamber that she united with him.578

Although the passage in the Gospel of Philip does not explicitly mention the allegory of Eve as a symbol of sense perceptions, the teaching follows mainly the same logic as in Philo’s parallel passage. It was the woman who must be joined to her husband, whereas God’s order before the fall in Gen. 2:24 was seen in a negative light. The separation of the woman from the man and the command for man to unify with his wife was seen as the source of death. Instead, if the woman once again unites with her husband, death will be reversed. The unification of the sexes is also handled in Gos. Phil. 65.1-26, which describes the activity of the unclean spirits. As long as the human soul is solitary it can be polluted by the unclean spirits, which are male and female in form. But when they see husband and wife together, the unclean spirits are powerless. The unification will take place when the image is united with its angel.

Gos. Phil. 70 refers to the “bridal chamber” in which the reunification takes place. It is not clear whether the bridal chamber mentioned in the Valentinian sources refers to a specific ritual such as baptism or anointing or a combination of them or whether it only depicts the inner mental process through which the human being will be unified with his spiritual archetype.579 However, the idea of unification of the sexes as a metaphor for salvation parallels Philo’s allegory of Gen. 2:24. If the rational soul unites

578 Gos. Phil. 70. Translated by Bentley Layton in the Gnostic Scriptures.

579 The unification of the female and male partners can also be understood as the unification of the spiritual seed with her angelic image. In this interpretation Eve does not refer to the irrational soul, but to the spiritual seed, i.e. the highest part of the human soul, which is depicted as the female part of the pre-existent seed. The separation of Adam and Eve is seen allegorically as the separation of the spiritual seed from its male counterpart in the intelligible realm. The metaphor of the “bridal chamber” is related to the mysterium coniunctionis in which the spiritual seed is united to her angelic counterpart. It is not clear whether this unification took place in some ritual or whether it simply depicted an inner mental process. It is noticeable that in Exc. Theod. 21-22 the unification of the female seed with its male counterpart is not actualized in a conventional water baptism, but in a proxy baptism for the death described by Paul in 1. Cor 15:29. For the analysis of the passage in Exc. Theod. 21-22, cf. Thomassen, The Spiritual Seed, 377-383.
THE ALLEGORICAL EXEGESIS OF CAIN, ABEL AND SETH AND ISRAEL AS A SPIRITUAL HUMAN BEING WHO SEES GOD

with the Logos-Savior, according to which it has been created, it will dominate the passions generated by the sense perceptions and the woman is brought to her man.

In Philo and the Valentinian accounts the salvation was seen as returning to the pre-lapsarian ideal state before the separation of the sexes. This ideal state of mind provides the power over the unclean spirits and passions of the soul. In Exc. Theod. 53.1 the fleshly passions are like “tares” (ζιζάνιον) growing together with the “good seed” (τὸ χρηστὸν σπέρμα). They are the “seed of the Devil” (σπέρμα τοῦ διαβόλου), which should not be nourished, but destroyed altogether and put to death. In Exc. Theod. 2.1-2 the spiritual seed is described as a leaven, which unites what seemed to have been divided, soul and flesh. The seed of Sophia is an effluence of the angelic power (ἀπόρροια τοῦ ἀγγελικοῦ) so that there may be no deficiency (ὑστέρημα) in the soul. In the Tripartite Tractate those who will achieve salvation need to be trained as in a school to experience ignorance and its pains and taste the things that are evil. It even seems that the suffering caused by erroneous opinions was the pre-condition for the reception of the knowledge of the Father of All.580

7.3 The division of humankind in the Valentinian myth and Philo

The three-fold division of humankind into spiritual (οἱ πνευματικοί), psychic (οἱ ψυχικοί) and material (οἱ υλικοί) categories is one of the main features of Valentinian teaching.581 The division within psychic and spiritual human beings is already attested in Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians. Paul made a distinction between two levels of the members of the ecclesia. The psychics lack the perfect understanding of divine things, whereas the spiritual human beings recognize all things.582 Some scholars have proposed that the Valentinians derived their anthropological division from Paul.583 It is noticeable, however, that Paul did not divide the whole of humankind into the aforesaid soteriological classes. While the Valentinian anthropological division concerned the whole of humankind since the creation of human beings, the Pauline division concerned only the members of the ecclesia. Birger Pearson maintains that the terminology of Paul’s opponents in

580 Cf. Tri. Trac. 122.3-123.22; 125.24-127.25
581 Dunderberg follows Brakke in translating the term ψυχικός as “animated ones.” Dillon and Unger use the term “ensouled” in their translation of Irenaeus’s Against Heresies, book 1. Cf. Dunderberg, “Valentinian Theories of Classes of Humankind” 139, note 2; Brakke, The Gnostics, 116. I use the term “psychic” because it is difficult to find an exact translation for the term. The category of the psychics becomes comprehensible as a part of Valentinian myth and it does not have an exact parallel in other philosophical systems.
582 1 Cor. 2:14–15.
Corinth derived from the Hellenistic Jewish exegesis of Gen. 2:7, which distinguishes “spirit” (pneuma) and “soul” (psyche) and consequently those who are living according to “spirit” (pneumatikoi) in contrast to those who live according to their lower “soul” (psychikoi). While some teachers in the Corinthian community taught that all humans possessed an immortal element (pneuma) in them on the grounds of creation, Paul interpreted Gen. 2:7 eschatologically: Christ is the last Adam whose resurrection is the basis of possession of the life-giving spirit (1 Cor. 15:44-47). Thus, the Valentinian view was closer to Paul’s opponents in Corinth, whose terms Paul may have adopted for rhetorical purposes.

Dunderberg has pointed out that although Paul may have been conscious of the Hellenistic Jewish division of humankind into psychic and spiritual beings, this does not necessarily mean that Paul was dependent on the anthropological mythology of his opponents in Corinth. The distinction between “psychic” and “spiritual” members of ecclesia may reflect the common Greco-Roman philosophy which realizes the potential threat of the soul being assimilated with the irrationality and bodily impulses. The psychics are in constant danger of being assimilated into the flesh, whereas the spiritual ones have made their psychic essence firm. They are no longer in need of preliminary teaching, but they obey the law of Christ in the Spirit.

I suggest that the tripartite division of humankind in the Valentinian sources has its basis in the Hellenistic Jewish allegorical tradition, even though it was linked to the myth of Sophia and the terms related to these categories may have been derived from Paul’s letters. In the Valentinian accounts the division of humankind is enlightened on the grounds of an allegorical exegesis of Gen. 1:26-27 and Gen. 2:7, and the three sons of Adam – Cain, Abel, and Seth – who represent hylic, psychic and spiritual human beings. These allegories are also found in Philo’s writings and they are related to the division of humankind into the perfect ones and those who are still making progress.

Ismo Dunderberg has pointed out that the Valentinian sources do not present the three-fold division of humankind consistently. In some cases, the Valentinian division of humankind is related to ethnic and religious boundaries. In the Tripartite Tractate the hylics follow the vain thoughts of Greek and Barbarian wisdom, the psychics obey the Law of the Hebrews, and

---


585 See Dunderberg, “Paul and Valentinian Morality,” 158-159.
the spiritual ones possess the perfect knowledge of the Father of All.\textsuperscript{586} This model of division parallels Heracleon who says that the group of hylics refers to the Gentiles, the psychics to the Jews and the pneumatics worshiped the Father in spirit and truth.\textsuperscript{587} Irenaeus maintained, however, that the distinction between psychic and spiritual categories describes the distinction between ordinary Christians and the Valentinians themselves.\textsuperscript{588}

In Valentinian anthropology, the emotions of Sophia which she experienced after her removal from the Pleroma formed the protological basis for the three-fold structure of the soul of Adam. The hylic, psychic and spiritual elements of Adam’s soul each have epistemological and soteriological significance, which is connected to the emotions of Sophia.\textsuperscript{589} The hylic soul is related to irrationality and the fleshly passions, whereas the two higher essences, i.e. the psychic and spiritual elements, contain the potentiality for salvation. These categories of the soul of the first human being became categories of humankind. Irenaeus describes this division in Iren. \textit{Haer.} 1.7.5 as follows: “these three natures [of Adam] are no longer found in one person, but constitute various kinds [of men]”

It is noteworthy that Irenaeus does not give us any explanation how the three essences of the first human being caused the threefold division of the whole of humanity. He intended to portray Valentinianism as a deterministic system according to which the categories of humankind are fixed.\textsuperscript{590} In \textit{Exc. C} there is, however, one passage which brings some light to the division of humankind into hylic, psychic and spiritual groups of beings. It is namely maintained in \textit{Exc. Theod.} 55-56.2 that Adam could not mediate the spiritual seed and the seed which was breathed, i.e. the psychic seed, to the following generations, but only to the hylic soul and the body:

\begin{quote}
Therefore, Adam neither seeds from the spirit nor from that which was breathed into him, for both are divine, and both are put forth through him but not by him. But his material nature is active toward seed and generation as though mixed with seed and unable to stand apart from the same harmony in life. Therefore, our father Adam is “the first earthly human being of the earth” and if he had seeded from psychic and spiritual as well as from material substance, all would have become equal and righteous and the teaching would have been
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{586} \textit{Tri.Trac.} 118-119. For the Valentinian myth and ethnic boundaries, cf. Dunderberg, \textit{Beyond Gnosticism}, 174-188

\textsuperscript{587} Heracleon, \textit{Frag.} 21 on John 4.22.

\textsuperscript{588} Iren. \textit{Haer.} 1.6.2,4. It is not clear whether the division between ordinary Christians and the Valentinians came from Valentinian sources or whether it was part of Irenaeus’s rhetorical strategy to draw boundaries.

\textsuperscript{589} Iren. \textit{Haer.} 1.6.1,

\textsuperscript{590} Dunderberg, \textit{Beyond Gnosticism}, 138.
in all. Therefore, many are material but not many are psychic, and few are spiritual.591

It is noticeable that psychic and spiritual seeds are mediated through Adam, but not by him (웠’ αὐτοῦ μὲν, οὐχ ύπ’ αὐτοῦ). It seems that behind these Valentinian speculations lies a similar kind of theory of metaphysics of prepositions as in Philo’s discussion concerning the birth of Cain in Gen.4:1: “I have gotten a man by means of God.” Philo argued that God was not an instrumental cause of Cain’s birth, but the effective cause.

Because God is the cause, not the instrument; and that which comes into being is brought into being through an instrument, but by a cause. For to bring anything into being need all these conjointly, the “by which,” “from which,” “through which,” and “for which?” Now he “by which” is the cause, “from which” matter; “through which” instrument; and “for which” the object.592

Philo’s description in Cher. 125 is based on the well-known metaphysics of prepositions.593 In Cher. 128 Philo explains that the human being is only an instrument (ὀργανον) through whom (δι’ αὐτοῦ) the energies of the soul are developed, both in states of tension and relaxation. It is God who makes the “percussion” (πλῆξις) for the “potentialities of the body and soul” and by whom (ὑπ’ οὗ) all is put in motion (πάντα κινεῖται).594 The distribution of the natures of Adam in Exc. Theod. 55-56 can be comprehended in the light of discussion in Philo’s Cher. 125-128. This would mean that concerning the psychical and spiritual essences Adam is only an instrumental cause (δι’ αὐτοῦ), not an efficient cause (ὑπ’ αὐτοῦ). Only the hylic and irrational soul of Adam is capable of mixing with his semen and proceeding to later generations.595 Adam can only be an instrumental cause for the two higher

591 οὔτ’ οὖν ἀπὸ τοῦ Πνεύματος, οὔτ’ οὖν ἀπὸ τοῦ ἐμφυσήματος, σπέιρει ὁ Ἀδάμ: θεία γὰρ ἄμφος, καὶ δι’ αὐτοῦ μὲν, οὐχ ύπ’ αὐτοῦ δὲ, προβάλλεται ἄμφος. Τὸ δὲ ὑλικὸν αὐτοῦ ἐνεργὸν εἰς σπέρμα καὶ γένεσιν, ὡς ἂν τὸ σπέρματι συγκεκριμένον, καὶ τάσης ἐν ἐξ ζοῆ τῆς ἀρμονίας ἀποστῆναι μὴ δυνάμενον. Κατὰ τοῦτο, πατήρ ημῶν ὁ Ἀδάμ, “ὁ πρῶτος δ’ ἄνθρωπος ἐκ γῆς χοϊκός.” Εἰ δὲ καὶ ἐκ ψυχικοῦ ἐσπέιρεν καὶ ἐκ πνευματικοῦ, καθάπερ ἐξ ὑλικοῦ, πάντες ἂν ἴσοι καὶ δίκαιοι ἐγεγόνεισαν, καὶ ἐν πάσιν ἂν ἡ διδαχὴ ἦν. Διὰ τοῦτο πολλοὶ μὲν οἱ ὑλικοὶ, οὐ πολλοὶ δὲ οἱ ψυχικοί· σπάνιοι δὲ οἱ πνευματικοί.

592 τὶ δήματος; ὃτι ὁ θεὸς αἴτιον, οὐκ ὄργανον, τὸ δὲ γινόμενον δι’ ὄργανον μὲν ὡς ἂν αἰτίου πάντως γίνεται. πρὸς γὰρ τὴν τινος γένεσιν πολλὰ δὲ συνελθέντι, ἃ τὸ υφ’ οὗ, τὸ εξ οὗ, τὸ δι’ οὗ, τὸ δι’ ὃ, καὶ ἐστὶ τὸ μὲν υφ’ οὗ τὸ αἴτιον, εξ οὗ δὲ ἡ ὄψις, δι’ οὗ δὲ τὸ ἐργαλείον, δι’ ὃ δὲ ἡ ἀρχή. (Cher. 125) My translation.

593 For the “metaphysics of the prepositions” in Middle Platonism, see the discussion in H. Dörrie, “Präpositionen und Metaphysik: Wechselwirkung zweier prinzipienreihen,” MH 26 (1969), 217-228; Wolfson, Philo I, 26ff; Tobin, The Creation of Man, 66-71; Runia, Philo of Alexandria, 171ff.

594 Cher. 128. ὄργανα γὰρ ἡμεῖς, δι’ ὃν οἱ κατὰ μέρος ἐνέργειαι, ἐπειπεδοῦμεν καὶ ἀνάμενεν, τεχνήτης δὲ ὁ τὴν πλῆξιν ἐργαζόμενος τῶν σώματος τε καὶ ψυχῆς δυνάμεων, υφ’ οὗ πάντα κινεῖται.

595 This parallels Aristotle’s view according to which human parents are not capable of mediating the mind in its active stage to their children. The mind is present already in the human semen, but only
soul parts, although the spiritual seed must be put in motion and activated through teaching (διδαχή). It is namely stated that if Adam had seeded both psychic and spiritual elements as he seeded the hylic soul, then “the teaching would have been in all” (ἐν πᾶσιν ἡ διδαχή). The most logical interpretation would be that that the spiritual seed within psychic soul was activated through knowledge and teaching.

In Valentinian soteriology the activation of the spiritual soul parallels the phases of salvation of Sophia. Firstly, Sophia was given form by Christ, who bestowed the promise of light and immortality on Sophia. Secondly, the Savior formed Sophia according to knowledge through which she became spiritual and began to procreate. As descendants of Adam, all humans are by nature born in a similar stage as Sophia outside the Pleroma and they have the capability of activating their spiritual potentialities through teaching, which contains the promise of better things. The psychic soul includes the spiritual seed as in a womb and it longs for immortality, but it must be formed and activated by spiritual teaching (sermoni perfecto). It seems, thus, that all human beings begin their life in a psychic condition and they have a spiritual intellect in a potential stage within their soul. Therefore, the categories of humankind were not fixed according to one’s nature, but according to one’s choice. The flexibility of these soteriological categories of humankind is mentioned in the following accounts.


596 This seems to parallel Aristotle, who says that “a man begets a man” (ἄνθρωπος γὰρ ἄνθρωπον γεννᾷ), which means that all the mental capacities are mediated to the later generations through natural procreations. The form of the body, i.e. the soul, does not exist independently, but it is mediated through the natural generation (Ar. Met. Z, 8:1033b20-34a). The higher capacities of the soul (reason and the mind) must be activated through education and contemplation because they are present only potentially in the material soul.

597 In Epiphanius’s Greek text there is only …ἔτοιμον γένηται πρὸς ὑποδοχὴν τοῦ τελείου < Λόγου>. The Latin version has perfectae rationis and Tertuallian sermoni perfecto (Adv.Val. 25.2). See Unger & Dillon, Against the Heresies, 163.

598 Thomassen is of the opinion that according to Heracleon’s fragments all humans were psychic before the advent of the Savior. Human beings fall into three categories (hylic, psychic and spiritual categories) through their responding to the gospel. Heracleon rejects the idea that those who acted in a material way did so according to their nature (φύσις). One is not material by nature, but they become so through their behavior. As in the Tripartite Tractate, unhesitating recognition of the Savior was characteristic of the pneumatics. The psychics hesitated, while the material ones rejected the Savior completely (Tri.Trac. 118-119). Thomassen says that there may have been an inner-Valentinian debate concerning the status of human beings before the advent of the Savior. Cf. Einar Thomassen, “Heracleon,” in Legacy of John: Second-Century Reception of the Fourth Gospel (Leiden, Brill: 2010), 182-183, 190-193).
The pneumatics are saved by nature, but the psychics are independent and have the capability for faith and indestructibility as well as unbelief and destruction according to their choice. But the hylics perish by nature.599

Iren. Haer. 1.6.1

There are, thus, three essences, the material, which they call “the left ones,” which must of necessity perish, inasmuch as it is incapable of receiving any breath of incorruption. The psychics, whom they call “the right ones,” are in the middle of the material and spiritual [beings], and pass to the side according to their inclination. But the spirituals are sent to form a union with the psychics and teach them conversion.600

There are two opposite categories of human beings, the spiritual ones and the hylics, whose positions are defined according to their nature. The psychics belong to the middle category, having a free power (αὐτεξούσιον) and capability (ἐπιτηδειότητα) for both destruction and faith. It is noticeable that although there are three categories of human beings, there are only two options for the choices. The soul can either choose salvation or destruction. There is no such choice in becoming a psychic, but the human soul is psychic because it has capability of making a choice between two options.601 Irenaeus maintained, however, that not all souls have an equal possibility of choosing and receiving the spiritual seed.602

---

599 Τὸ μὲν οὖν πνευματικὸν φύσει σωζόμενον· τὸ δὲ ψυχικόν, αὐτεξούσιον ὡς, ἐπιτηδειότητα ἔχει πρὸς τε πίστιν καὶ ἀφθαρσίαν, καὶ πρὸς ἀπίστιαν καὶ φθοράν, κατὰ τὴν οἰκείαν ἀἱρέσιν· τὸ δὲ ὑλικὸν φύσει ἀπόλλυται.

600 Τριῶν οὖν οὖν οὖν, τὸ μὲν ὑλικὸν, δὲ καὶ ἀριστερὸν καλοῦσι, κατὰ ἀνάγκην ἀπόλλυσθαι λέγουσιν, ὧτε μηδεμίαν ἐπιδέξασθαι πνοὴν ἀφθαρσίας δυνάμενον· τὸ δὲ ψυχικὸν, δὲ καὶ δεξιὸν προσαγορεύουσιν, ὧτε μέσον ἐν τῷ τε πνευματικῷ και ὑλικῷ, ἐκεῖσε χωρεῖν, ὡς αὐτῷ καὶ τὴν πρόσκλισιν ποιήσῃ τῷ τε πνευματικῷ ἐκπέπεμφθαι, ὧτες ἐνθάδε τῷ ψυχικῷ συζυγεῖν μορφωθῆ, συμπαῖδευθὲν αὐτῷ ἐν τῇ ἀναστροφῇ (Iren. Haer. 1.6.1).

601 This double orientation of the soul is also mentioned in Hippolytus’s account in which the soul is the locus where the choices between demons and logoi are made. The logoi cannot exist in the soul where demons dwell. Therefore, the soul must make a decision between two options (Hipp. Ref. 6.32.9). Cf. Dunderberg, “Valentinian Theories,” 146-147; ibid. Beyond Gnosticism, 140-141.

602 The Gospel of Philip (64:22-31) refers to those who have been baptized but have not received anything. It is likely that this refers to some people mentioned in Iren. Haer. 1.7.1 who are never able to receive the seed.
Irenaeus describes here, not the category of psychics but the souls of human beings in general. The good souls can receive the seed within the psychic soul while the bad ones are never able to receive the seed. Therefore, the hylics, who are doomed according to their nature, consist of two kinds of human beings. They are those who are not able to receive the seed and those who have once received the promise of salvation, but have lost the battle against their fleshy passions. It seems that the hylic nature has gradually taken a dominant position in humankind because the gift of spirituality was not taken in advance by many. Therefore, there are only a few spiritual human beings, although there were many of them, who were called into life and immortality.

Although there were some hylics who were predestined to damnation, in most cases the hylics were simply disillusioned psychics. They were annihilated according to their nature because they had not succeeded in the activation of the spiritual potentialities within their soul. The spiritual ones are good psychics, who have made a choice for the better and succeeded in their process of regenerating of self. It is not excluded, however, that there were some exceptional human beings who without any choice possessed the spiritual seed perfectly and knowledge of the divine things since their birth. They parallel the super-sages in the writings of Philo, such as Isaac or Moses. They are sent into the world to form a union with those who are making progress towards salvation and to teach them conversion. Paul the Apostle may for the Valentinians have been the same kind of super sage as Moses was for Philo.

It seems that the Valentinian theologians did not adopt the division of humankind from Paul, who divided the members of the *ecclesia* the psychics and the pneumatics. The basis for the anthropological division was not in Christ, as it is in Paul, but in the creation of Adam. This model was closer to the division of humankind and the allegory of the soul in Philo's writings.

---

603 Ἐν αὐτάς μὲν τὰς ψυχικὰς [ψυχὰς] πάλιν ὑπομερίζοντες λέγουσιν, ἃς μὲν φύσει ἀγαθὰς, ἃς δὲ φύσει πονηρὰς. Καὶ τὰς μὲν ἀγαθὰς ταύτας εἶναι τὰς δεκτικὰς τοῦ σπέρματος γινομένας· τὰς δὲ φύσει πονηρὰς μηδέποτε ἄν ἐπιδέξασθαι ἑκεῖνο τὸ σπέρμα.

604 Dunderberg, *Beyond Gnosticism*, 139.

605 Clement has preserved a legend according to which Valentinus learned his doctrine from Theudas, who was a disciple of Paul (Strom. 7.106.4). Paul may have been regarded as the founding father of the Valentinian school of thought. Paul’s status in the Valentinian tradition was prominent. In some sources he is simply called “the Apostle” without mentioning his name (*Exc. Theod.* 22.1) and his mission was associated with the sending of the “Paraclete” (*Exc. Theod.* 23:2-4).
Philo taught that the creation of a human being in Gen. 1:27 depicts the creation of the heavenly man who serves as an ethical goal for the earthly souls. The heavenly man represents the perfect man who is not in need of instruction, but is self-taught and self-instructed. Philo's allegory of the soul served as the basis for the allegory of humankind, which means that whole of humankind can be divided into perfect ones and those who are making progress. Philo explains this in Her. 56-57:

For the “Maker of all,” he says, “breathed into his face the breath of life and man became a living soul,” just as we are also told that he was fashioned after the image of his Maker. So we have two races of men, one that of those who live by reason, the divine inbreathing, and the other of those who live by blood and the pleasure of the flesh. This last is earthly creation while the other is the faithful impress of the divine image.

In this passage, the two races of human beings do not refer to the heavenly man and earthly man but to two categories of earthly men. The bipartite division of humankind is based on the allegorical reading of the anthropological creation narratives of the Bible. Just as the Creator breathed the spirit into the earthly mind, so the humankind is divided into those who live by the spiritual reason and those who obey the pleasures of the flesh. The former category refers to those whose mind imitates the divine mind, i.e. the Logos, while the latter group consists of those who have lost their potentiality for a virtuous life. Philo elaborated this distinction in Post. 78-79 by saying that those who are living according to the Logos are divided into two sub-categories, i.e. the perfect ones and those who are still making progress towards perfection. Therefore, there are three classes of human beings: material, progressive and perfect groups of humans.

Not without purpose have the differences between these cases been recorded in the lawgiver’s pages. For to those who welcome training, who make progress, and improve, (τοῖς μὲν γὰρ ἀσκηταῖς προκόπτουσι) witness is borne of their deliberate choice of the good that their very endeavour may not be left unrewarded. But the fitting lot of those who have been held worthy of a wisdom that needs no other teaching and no other learning (τοῖς δ’ αὐτοδιδάκτου καὶ αὐτομαθοῦς σοφίας ἀξιωθεῖσιν) is, apart from any agency of their own, to accept from God’s hands Reason as their plighted spouse, and to receive

---

606 Leg. All. 1.53-55, 92-95; Leg. All. 3.140-144; Q.G. 1.8.
607 “ενεφύσησε” γάρ φησιν “ὁ ποιητὴς τῶν ὅλων εἰς τὸ πρόσωπον αὐτοῦ πνοὴν ζωῆς, καὶ ἐγένετο ὁ ἄνθρωπος εἰς ψυχὴν ζῶσαν,” ἢ καὶ κατὰ τὴν εἰκόνα τοῦ ποιητοῦ λόγος ἔχει τυπωθῆναι. ὡστε διὶ τῶν εἴδος ἀνθρώπων, τὸ μὲν θείῳ πνεύματι λογισμῷ βιούντων, τὸ δὲ αἵματι καὶ σαρκὸς ἡδονῇ ζώντων. τούτῳ τὸ εἶδός ἔστι πλάσμα γῆς, ἐκείνῳ δὲ θείας εἰκόνος ἐμφανεῖς ἐκμαγεῖον. (Her. 56-57).
608 For the distinction between the heavenly and the earthly races, cf. also Leg. All. 1.31-32 and Leg. All. 2.4.
Knowledge, which is partner in the life of the wise. But he that has been cast away from things human, the low and grovelling Lamech, marries as his first wife Ada, which means “Witness.” He has arranged the marriage for himself, for he fancies that the prime good for a man is the smooth movement and passage of the mind along the line of well-aimed projects, with nothing to hinder its working towards easy attainment.

Philo maintains that humankind is divided not into two but into three categories. The first category of humans is those progressing towards virtue while the second represents those who have reached perfection. The third category consists of those who have lost their intellectuality absolutely and are devoted to earthly things.\(^609\) The tripartite division of humankind in the Valentinian accounts parallels the division in Philo. Although the idea of progress is not explicitly stated in the Valentinian source material described above, it is not farfetched to suggest that the psychic humans can be equated with this category.\(^610\) The psychics are in the middle of the material and the spiritual categories and their status depends on their choice. The pneumatics are saved according to their nature, which means that they have transformed and stabilized their intellect according to the image of the angels. They are not in need of instruction or commandments, because they obey the spirit spontaneously.

It is plausible to suggest that the Valentinian teachers did not derive the division of humankind from Paul, but from the Gnostic myth, which they refined in the light of the anthropological allegories attested in Philo’s writings. Although the names of the categories of humankind may have been derived from Paul’s writings, the allegorical pattern itself comes from the Hellenistic Jewish exegetical tradition similar to that of Philo. The division of humankind was also related to the allegory of the descendants of Adam − Cain, Abel, and Seth – which is found both in Philo and in Valentinian sources.

7.4 Cain, Abel and Seth – the division of humankind and Seth as “the seed of human virtue”

In the allegory of Cain, Abel, and Seth, Philo maintains that Cain and Abel represent two attitudes towards God and the virtuous life.\(^611\) They are no longer distinct persons, but they represent qualities of the same soul. The battle between these qualities refers to the mental conflict between self-

\(^609\) The marriages of the patriarchs were symbols of the unification wisdom. While God arranged the marriages of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the marriage of Lamech was arranged by himself.

\(^610\) The idea of progress is mentioned in the Valentinian text the Interpretation of Knowledge (cf. below).

\(^611\) Sac. 1-3.
loving Cain and God-loving Abel. Although they are both brought forth from the same root – as the offspring of Adam – they are enemies of each other and combat with each other till some of them finally gain domination.\footnote{Sac. 2-3. It is likely that Philo’s interpretation here presupposes the conception attested in the 
Apocalypse of Moses I 1-3 according to which Cain and Abel were twins. In Genesis Rabbah XXII 3 it is stated that Cain and Abel were born simultaneously. The phrase “…and she again bore” implies an additional birth, not an additional pregnancy. See Klijn, Seth in Jewish, Christian, and Gnostic Literature (Leiden: Brill, 1977), 6-7, 18-19. Philo may have used this assumption in his interpretation that the murder of Abel was the destruction of the better part of the same human soul. This parallels the birth of the twins in the case of Jacob and Esau, which is used by Philo as an allegory for the combat between rational and irrational impulses of the soul (cf. Leg. All. III 88 ff). This would mean that Philo saw conflict between Cain and Abel as an analogy with the fight between the twins Jacob and Esau.}

It is a fact that there are two opposite and contending views of life, one which ascribed all things to the mind as our master, whether we are using our reason or our sense, in motion or at rest, and the other which follows God, whose handiwork it believes itself to be. The first of these views is figured by Cain who is called Possession because he thinks he possesses all things, the other by Abel, whose name is “one who refers to God. Now both of these views or conceptions lie in the womb of the single soul. But when they are brought to the birth they must need to be separated, for enemies cannot live together forever. Thus so long as the soul had not brought forth the God-loving principle in Abel, the self-loving principle in Cain made her his dwelling. But when she bore the principle which acknowledges the Cause, she abandoned that which looks to the mind with its fancied wisdom.

Philo’s etymological explanation for the name of Cain is “possession” (κτῆσις), which means that Cain is a symbol of the self-loving human being who takes the honor for himself. Abel’s name, on the other hand, means “referring to God” (ἀναφέρων ἐπὶ θεόν), which means that he gives honor to God for all his works. According to Philo, the professions of Cain and Abel reflect the basic characteristics of these persons. Abel is a shepherd and Cain is a tiller of the ground.\footnote{Sac. 45; QG 1.59} Allegorically this means that Abel is the shepherd of the outward senses while Cain devotes his attention to earthly and inanimate objects. The impulses of irrational sense perceptions are equated with “cattle,” and it is the task of every wise human being to guide this “herd” to reach perfection.\footnote{Sac. 104.}

The battle between Cain and Abel refers to an ongoing spiritual conflict within the human soul. The murder of Abel by self-loving Cain refers to the demolition of the God-loving principle of the soul. The Abel-principle depicts
the rational mind, which lost the battle against the fleshly passions at the moment it failed to recognize its nothingness and total dependence on God. Despite the mental weakness of the human soul, Philo says in Post. 173 that the Abel-principle can never be completely killed, because after his death Abel only departed to a better abode. This would mean that Philo did not require perfection for those who were saved. 615 Although the figures of Cain and Abel in Philo’s allegory are rather easily understood, Seth is a more shadowy figure. In Post. 124 Philo begin to explain the verse in Gen. 4:25 as follows:

Let us consider what may be called the new birth (ὡσπερ παλιγγενεσίαν) of the murdered Abel. “Adam,” it says, “knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bare a son, and called his name Seth saying: God hath raised up to me another seed in the place of Abel (σπέρμα ἕτερον ἀντὶ Ἄβελ), whom Cain slew.”

It unlikely that the “rebirth” (παλιγγενεσία) of Abel in Philo’s commentary refers to Abel’s reincarnation in the person of Seth, because it is explicitly stated that Seth is another seed instead of Abel (σπέρμα ἕτερον ἀντὶ Ἄβελ). It is evident that Philo knew the Platonic meaning of the term as “reincarnation,” but he used it metaphorically (…ὡσπερ παλιγγενεσίαν) in his allegorical reading of Gen. 4:25. 616 In Philo, the term παλιγγενεσία refers usually to the liberation of the ruling part of the soul from the fleshly passion and its unification with the Logos. It describes the migration of the soul towards immortality and apart from some exceptional humans, such as Moses or Isaac, it is a lifelong process, which will not be made perfect until the final separation of the soul and body in death. 617

Philo gives an allegorical explanation for Seth’s name, which means “watering” (ποτισμός). 618 This name means that Seth is a symbol of the human being whose sense organs are “watered” through the rational spirit.

---

615 Det. 47-51; Post. 170-173.
616 Sami Yli-Karjanmaa interpretes παλιγγενεσία in Post. 124 as a sort of hidden reference to reincarnation, although he maintains that “the possibility of Philo’s meaning that Seth’s soul had actually been Abel’s would also be anomalous given that the later entity is inferior to the earlier one.” Cf. Sami Yli-Karjanmaa, Reincarnation in Philo of Alexandria (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2015), 162-167.

617 In Cher. 113-115 Philo says that the human soul should not proceed to irrational passions but to its regeneration (παλιγγενεσίαν ὁρμήσομεν). For analysis of the term παλιγγενεσία in Philo see Fred. W. Burnett, “Philo on Immortality: A Thematic Study of Philo’s Concept of παλιγγενεσία,” in CBQ 46 (1984), 447-470. Cf. also Wolfson, Philo I, 405.

618 The etymology of the name of Seth is attested in Post. 10, 124, 126 and 170. In QG, I 78 Philo gives another explanation and says that Seth means the “one who drinks water.” There is not necessarily a contradiction between these etymologies, it is merely that the point of view is different. In Post. 173 the focus is on the principle of virtue, i.e. the “heavenly Seth,” but in QG I 78 the focus is on the earthly representation of Seth, a perfect human being, who is constantly living in the presence of the wisdom of God.
Philo also pondered what Moses meant by saying that God has raised Eve another seed (σπέρμα ἑτέρον). Philo defines that it was the seed that superseded all the mortal seed, including the seed of Abel, being a sort of seed above. Abel’s seed was connected to the mortal body and after having quitted the mortal body, it departed to the better existence in heaven. The seed of Seth was different, because it was the seed of human virtue, and it will never quit the race of mankind (ὅ δὲ Σὴθ ἅτε σπέρμα ὢν ἀνθρωπίνης ἀρετῆς οὐδέποτε τὸ ἀνθρώπων ἀπολείψει γένος). Thus, Seth represents the seed of virtue, which forms the basis for the growth of the virtuous generations of Noah, Abraham, and Moses. There was a sense of progression among these generations. Noah was more virtuous than Seth and Abraham continued where Noah ended, but Moses was the “hierophant of the sacred way of life” (ὡσπερ ἱεροφάντης ἐν τοῖς ἀδύτοις ποιοῦμενος τὰς διατριβάς).

In Philo, the seed of Seth represented the collective “personality” of all wise humans. It was not a distinct race, but a collective representation of the virtuous mind. A. F. J. Klijin has pointed out that Philo is probably the first Jewish author who mentions the idea of Seth as a symbol of human virtue and a representative of righteous human beings. Philo does not connect the figure of Seth with some historically known group or ethnically distinct race, but he was a symbol for all those who were striving for the virtuous life or symbolized the seed of virtue itself. In Sethian Gnosticism Seth was seen as a historical progenitor of a distinct “spiritual race.” In the Gnostic sources, it was usual to think that Cain and Abel were born as a result of the defilement of Eve. This motif is absent in Philo’s writings. Strikingly the

---

619 Post. 173-174
620 Klijn, Seth, 26-27.
621 In the patristic documents an early Christian group called the Sethians is mentioned by Irenaeus (Iren. Haer. 1.1.30) as Sethian-Ophites, by Pseudo-Tertullian (Against All Heresies) as Sethians, by Hippolytus (Ref. V 20) as Sethians and by Epiphanius (Pan.39-40) as Sethians or Archontics. In the Nag Hammadi library, there are many documents where Seth and his race play a dominant role. The most important of these texts is a book called the Apocalypse of Adam, where Adam gives a testamentary revelation to his son Seth. The Gospel of Egyptians contains a highly articulated doctrine of Seth and his role as a Savior figure. The book called Allogenès is also regarded as a Sethian document because, according to Epiphanius’s report, the Sethians possessed a book of that name. Cf. Pearson’s article “The Figure of Seth in Gnostic Literature,” in Birger Pearson, Gnosticism, Judaism and Egyptian Christianity, 473-478 and Klijn, Seth, 90-107.
622 For the generation of Cain, Abel and Seth in the Gnostic writings, cf. especially Hyp. Arch. 91:11-92:2 and the longer recession of the Ap. John 24:15-36. In these texts, Cain or both Cain and Abel are the offsprings that resulted from the union of Eve and the archons. Pearson suggests that these speculations are based on the earlier Jewish haggadic traditions according to which Cain and Abel were the sons of the devil rather than of Adam. Pearson refers to Targum Ps. ~Jonathan, which contains a tradition according to which Eve was made pregnant by Sammael, the angel of death. Cf. Pearson, “Seth in Gnostic Literature,” 478-479. Klijn also refers to the stories in Genesis Rabbah and Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer according to which Cain was not Adam’s son and Adam did not have intercourse with
THE ALLEGORICAL EXEGESIS OF CAIN, ABEL AND SETH AND ISRAEL AS A SPIRITUAL HUMAN BEING WHO SEES GOD

allegory of Cain, Abel and Seth is found in the Valentinian accounts, which parallel Philo’s allegory.

Exc. Theod. 54.1-3

From Adam, three natures were begotten. The first was irrational which was Cain’s, the second the rational and righteous, which was Abel’s, the third the spiritual, which was Seth’s. Now that which is earthly is “according to the image,” that which is psychical according to the likeness of God, and the spiritual is the seed of his own; and with references to these three, without the other children of Adam, it was said, “This is the book of the generation of men.” And because Seth was spiritual he neither tends the flock nor tills the soil but produces a child as the spiritual beings do. And him who “hoped to call upon the name of the Lord” who looked upward and whose “commonwealth is in heaven” – him the world does not contain.623

Iren. Haer. 1.7.5

They conceive, then, of three kinds of men, spiritual, material and animal, represented by Cain, Abel, and Seth. These three natures are no longer found in one person but constitute various kinds of men. The material goes, as a matter of course, into corruption. The animal, if it makes choice of the better part, finds repose in the intermediate place; but if the worst, it too shall pass into the worst.624

The allegory of Cain, Abel and Seth is connected in these passages to the threefold division of humankind. In Exc. Theod. 54.1 it is stated that from Adam three natures (τρεῖς φύσεις) were born, which formed the “book of generations of men” (ἡ βίβλος γενέσεως ἀνθρώπων). The irrational nature of the soul refers to Cain, the reasonable and just nature to Abel, and the spiritual nature to Seth. The earthly soul is created according to the image,

Eve before he begot Seth. The speculation concerning Seth’s presence during Adam’s burial and his astrological knowledge in Vita Adae et Evae and Josephus (Ant. I 60-65) are according to Klijin isolated stories that should be distinguished from aforesaid Jewish Haggadic literature. Cf. Klijin, Seth, 6-10, 119.

623 Ἀπὸ δὲ τοῦ Ἀδάμ τρεῖς φύσεις γεγονόνται· πρώτη μὲν ἡ ἄλογος, ἢς ἦν Κάιν· δευτέρα δὲ ἡ λογικὴ καὶ ἡ δικαία, ἢς ἦν Ἄβελ· τρίτη δὲ ἡ πνευματικὴ, ἢς ἦν Σήθ. Καὶ ὁ μὲν χοικός ἔστι “κατ’ εἰκόνα”· ὁ δὲ ψυχικὸς “καθ’ ὀμοιοσύνην” Θεοῦ· ὁ δὲ πνευματικὸς κατ’ ἱδίαν ἐφ’ ὦς τρεῖν, ἄνευ τῶν άλλων παίδων τοῦ Ἀδάμ, ἑξηρεν· “Ἀδύτη ἡ βίβλος γενέσεως ἀνθρώπων.” Ὅτι δὲ πνευματικὸς ὁ Σήθ, οὐτε ποιμαίει, οὐτε γεωργεῖ, άλλα παίδα καρποφορεῖ, ὡς τὰ πνευματικά. Καὶ τούτων, δὲς ἠλπίσεν ἐπικαλεῖσθαι τὸ Ὄνομα Κυρίου, ἄνω βλέποντα, οὗ “τὸ πολίτευμα ἐν οὐρανῷ,” τούτων ὁ κόσμος οὐ χωρεῖ.

624 Ἀνθρώπων δὲ τριὰ γένη ὑφίστανται, πνευματικῶν, χοικῶν, ψυχικῶν, καθὼς ἐγένοντο Κάιν, Ἄβελ, Σήθ· καὶ ἐκ τούτων τὰς τρεῖς φύσεις, οὐκέτ’ καθ’ ἐν, ἀλλὰ κατὰ γένος. Καὶ τὸ μὲν χοικόν ἐς φθορὰν χωρεῖν· καὶ τὸ ψυχικόν, ἐὰν τὰ βελτίωνα ἔλθηται, ἐν τῷ τῆς μεσότητος τόπῳ ἀναπαύσεθαι· ἐὰν δὲ τὰ χείρον, χωρήσειν καὶ αὐτὸ πρὸς τὰ ὄνομα.
whereas the psychic soul is created according to the likeness of God (Gen. 1:26). The spiritual part of the soul is distinct (κατ’ ἰδίαν) from these lower elements of the soul, because it has been created according to the Savior’s angels and implanted secretly into Adam’s earthly soul (Gen. 1:27; 2:7). It was then Seth only who activated the spiritual nature inherited from his father, Adam.

The seed of Seth in the Valentinian accounts parallels Philo’s conception of it as another seed (σπέρμα ἕτερον) or the seed virtue (σπέρμα ἀρετῆς). The figure of Seth is a symbol of those who have activated their spiritual potentialities. In Philo, the seed of Seth became both one and many. On the one hand, it refers to the spiritual mind of Seth, but its presence expanded to the later generations (Noah, Abraham, Moses, etc.), who participated in the same seed of virtue. In the Valentinian system, the spiritual seed is both an inner man and an image of the ecclesia above, which means that the seed is both one and many.\textsuperscript{625} It is implanted in the soul of Adam and mediated to Seth, who is a symbol of the perfect man.\textsuperscript{626} The spiritual humans participate in the same seed of Seth, which was created as an image of the angels of the Savior.\textsuperscript{627}

In \textit{Exc. Theod.} 54 the natures of the descendants of Adam are related to their professions: Cain tills the soil and Abel tends the flock. As in Philo, the profession of Seth is not mentioned. It is only mentioned that Seth was spiritual and, therefore, he neither tends the flock nor tills the soil, but produces a child as the spiritual beings do (Ὁτι δὲ πνευματικός ὁ Σῆθ, οὔτε ποιμαίνει, οὔτε γεωργεῖ, ἀλλὰ παῖ δα καρποφορεῖ, ὡς τὰ πνευματικά). Seth represents a perfect human being who does not work like those who are still progressing (Abel) or who are attracted to fleshly things (Cain), but instead produces spiritual offspring. The term καρποφορεῖν resembles the expression in Valentinus’s psalm \textit{Harvest}, which was discussed in the previous chapter. Valentinus writes that the Spirit produces a harmonious soul which is depicted as begetting children and producing fruit from the depths (ἐκ δὲ βυθοῦ καρποὺς φερομένους, ἐκ μήτρας δὲ βρέφος φερόμενον).\textsuperscript{628}

\textsuperscript{625} Iren. \textit{Haer.} 1.5.4.

\textsuperscript{626} It is likely that the view that Seth was the first perfect man, who could activate the spiritual potentialities inherited from his father was based on Gen. 5:3: “When Adam had lived 130 years, he had a son in his own likeness, in his own image; and he named him Seth.” Seth was a perfect copy of Adam’s soul and therefore, he possessed all the essences of his father, including the spiritual nature.

\textsuperscript{627} Iren. \textit{Haer.} 1.4.5.

\textsuperscript{628} It is not clear, however, whether producing fruit refers to producing good works or winning converts. Paul compared the good character with the fruits of the Spirit: “But the fruit of the Spirit (ὁ δὲ καρπὸς τοῦ πνεύματος) is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Against such things, there is no law.” (Gal. 5:22-23). In the Gospel of John producing fruits was also used as a metaphor for making converts. “You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you. I have appointed you to go and produce fruit (καρπὸν φέρητε) that will last, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he will give it to you.” (John. 15:16). According to Irenaeus, the Valentinian
In Philo’s allegory, Seth represents the mind, which “waters” the bodily organs in harmony with the cosmic mind, i.e. the Logos. Seth is a perfect man who controls his sense perceptions and gives honor to God for everything. Although Seth in the Valentinian allegory is also a symbol of a perfect man, the metaphor of his profession is somewhat different. Seth does not “water” the lower soul parts, but he “produces fruit.” In both cases, however, the metaphor of Seth’s essence is related to natural growth. It reflects the ancient ideal of the perfect human being who obeys right reason intuitively, “by nature”, without any command or instruction.629

While Seth represents perfection, Abel in Philo’s allegory belongs in the middle category. He is not perfect, but he is struggling against passions and making progress in the virtuous life. In the Valentinian account, Abel is referred to as a psychic human who can reach salvation according to his choice. He is equal with those in Philo’s teaching who are making progress in virtue being on the boundary between two extremes. They frequently go up and down as on a ladder, whereas the wicked, i.e. those who are similar to Cain, will go to Hades.630

The Valentinian allegory of Cain, Abel and Seth is thus closer to Philo’s symbolic view than to the Gnostic speculation of Seth’s race. In the Valentinian accounts Cain, Abel, and Seth are allegorical symbols of the categories of humankind, not progenitors of distinct “races.” Seth is associated with the spiritual seed, which is distinct from the seed of Cain and Abel. This parallels Philo’s depiction of Seth as “another seed.” Both accounts can be interpreted in the light of Aristotelian theories concerning the generation of the “mind,” i.e. the intellect, which is another genus compared with the rational part of the soul.631 Although the intellect is inherited – in most cases – simultaneously through natural procreation by God’s providence, it must be awakened and made active through philosophy and contemplation.632

---

629 Ismo Dunderberg, Gnostic Morality Revisited (WUNT 347; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015), 81-86.
630 Somn. 1.151
631 De Anim. II, 2.
632 It seems that later on the symbolical and mythical merged in the Valentinian and Sethian Gnostic traditions. Hippolytus (Ref. 5.20) describes some Gnostic groups which developed the role of Seth in a more symbolical direction. Seth functions as a symbol of Light that is contrasted with Darkness (Cain) and the Intermediate Spirit (Abel). Cf. Pearson, “Seth in the Gnostic Literature,” 490-491. Although the illicit generation of Cain and Abel is absent in the accounts of Irenaeus and Clement, it is attested in Val. Exp. 38:22 according to which the Devil begot Cain and Abel. Cf. Geliahu A. G. Stroumsa, Another Seed: Studies in Gnostic Mythology (Leiden: Brill, 1984, 33-34.)
7.5 The allegory of the patriarchs and the allegory of Israel

Philo says that all humans share the same spiritual goal. According to Philo, "God has created no soul absolutely barren of good, even if the employment of that good be beyond the reach of some people." However, only a few persons can reach perfection during their lifetime. Some of them are born as sages and some others re-born as sages. The majority of people are those who are making laborious progress and will not achieve regeneration (παλιγγενεσία) until they have left behind their earthly life. The transformation of the self and perfection can be reached according to Philo in different ways. The historical journeys of the patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob) represent the methods of spiritual growth, and their marriages are symbols of devotion to divine Wisdom.

Philo maintains that the triad of the patriarchs represents the common ancient pedagogical method through which one can reach the virtuous life and freedom from the fleshly passions. The perfection of the soul can be reached “through nature, learning and practice” (διὰ φύσεως καὶ μαθήσεως καὶ ἀσκήσεως). Philo calls these methods “gifts” (χάριτες) because they are divine means for perfecting the soul and achieving excellence. In this pedagogical

---

633 Leg. All. 1.34.
634 Wolfson, Philo II, 7-11, 83-84, 92. While the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob offer models for human perfection, the virtues of Moses, however, superceded the capabilities of ordinary humans. Moses was according to Philo, the greatest and most perfect of men (Mos. 1.1). The virtues of Moses went beyond what any Stoic sage could ever possess. Cf. David Winston, “Sage and Supersage,” 815-24; Ian W. Scott, “Is Philo’s Moses a Divine Man?” Studia Philonica Annual 14 (2002), 87-111. Sandmel maintains that although Moses was greater than the other patriarchs, his spiritual goal was the same as all other humans. The only differentiation made is only, how he reached the goal, for the goal is the same. Cf. Sandmel, Philo of Alexandria, 24-26, 56-62, 84-88; also Burket, “Philo on Immortality,” 455. I suggest, however, that Moses was exceptional and the final destiny of Moses also differed from that of other sages. The difference between Moses and other human beings did not concern only the method through which the perfection was achieved, but its quality.

635 Philo’s allegories of the patriarchs parallel with Neoplatonists, who saw the adventures of Odysseus as descriptions of the soul’s journey to its true homeland in heaven. Thomas Tobin points out that this kind of allegorical interpretation is also attested in Numenius (Fragment 33). The closest parallel comes, however, from Plutarch. In Quest. Conv. 9.14.6 Plutarch’s teacher M. Annius Ammonius talks about the interpretation of the encounter between Odysseus and the Sirens. The music of the Sirens attracts the soul upward after its death. The event in the physical world of the myth has become an archetype of the soul’s ascent into heaven. Tobin suggests that this Homeric allegory of Plutarch is quite similar to Philo’s allegories of journeys of the patriarchs, which depict the soul’s journey to heaven. Cf. Tobin, The Creation of Man, 150-151; Winston, Logos, 36-37.

636 Praem. 27-51; Abr. 54. The three elements necessary to the acquisition of virtue go back to Aristotle, and it was adopted in the Platonic tradition of Alexandria. In the Pythagorica, the triad is mentioned in the form physis, ascesis, and eidesis. See Dillon, The Middle Platonists, 152. Wolfson
triad Abraham represents “learning” through faith (πίστις). Isaac is a symbol of virtue, which is based on “nature” and spiritual joy (χαρά). Jacob represents virtue which was based on “practice” and rewarded by the vision of God (ὅρασις θεοῦ). Philo maintained, however, that these methods were not three distinct means to the virtuous life, as some philosophers taught, but they instead formed a unified whole.

But indeed, we must not fail to note that each possesses the three qualities but gets his name from that which chiefly predominates in him. For teaching cannot be consummated without nature or practice, nor is nature capable of reaching its zenith without learning and practicing, nor practice either unless the foundation of nature.

Although all these methods were needed for the virtuous life, the intuitive knowledge, represented by Isaac had a special role in the pedagogical triad. It was based on one’s innate character and served as a root (ῥίζα) for the other two methods. Philo says that any practice or learning is of no use without a good character. Although all humans possess to some degree an innate capacity for virtuous life, this capacity must be strengthened by education and practice to reach its perfection.

There being, then, three methods by which wisdom increases, it is the first and third that are most intimately connected; for what comes by practice is the offspring and product of that which comes by learning; whereas that which comes by nature is, to be sure, kin with them, being like a root at the bottom of all three.

Michael L. Satlow suggests, however, that Isaac is not “imitable” because he possessed perfection from his birth, like Moses. Only the two other methods, the way of Abraham (learning) and the way of Jacob (practice) are open to “ordinary humans.” Satlow maintains that learning, i.e. philosophy, is the superior path because it changes the ontological status of the human soul, whereas the way of Jacob, i.e. ascesis, leads to “non-linear progress.” Although Abraham evidently reached perfection during his lifetime, Jacob’s

has pointed out that there was disagreement between the Peripatetic and Stoic traditions of philosophical paideia, and Philo was actually closer to the Peripatetic tradition. Cf. Wolfson, Philo II, 196-199.

Satlow sees that these two paths, philosophy and practice, were exemplified in two ancient communities described by Philo: the Therapeutae followed Abraham’s model in their contemplative life, whereas the Essenes represented the path of Jacob. See Michael L. Satlow, “Philo on Human Perfection,” *JTS* 59 (2008), 511-512, 515-518.

Abr. 53.

Somn. 1.169.
character remained vague. It is doubtful whether he reached perfection at all.\textsuperscript{640}

According to Philo, all patriarchs represented the spiritual Israel, although the name Israel was given first to Jacob as he wrestled with the angel of God.\textsuperscript{641} Philo states that the name Israel means allegorically “a human being who sees God.”\textsuperscript{642} Philo’s allegory of the pedagogical triad is not mentioned in the Valentinian sources. However, the allegory of “Israel as the one who sees God” is mentioned in \textit{Exc. Theod.} 56.5.\textsuperscript{643} The context of the allegory of Israel is the eschatological gathering of the psychics and pneumatics in the light of Paul’s metaphor of the olive tree in Romans 11:23-26.

\begin{quote}
When, then, the psychics “are engrafted on the olive tree” into faith and incorruptibility and share “the fatness of the olive tree” and when “the Gentiles come in,” then “thus shall all Israel be saved.” But Israel means allegorically a pneumatic one, who sees God, the legitimate son of faithful Abraham, he who was born of the free woman, not he who was born according to flesh from the Egyptian slave. Therefore, it happens from the three categories the formation of the pneumatic and a change of the psychic from slavery to freedom.\textsuperscript{644}
\end{quote}

The allegory of Israel also appears in Clement’s writings. Clement mentions it in \textit{Paed.} 1.57.2 and in \textit{Strom.} 1.31.4.\textsuperscript{645} It is noteworthy that the allegory of

\textsuperscript{640} Mut. 83-86. The names of the patriarchs reflect their regenerated self. Philo notices that Jacob is occasionally called in the Bible by his former name. This may mean that the change of Jacob’s ontological status was vague.

\textsuperscript{641} Mig. 125; Abr. 56-57; Praem. 44.

\textsuperscript{642} Congr. 140-147; Somn. I 170-171. The allegory of Israel is attested twelve times in the writings of Philo: \textit{Fug.} 139, 208, Conf. 92, 146, \textit{Heres} 78, Mut. 82-83, Somn. 1.171, Somn. 2.173, Praem. 44, Congr. 51, Abr. 57, Mig. 125. Philo mentions many times the faculty of seeing as a characteristic of the perfect human being, but it is not always related to the allegory of Israel. Generally, Philo compared knowing with seeing: God’s voice was not heard, but seen.

\textsuperscript{643} Exc. Theod. 56.5.

\textsuperscript{644} Τὸ μὲν οὖν πνευματικὸν φύσει σωζόμενον· τὸ δὲ ψυχικὸν, αὑτεξούσιον ὄν, ἐπιτηδειότητα ἔχει πρὸς τε πίστιν καὶ ἀφθαρσίαν, καὶ πρὸς ἀπειθίαν καὶ φθοράν, κατὰ τὴν οἰκείαν αgpioν· τὸ δὲ ὑλικὸν φύσει ἀπολλύται. Ὑπονοοῦμεν, ἂν τὰς ἀγγέλους ὑπερισχύει πρὸς τὴν αὐτήν, καὶ τοῦτο ὑποκειμένον ἀπὸ τὴν θεώσεως καὶ τῆς ἁγίας.Петербург, ὑποπτών τῶν θεῶν, ἐκ τοῦ πιστῶν ἀμαρίου ὡς γνήσιος ἢ ἐκ τῆς ἐλευθερίας, οὐχ ὡς ἐκατὸ πάροικος, ἢ ἐκ τῆς δούλης τῆς Ἀιγύπτου Γίνεται οὖν, ἢ τῶν γενέων τῶν τριῶν, τοῦ μὲν μόρφου τοῦ πνευματικοῦ, τοῦ δὲ μετάθεσις τῆς ψυχικοῦ ὑπὸ διόδιας εἰς ἐλευθερίαν.

\textsuperscript{645} In \textit{Paed.} 1.57.2 the allegory of Israel is related to the interpretation of Jacob’s wrestling with an angel, in which the context was the naming of Jacob. It is noteworthy that the angel who wrestled with Jacob was according to Clement the Logos, God, the “teacher” (ὁ θεός, ὁ λόγος, ὁ παιδαγωγός). Philo calls the Logos an angel in Mut. 87, which is quite likely behind Clement’s interpretation. In \textit{Strom.} 1.31.4 the allegory of Israel is related to the discussion of the wives of the patriarchs and the change of Jacob’s
Israel in *Strom.* 1.31.4 is part of one of the four main blocks where Clement mentions Philo by name: “ἐρμηνεύει δὲ ὁ Φίλων ...” (1.31.1). Therefore, it is sure that this allegory goes back to Philo. In addition to *Strom.* 1.31.1, Clement mentions Philo by name in *Strom.* 1.72.4, 1.153.2 and 2.100.3. It is therefore highly plausible to suggest that the Valentinian variant of the allegory in *Exc. C* also goes back to Philo. It is noteworthy that in *Exc. Theod.* 56.5 the allegory of Israel is related to Isaac, who is depicted as “a lawful son” of Abraham. Significantly, there is only one occasion in Philo, in *Fug.* 208, where he connects the allegory of Israel to Isaac:

*For so doing thou shalt give birth with easy travail to a male offspring, Ishmael by name, since thou shalt have been chastened by hearkening to words of God; Hearing takes the second place yielding the first to sight, and sight is the portion of Israel, the lawful and firstborn son; for “seeing God” is the translation of Israel. It is possible to hear the false and take it for true because hearing is deceptive, but sight, by which we discern what really is, is devoid of falseness.*

The term used by Philo for Isaac is γνήσιος υἱός, which appears 14 times in Philo. It is used five times as a designation for Isaac (*Abr.* 110, 132, 168 and 254), but Philo uses it only once in the allegory of Israel. It is noteworthy that Isaac is not called “lawful son” in Septuagint or other surviving Hellenistic Jewish material. It is rather likely that Philo himself invented the term. The term “lawful son” is not restricted in Philo to Isaac only. Also, Jacob’s sons with Leah are called “lawful sons” and Moses is contrasted with his father’s “lawful sons.” In these cases the term “lawful son” refers to the offspring who are born in a legal marriage and it does not have distinctively spiritual meaning. The spiritual connotation of the term is, however, quite evident in the case of Isaac. Philo says that the holiest mystery for those who have been initiated into the allegorical mysteries of Torah is that it was God's name. It is likely, then, that the allegory in *Strom.* 1.31.4 is a combination of Philo’s *Congr.* 51 and *Her.* 36 where Philo declares that Jacob is finally initiated into the “seeing race” (διορατικῷ γένει). Cf. van den Hoek, *Clement of Alexandria,* 181.  

646 οὕτως γὰρ πραϋτόκοις ὠδῖσιν ἄρρενα γενεὰν ἀποκυήσεις, ὄνομα Ἰσμαήλ᾽ ἀκοαῖς θείαις σωφρονισθεῖσα· ἑρμηνεύεται γὰρ Ἰσμαήλ ἀκοὴ θεοῦ. ἀκοὴ δ' ὁράσεως τὰ δευτερεῖα φέρεται, ὅρασιν δὲ ὁ γνήσιος υἱὸς καὶ πρωτόγονος Ἰσραὴλ κεκλήρωται· μεταληφθεὶς γάρ ὁρῶν θεόν. ἀκούειν μὲν γὰρ καὶ ψευδῶν ὡς ἀληθῶν ἐνέστι, ὅτι ἀπατηλὸν ἀκήκοα, ἀψευδὲς δ' ὅρασις, ἔτι ἑκάστῳ ὄντως κατανοεῖται.  

647 The term “lawful son” has a spiritual meaning in *Corpus Hermeticum* (*CH* 13) where Tat wants an explanation for the regeneration and begs: “Do not refuse me, father; I am your true son (γνήσιος υἱός); tell me fully the way of rebirth?” (Translation by Salaman, Van Oyen, Wharton, Mahé, *New Translation of the Corpus Hermeticum* (Rochester: Inner Traditions, 2000), 13. The term γνήσιος υἱός appears once in Clement (*Quis Dives Salvetus* IX) as a designation for Christ. This might have been caused by Clement’s tendency to equate Isaac and Christ.  

648 *Leg.All.* 2.94; *Deus.* 121.
who begat Isaac.\footnote{Leg. All. 2.218; Mut. 137.} The name Isaac means “laughter,” because God is the creator of joy and is Isaac’s real father. In Fug. 208 Isaac is called not only “lawful son” but also a first-born (πρωτόγονος) son, which depicts the divine origin of Isaac as a son of God (υἱὸς θεοῦ). Thus, Isaac is an earthly image of the Logos, whom Philo calls the archetypical first-born (πρωτόγονος) son of God.\footnote{Conf. 146-147.} Strikingly, the two passages in Exc. Theod. 56.5 and Philo’s Fug. 208 are the only surviving instances where Isaac as a “lawful son of Abraham” and the allegory of Israel are explicitly brought together. It is therefore evident that the Valentinian teachers knew a similar kind of teaching as in Philo’s Fug. 208 which they incorporated into the allegory of the olive tree in Paul’s letter to the Romans. It is specifically the category of the psychics that is engrafted onto the olive tree, i.e. Israel, who represents a spiritual human being who sees God. Therefore, the passage in Exc. Theod. 56.5 is the clearest evidence of the Valentinian teaching according to which the psychics are explicitly said to be changed into the pneumatics. The psychics, “who are born according to the flesh from the Egyptian slave,” experience a change “from slavery to freedom.” In the end, the psychics will become the children of the free woman and share the same salvation as those who are spiritually lawful sons.

It is not clear whether the Valentinian allegory of Israel speaks about the coming together of two groups, i.e. the psychics and pneumatics, or whether it depicts the transformation of the mind. Ismo Dunderberg has argued that the latter option is the most probable view. He maintains that the transformation of the psychics into pneumatics “can be understood as a description of the ideal state of mind in which the soul has made the right choice – it has chosen the spirit instead of matter – and the spirit and the soul now reside together in perfect harmony.”\footnote{Dunderberg, “Paul and Valentinian Morality,” 166.} Dunderberg’s interpretation means that becoming the children of free women depicts the transformation of the self, not necessarily the unification of two groups of humans. The collective interpretation is, however, also possible, which would mean that

\footnote{649 Leg. All. 2.218; Mut. 137.} \footnote{650 Conf. 146-147. The allegory of Israel as the firstborn who sees God also appears in the Gnostic document On the Origin of the World (NHC II, 5). The allegory is linked to the creation of a congregation of angels, a firstborn called Israel, and Jesus, before the creation of earthly human beings (Orig. World 105, 20-106, 19). In this passage Israel does not refer to the earthly human being, the legitimate son of Sarah and Abraham, but he is merely seen as a divine being together with the angels and Jesus. It is unlikely, then, that the author of the Orig. World would have been dependent on Philo but he may have been familiar with the Valentinian teaching where the allegory of Israel appears. There also are some other Valentinian motifs in Orig. World, such as the tripartite division of humankind into spiritual, psychic, and earthly categories (Orig. World 121, 27-123, 2). Cf. Birger Pearson, Gnosticism and Christianity in Roman and Coptic Egypt (New York; T&T Clark, 2004), 69.}
the salvation of the psychics means engrafting oneself onto those who are perfect. The idea of collective salvation is also attested in the Gospel of Philip.

In this world, slaves serve the free. In heaven’s kingdom, the free will serve the slaves and the attendants of the bridal chamber will serve the wedding guests. The attendants of the bridal chamber have only one name, and that is rest. When they are together they need no other form, [for they are in] contemplation...perception. They are superior...among those in...the glories of glories...\textsuperscript{652}

In this passage, the task of those who are free is to serve and unite with those who are slaves. Although the categories of “psychics” and “pneumatics” are not mentioned in this passage, it fits rather well with the soteriological vision attested in Exc. Theod. 56.5. The salvation of the psychics is dependent on the union with the perfect ones. The pneumatics are the salt and light of the world and they are supposed to form unions with the psychics.\textsuperscript{653} It seems, however, that the unification of the psychics and the pneumatics in Valentinian soteriology was a process which may already begin during one’s earthly life, but it will be made perfect in the eschatological salvation.

7.6 The immortality of the soul and the practice of dying

In Valentinian soteriology the ultimate telos of the immortal soul involved assimilation with the aeons of the Pleroma. Although some souls were not capable of receiving spiritual enlightenment, in most cases the transformation of the soul was based on one’s choice. There may have been some exceptional human beings who were perfect since their birth, like Isaac or Moses in Philo’s writings. They were super-sages, whose intellectual capability superseded the level of any other sages. For those who were progressing towards the virtuous life, perfection was related combating bodily passions. In the allegory of Adam and Eve, the separation of the sexes was seen as a distinction between the divine and the irrational soul. Salvation meant a return to the pre-lapsarian unity of the soul. In Philo, the re-unification of the sexes was seen as an archetype for controlling one’s emotions by reason, which can be understood as an allegorical elaboration based on Plato’s teachings concerning the cultivation of the soul (cf. e.g. Rep. 4.430e-431b). Philo describes enlightenment of the soul as dying for the body and this world, which also was a Platonic commonplace. The “practice of dying” was the sign of the wise human being because it returned the soul to the stage before the separation of the sexes and the fall. This same idea is also attested in the fragment of Valentinus, which is preserved by Clement of Alexandria in Strom. 4.89:1-3.

\textsuperscript{652} Gos.Phil. 72:17-29. Translated by Marvin Meyer.

\textsuperscript{653} Iren. Haer. 1.6.1.
And Valentinus writes in some homily, word for word: “From the beginning you are immortal, and children of eternal life, and you wished to divide death between you, that you might consume and dissolve it, and death might die in you and through you. For when you dissolve the world and yourselves are not dissolved, then you will rule over the creation and over all of corruption.”654

There have been attempts to interpret Valentinus’s fragment in the light of Pauline and Johannine views. The dying of death may refer to baptism.655 In some cases, it has been seen as criticism towards martyrdom656 or the Christian Eucharist.657 It is also possible to interpret Valentinus’s fragment in connection with the later Valentinian systems in Theodotos’s fragments and the Tripartite Tractate. Clement’s comment which follows Valentinus’s quotation may support that interpretation. The phrases “from the beginning” and “children” may refer to the beginning of the existence of the seed of Sophia and their descent into the realm of death, i.e. the sense perceptible world.658

The phrase “death will die” (ἀποθάνῃ ὁ θάνατος) in Valentinus’s fragment is evidently an allusion to Gen. 2:17, which contains God’s warning to Adam and Eve not to eat from the tree of knowledge, because they will “die by death” (θανάτῳ ἀποθανεῖσθε) on that day. It seems, however, that Valentinus has converted the meaning of Gen. 2:17: it is no longer death which will cause dying, but death itself is going to die. The closest parallels with Valentinus’s fragment come from Hellenistic Jewish wisdom theology and the theory of immortality in Philo, who distinguished between physical death and the death of the soul.659 Philo clarifies the distinction between two deaths in Leg. All. 1.105.

654 Οὐαλεντινῖνος δὲ ἔν τινι ὁμιλίᾳ κατὰ λέξιν γράφει· ἀπ’ ἀρχῆς ἀθάνατοι ἐστε καὶ τέκνα ζωῆς ἐστε αἰωνίως καὶ τὸν θάνατον ἠθέλητε μερίσασθαι ἐς ἑαυτούς, ἵνα δαπανήσητε αὐτὸν καὶ ἀναλώσητε, καὶ ἀποθάνῃ ὁ θάνατος ἐν ὑμῖν καὶ δι’ ὑμῶν. ὅταν γὰρ τὸν μὲν κόσμον λύητε, ὑμεῖς δὲ μὴ καταλύησθε, κυριεύετε τῆς κτίσεως καὶ τῆς φθορᾶς ἁπάσης. Translated by Einar Thomassen in The Spiritual Seed, 460. Clement continues the summary: “Now, like Basilides he supposes that there are people that by its very nature are saved; that this race, indeed, has come down to us for the destruction of death; and that the origination of death is the work of the creator of the world. Accordingly, he understands the scriptural passage (Ex. 33:20): ‘No one shall see that face of God and live’ as though God were the cause of death.” Cf. also Layton, The Gnostic Scriptures, 240.


657 For the summary of different interpretations, cf. Dunderberg, Beyond Gnosticism, 35–37, esp. notes on page 217.

658 Thomassen, The Spiritual Seed, 460-465.

659 Dunderberg, Beyond Gnosticism, 37-45.
And further, he says, “In the day in which you eat of it you shall die the death.” And yet, after they have eaten, not merely do they not die, but they beget children and become authors of life for others. What then is to be said to this? That death is of two kinds, one that of the man in general, the other that of the soul in particular. The death of the man is the separation of the soul from the body, but the death of the soul is the decay of virtue and the bringing in of wickedness.660

Philo explains that there are two kinds of death. The phrase θανάτῳ ἀποθανεῖν does not refer to the death of the body, which is natural death, but to the death of the soul or spiritual death. The natural death waits for everybody, whereas the death of the soul is the punishment for the wicked. This means that some humans may have experienced soul-death even before their physical death.661 According to Philo, natural death, which is the separation of the soul from the body, is actually a good thing for the virtuous soul, and it should be “practiced” through philosophical study. Those who have died to the life in the body have separated themselves from the body even before their physical death. They are kings and rulers of the body as they contemplate the divine realm “through the eye of the soul.”662

For Philo, the contemplative life is a way of dying to the body and renouncing the bodily passions which will lead to wickedness. Emma Wasserman summarizes Philo’s view: “Wickedness is personified as a being that works together with passions to entomb the soul, because passions are the root cause of wickedness and vice.”663 Philo describes how souls have descended to the body as in the river. They are at one time carried away and swallowed up by the voracity of a most violent whirlpool and, at another time, they strive with all their power to resist its power. Virtuous souls must practice dying to the life of the body through philosophy to attain immortality and should resist the passions of the body.

These last, then, are the souls of those who have given themselves to genuine philosophy, who from first to last study to die to the life in the body that a higher existence immortal and incorporeal, in the presence of Him, who is Himself immortal and uncreated, may be their portion.664

---

660 λέγει γε μήν· “Ἦν ἡμέρα φάγητε ἀπ’ αὐτοῦ θανάτῳ ἀποθανεῖσθε” καὶ φαγόντες οὐχ οἷον οὐκ ἀποθνῄσκουσιν ἀλλὰ καὶ παιδοποιοῦνται καὶ έτέρους τοῦ ζῆν αἴτιοι καθίστανται τί οὖν λεκτέον; ὅτι διττός εστὶ θάνατος, ὁ μὲν ἀνθρώπου χωρισμός ἐστι τῆς ψυχῆς ἀπὸ σώματος, ὁ δὲ ψυχῆς ἱερατικὴς φθορά ἐστι κακίας δὲ ἀνάληψις.

661 QG 1.16, 45, 51.

662 QG 1. 86; Somn. 2.244. Cf. Dunderberg, Beyond Gnosticism, 40-41.

663 Wasserman, The Death of the Soul, 63.

664 αὕτε μὲν οὖν εἰσὶν ψυχαὶ τῶν ἀνόθως φιλοσοφησάντων, εἴς ἀρχὴς ἀρχὴ τέλους μελετῶσαν τὸν μετὰ σωμάτων ἀποθνῄσκειν βίον, ἵνα τῆς ἀσωμάτου καὶ ἀφθάρτου παρὰ τῷ ἀγενήτῳ καὶ ἀφθάρτῳ ἐκκοσμήσαιν. (Gig. 14).
Philo is evidently dependent on Plato who says in *Phaed.* 64a, 67d that the philosophical way of life is “to study nothing but dying and being dead” (οὐδὲν ἄλλο αὐτοὶ ἐπιτηδεύουσιν ἢ ἀποθνῄσκειν τε καὶ τεθνάναι). Salvation is the separation of the soul from the body. Therefore, the practice of the philosophers is to separate the soul from the body (τὸ μελέτημα αὐτὸ τούτο ἐστιν τὸν φιλοσόφον, λύσις καὶ χωρισμός ψυχῆς ἀπὸ σώματος). In *Det.* 32-34 Philo says that virtuous men even pray for diseases in their practice of dying (μελετῶντες ἀποθνῄσκειν).665 Valentinus’s interpretation of Gen. 2:17 can be understood in the light of Philo’s teaching concerning spiritual death and the practice of dying. Human beings possess immortality, and they must consume the physical death so that it will die. Valentinus stressed that his disciples wanted death to be divided to them. This parallels Philo’s teaching according to which virtuous men may even pray for diseases when practicing dying.666 The ruling of the entire corruption refers to the annihilation of the bodily passions.667 As in Philo, kingship means self-control and ruling the body and its pleasures as well as the senses and speech. This could happen as the human mind “knows himself” and gives the honor of everything to God alone.668 For Philo, the archetype for the perfect sage was Moses, who can be equated with the philosopher-king who spent his life mediating on dying to the bodily life. The purpose of the philosophical life was assimilation with the Logos, i.e. the cosmic Mind, which Philo understood as an “immortal” (ἀφθάρτος) and bodiless (ἀσωμάτος) existence alongside the unbegotten and incorruptible God.669 The exhortation of the High Priest not to enter a place where there is a dead body (Lev 21:11) was interpreted as an exhortation to stay away from the passions and wickedness, which can pollute and destroy the soul.670

According to Valentinus’s teaching immortality as a way of contemplative life was based on the principal immortality of the human soul. It is similar to the teachings attested in the *Gospel of Thomas*, which supposed that the divine image was not lost in humankind, but is still present.671 The phrase ἀπ᾽

665 Yli-Karjanmaa points out that Philo uses the expression “the practice of dying” both in the Platonic form (*Gig.* 13-14) but also in further developments (e.g. *Det.* 34). Cf. Yli-Karjanmaa, *Philo and Reincarnation*, 122-123.

666 *Det.* 32-34.


668 *Migr.* 7-12.


670 Fug. 113-114.

671 *Gos.Thom.* 11, 85. Cf. Dunderberg, *Beyond Gnosticism*, 44-45; Elaine Pagels, “Exegesis of Genesis 1 in the Gospel of Thomas and John,” in *JBL* 118 (1999), 477-496; Stevan Davies, “The Christology and Protology of the *Gospel of Thomas*,” *JBL* 111 (1992), 663-682. The relation between Philo of Alexandria and the *Gospel of Thomas* cannot be handled thoroughly in this study. It is not contrary to reason to suggest that the *Gospel of Thomas* was written in the scholarly circles of
ἀρχῆς may have a double meaning in Valentinus’s fragment: it is a temporal expression (“since the beginning”), but it also refers to immortality as the principal condition of the soul at its present stage (“basically”). Philo maintains, however, that the first human being was spiritually superior to the present race of humankind. Just as sculptures are inferior imitations of the original model or the degree of magnetic attraction weakens from iron to iron, so the human soul has lost its original power through the generations. Despite this degeneration of humanity, the rational spirit of the human soul is a fragment of the divine intellect, which is potentially inherited from the parents and it can be still found and vivified as one begins to live a contemplative life and die to the bodily passions.

It is probable that Valentinus was dependent on the Hellenistic Jewish anthropological theology according to which the potentiality of salvation was present since the creation of the first human being, and it was inherited through natural procreation to the later generations. Potential immortality required, however, the external impetus to become active. The Valentinian teachers suggested that only a few human beings have taken up the possibility of acquiring spiritual gifts. Most human beings have lost their spirituality and dissolved into the fleshly passions. It is possible that this view was based on the fact that the essences, which were once deposited into Adam’s soul have gradually weakened, as Philo taught.

It is noticeable that Valentinus does not connect immortality to crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus or the baptism or any ritual practices of early Christianity. Immortality is a gift that has been implanted in the soul of Adam and his descendants, although it must be actualized through correct teaching. This soteriological view parallels the Valentinian myth in Iren. Haer. 1.1-7 and Exc. C which does not contain any etiology of the sacraments, but an etiology of the emotions and how they can be healed through knowledge.

7.7 The eschatological wedding feast and the unification with the angels

The Valentinian allegory of the spiritual Israel contains a vision of the unification of the psychics and pneumatics. In the light of Philo’s division of humankind, the allegory can be seen as a unification of the perfect ones

Alexandria, which owed much to the intellectual heritage of Platonizing Judaism, which was similar to that of Philo’s. The relation between Philo and the Gospel of Thomas is discussed in Ivan Miroshnikov’s newly published dissertation The Gospel of Thomas and Plato: A Study of the Impact on the “Fifth Gospel” (Academic dissertation to be publicly discussed, by due permission of the Faculty of Theology at the University of Helsinki; Unigrafia), 2016.

672 Opif. 140-141.
673 Dunderberg, Beyond Gnosticism, 96-97.
(τέλειοι) and those who are making progress (προκόπτων) in the community of the believers. While the pneumatics have made the transformation of the soul firm, the psychics were still making progress in their fight against bodily passions. Irenaeus complained that Valentinian disregarded the ordinary Christians and called them psychics, “who possessed the grace for loan only.” In reality, Valentinians did not evaluate the psychics negatively because the existence of the different groups was a part of soteriological dynamics. Unlike the psychics, who were still progressing on the spiritual path, the pneumatics steadfastly possessed grace. Thus, some members have not yet made their calling firm, some others have stopped their spiritual development and possibly some have lost their calling altogether. The division among the believers did not lead, however, to two separate communities, but a mixed community, where the “have-nots” can benefit from the advanced ones. The allegory of Israel can be understood both as a description of individual mental transformation and as a collective event in which the pneumatics were united with the psychics. It is not clear, however, whether this unification takes place in the presence of or the eschatological fulfillment of salvation.

Philo discusses the afterlife in the commentary on the death of Abraham in *Her.* 280-283 and evaluates some popular opinions concerning the destiny of the soul after death. Philo tries to find a proper interpretation of the expression that Abraham was taken to his fathers. Philo rejected the literal interpretation of the “fathers” and enumerated three alternative explanations about the place to which Abraham departed. Firstly, the destiny of Abraham’s soul may have been the realm of the sun, the moon, and the other stars. Secondly, it may refer to the intelligible cosmos and the commonwealth among the incorporeal Ideas (ἀσωμάτων ἰδεῶν πολιτείᾳ). Thirdly, the fathers may refer to the elements of the world out of which the body and the soul are made (earth, water, air, fire, and ether). The first and the third option were ruled out by Philo. After death, the souls of the sages will be integrated into the intelligible cosmos from which the human intellect is a fragment. In *Gig.* 61 Philo says that those who are born of God are priests and prophets. They have quitted existence of the sense-perceptible world and perceived the

---

674 Iren. *Haer.* 1.6.4.

675 Dunderberg, *Beyond Gnosticism*, 147-148, 156-158. The relationship between the perfect and the progressive ones in the Valentinian community is described in the *Interpretation of Knowledge*: “Rather, by laboring with one another, they will work with one another, and if one of them suffers, they will suffer with him, and when each one is saved, they are saved together.”

676 *Leg. All.* 1.36-40, *Leg. All.* 3.161, *Her.* 281-83, *Somm.* 1.33-34, *Spec.* 4. 123, *Q.G.* 2.59. Although both the intellects of the heavenly bodies and human intellects were created as images of the Logos, it unlikely that the realm of the ethereal cosmic bodies would have been the final place for the saved. Philo stressed that the rational spirit of the human soul is not only a fragment (ἀπόσπασμα) of the ethereal spirit but something better, even a radiance (ἀπαύγασμα) of the blessed thrice-blessed nature of God.
THE ALLEGORICAL EXEGESIS OF CAIN, ABEL AND SETH AND ISRAEL AS A SPIRITUAL HUMAN BEING WHO SEES GOD

world which is perceptible only by the intellect. They have settled themselves in the kosmos noetos and are reckoned among the incorruptible incorporeal Ideas.

Philo identified the intelligible cosmos as the final place for the righteous souls with the abode of angels. Philo says in QG 3.11 that “the fathers” indicate “the incorporeal substances and inhabitants of the divine world, whom in other passages he is accustomed to call angels.” For Philo, the angels were incorporeal souls (ὐσωμάτους ψυχάς), pure intelligence in the likeness of the Monad (δι’ ὅλων νοεράς, λογισμοὺς ἀκραιφνεῖς, μονάδι ὀμοιομένας) and immortal logoi (ἄθανάτοις λόγοις). The angels were not identified with ideas, although their souls belong to the intelligible realm being the mediators of the knowledge of the Ideas. Philo says that the angels are divine intellects and ministers of the Ruler of all (ὑπάρχοι τοῦ πανηγεμόνος). Their task is to report (διαγγέλλειν) the commands of the Father to humankind from which their name is derived.678

In Sac. 1-5 Philo also speculates on the destinies of the patriarchs in the afterlife, and he makes a distinction between λαός (Gen. 25:9) and γενός (Gen.35:29). Philo says that Abraham and Jacob were both added (προστιθέναι) to the people. They were progressing through learning and practice and after death they were made equal to the angels (ἰδέα τις ἢ γένος ἢ σφραγίς). Isaac belonged to the self-taught race and he passed over (μεταανίστεναι) to the immortal and most perfect genus of beings (τὸ ἄφθαρτον καὶ τελεώτατον γένος.) In the light of Opif. 134-135, the term γενός refers to the heavenly man, who was created as an image of the Logos being “a kind of idea or genus or seal” (ἰδέα τις ἢ γένος ἢ σφραγίς).679

It seems that in Sac. 1-5 the distinction between “people” and “genus” illustrates the difference between progressive human beings and perfect human beings like Isaac. While there are many progressive people, there are only a few perfect ones who have participated in the genus of the heavenly man since their birth like Isaac. Therefore, the difference between “people” and “genus” did not concern differences regarding the final destiny of the soul, but the method through which salvation and the perfection of the soul were accomplished. It seems, however, that the category of progressive human beings is divided into two sub-categories: those who reached perfection during their life time like Abraham, and those who remained imperfect like Jacob.680

Philo maintains that the ruling part of the soul, i.e. the mind, should imitate the heavenly man, who desires his archetype, i.e. the Logos.681

677 Spec. 1.66; Winston, Logos, 33-34.
678 Somn. 1.140-141.
679 This is a difficult passage. Goodenough says: “I find it hard to take this passage seriously in its details.” Cf. Goodenough, "Philo on Immortality," 104 note 73.
680 Satlow, “Philo on Human Perfection,” 506.
681 Leg. All. 2.4.
was, however, an ontological distinction between the soul of the wise man and the Logos. Like the heavenly man who was not identified with the Logos, the sages were not assimilated with the Logos, but after death they were made logoi, i.e. similar to the angels. There was one exception to all human beings, who was able to ascend even above the “species and genera” (ἀνωτέρω προαγαγών εἶδη καὶ γένη) of the patriarchs and all wise human beings.682 He was the all-wise Moses, who differed from every other human being including the self-taught race of Isaac.

The difference between Moses and his ancestors did not concern only the method through which the perfection was achieved, but its quality.683 Moses did not have to learn to control his irrational impulses as Abraham or Jacob did, nor did he control the passions spontaneously like Isaac, for Moses’s rational soul was assimilated with the Logos without any mixture of the irrational impulses. While all other human beings were taken from their mortal bodily existence and added to the heavenly abode through physical death, Moses did not experience “subtraction or addition,” because he was already assimilated with the Logos before his death.684

For Philo, Moses was an exceptional human being. He became a kind of incarnated deity or an archetypical “Savior-figure” because he ruled not only his body through the dominant mind, like other sages, but he controlled both his body and mind.685 Moses’s ascent to the intelligible cosmos on Sinai represented his vocation in striving to become a philosopher-king, High-Priest, and prophet. During his ascent, Moses was metamorphosed as “god” and transformed from the world of becoming into the monadic existence of the Logos. Moses did not rule only his bodily passions but he became co-regnant and partner in the governance of God’s creation owing to his control of cosmic forces.686

At his death, Moses’s body and soul were converted into the indivisible Monad and into the mind, “pure as sunlight.”687 Moses could not die like the other sages because he had already separated from this body, which he left during death as a mere oyster shell. Philo maintains that nobody knows the place of the tomb of Moses following a widespread Jewish tradition which includes Moses among those who, like Enoch and Elijah, did not die a normal bodily death, but were simply shifted to their heavenly abode during their

682 Mig. 174-175.
684 Sac. 10; Mos. 2.288; Gig. 54. It is noteworthy that Philo speaks in Sac. 8 in the plural form of those who have advanced beyond “form and genus” to the same level as Moses. This would mean that Moses is not the only representative of his type of human being. It is likely that Philo has in mind those who have departed from the world in a similar manner as Moses, i.e. Elijah and Enoch.
685 Goodenough, By Light, Light, 224–229.
686 QE 2.29. Litwa, “The Deification of Moses”.
687 Mos. 1.1; 2.288.
life.\footnote{Deut. 34:6. Cf. Wolfson, \textit{Philo I}, 403-404; Litwa, “The Deification of Moses”} It is notable that Philo presents the life and apotheosis of Moses in a way which parallels playwriter Ezekiel’s \textit{Ἐξαγωγή}. Many verbal parallels, exegetical traditions, and thematic similarities demonstrate that it is likely that Philo knew Ezekiel’s play or similar kinds of stories which served as literary source material for Philo’s own portrayal of the life of the most wise Moses.\footnote{For a detailed investigation of Philo’s relation to Ezekiel’s play, cf. Gregory Sterling, “From the Thick Marshes of the Nile to the Throne of God: Moses in Ezekiel the Tragedian and Philo of Alexandria,” in \textit{The Studia Philonica Annual} 26 (2014), 115-133.}

Philo does not explicitly describe the destiny of imperfect souls. Philo taught, however, the conditional immortality of the soul and he clearly says that the soul may experience death as a punishment for wickedness, which is distinguished from the bodily death. It seems that the soul-death was only reserved for the worst types of persons.\footnote{Cf. Wasserman, \textit{The Death of the Soul}, 65.} There have been some attempts to integrate Philo’s soteriology with the Platonic transmigration of the soul. This would mean that imperfect souls must undergo further transmigrations to purge them before they can be added to the rank of embodied angels. David Winston suggests that Philo taught not only the pre-existence of the soul but the re-incarnation of the soul as well. The re-incarnation of the soul is caused by the fact that most of the human souls do not lose their love of the body after their death which causes their re-birth to a new body.\footnote{Somn. 1. 138.} The souls are selected for return according to the numbers and periods determined by nature.\footnote{Plant. 14.} These arguments can be found in the Middle Platonic literature as a proof of the subsequent reincarnations of the soul.\footnote{Winston, \textit{Logos}, 34-34, 41-42.} Most recently, Sami Yli-Karjanmaa has challenged the consensus of scholarly opinion in his thesis according to which Philo adopted the Platonic metempsychosis as an essential part of his soteriological system.\footnote{Yli-Karjanmaa regards \textit{Somn.} 1. 137-139 as one of the clearest cases where Philo describes the phenomenon of reincarnation. Cf. Yli-Karjanmaa, \textit{Reincarnation}, 129-150. Yli-Karjanmaa summarizes his argument as follows (pages 245-246): “In my view, although Philo is quite silent, he did want to communicate to his audience also the view that souls transmigrate. His vagueness is not impenetrable. This enables us to conclude that while he in his surviving works did not want the references to reincarnation to be immediately understood by anyone (\textit{Somn.} 1.139 is an exception) he did not want to hide his position so well that nobody can find it. Indeed, the history of Philonic scholarship on this issue bears testimony to precisely this: some scholars have found his references, others have not—or they have considered them isolated or anomalous. The question then becomes, can we better understand Philo’s anthropology, ethics, soteriology and individual eschatology with or without reincarnation, and, if without, what is the more probable alternative. The reasons for Philo’s reticence about explicitly speaking of reincarnation would merit a study of its own.”}
Philo evidently knew the Platonic doctrine of the transmigration of the souls and he used similar kinds of terminology. This does not mean, however, that he agreed with Middle Platonic teachers who taught metempsychosis. Actually, there are some critical elements in Philo’s anthropology which contradict the conception of reincarnation. In the allegory of Cain and Abel, Philo clearly says that Abel was regenerated in heaven after his death without mentioning any subsequent incarnations, even though it is clearly assumed that Abel was not a perfect man because he lost his “intellectual” battle against Cain’s useless argumentations. As I noted above, Jacob’s character also remained vague and it is not clear whether he reached perfection during his lifetime. He was added, however, to the realm of the angels after his death. Philo also stressed that perfection during one’s lifetime was reserved only for some exceptional human beings, who served as archetypes for all others. Philo says that God does not punish involuntary errors and imperfection if a human being is mostly making progress in a virtuous life. The ascending and descending angels in Jacob’s dream refer to the ebb and flow of those souls who are progressing towards the virtuous life. It seems that Philo converted the Platonic idea of transmigration of the soul to the transmigration of virtue during one’s lifetime, as the soul makes a laborious migration from the fleshly passion to the heavenly home. Philo therefore writes in *Immut.* 75-76 (cf. also 104-108):

> And so the Psalmist said somewhere (Ps. c. [ci.] 1), “I will sing to thee of mercy and judgement.” For if God should will to judge the race of mortals without mercy, His sentence will be one of condemnation, since there is no man who self-sustained has run the course of life from birth to death without stumbling, but in every case his footsteps steps have slipped through errors, some voluntary, some involuntary. So then that the race may subsist, though many of those which go to form it are swallowed up by the deep, He tempers His judgement with the mercy which He shews in doing kindness even to the unworthy. And not only does this mercy follow His judgement but it also precedes it. For mercy with Him is older than justice, since He knows who is worthy of punishment, not only after judgement is given, but before it.

With regard to the imperfect but repentant souls, the most credible view in Philo, in my opinion, is that they were transformed after their death into the rank of the angels. The perfect ones did not experience any transformation because they have been transformed already during their lifetime. Finally, all these human beings participated in the same spiritual genus of Israel who see God in heaven and return to the megalopolis from which they migrated into the body. Apparently, Clement of Alexandria followed Philo and believed

---

695 Sobr. 44-50; Mut. 185; Plant. 130-131; Abr. 128-130; QG 3.27.

696 Somn. 1:150-152.
that the vision of the divine things can be achieved to some extent during one’s stay on earth, but it reaches its climax after the death of the body, when the soul is able to fly back to its original place. It is not clear, however, whether Philo taught that human souls preserved their personality after death. The most logical conclusion in the light of Philo’s discussion in \textit{Sac.} 1-5 is that all human beings were finally made equal with each other and integrated into one \textit{genus} of human being, which is also depicted as the heavenly man. The heavenly man represents a collective personality in which the “races” of human beings (represented by Abraham and Isaac) were transformed into the single \textit{genus} of human beings (represented by Isaac).  

Speculations concerning the destiny of the perfect ones and those who were making progress form the basis for the Valentinian theory of the afterlife. In addition to the allegory of Israel and the olive tree discussed above, the theme of the union of the psychics and pneumatics is contained in the allegory of the wedding feast:

\begin{quote}
\textit{The rest of the spiritual ones on the Lord’s day, i.e. in the Ogdoad, which is called the Lord’s day, is with the Mother, who keeps their souls, the garments, until the end. The other faithful souls are with the Demiurge, but at the end, they also ascend into the Ogdoad. Then comes the marriage feast, which is common to all saved, until all are equal and know each other. Henceforth, the spiritual ones having put off their souls, together with the Mother, who leads the bridegroom, also leads bridegrooms, their angels, into intellectual and eternal marriage with the Syzygy. They will pass into the bride chamber through the Limit and attain the vision of the Father having become intellectual aeons. And the master of the feast, who is the best man of the marriage and friend of the bridegroom, standing before the bride chamber and hearing the voice of the bridegroom, rejoices greatly. This is the fullness of his joy and rest.}
\end{quote}

It seems that according to this particular passage, at the end salvation is given equally both to the spirituals and psychics, i.e. the other faithful souls. Those who are progressing are finally perfected, and the distinction between

\footnotesize

699 \textit{Exc.Theod.} 63-65. Ἡ μὲν οὖν τῶν πνευματικῶν ἀνάπαυσις ἐν κυριακῇ, ἐν Οὐχόδαδ, ὢ Κυριακῇ ὡνομᾶται, παρὰ τῇ Μητρί, ἐγράφοντας τὰς ψυχὰς, τὰ ἐνδύματα, ἄχρι συντελείας αἱ δὲ ἄλλαι πισταὶ ψυχαί, παρὰ τῷ Δημιουργῷ περὶ δὲ τὴν συντελείαν, ἀναγραφότας καὶ αὐτὰ εἰς Οὐχόδαδα. Ἐστὶ, τὸ δείπνου τῶν γάμων κοινὸν πάντων τῶν συμμεῖον, ἄχρις ἀνάπαυσθη πάντα καὶ ἄλληλα γνωρίσῃ. Τὸ δὲ ἐντεῦθεν, ἀποθέμενα τὰ πνευματικὰ τὰς ψυχὰς, ἀμα τῇ Μητρὶ κομιζόμενη τὸν Νυμφίον, κομιζόμενα καὶ αὐτὰ τοὺς νυμφίους, τοὺς Ἀγγέλους ἑαυτῶν, εἰς τὸν Νυμφῶνα ἐντὸς τοῦ ὸρος εἰσίσθαι, καὶ πρὸς τὴν τοῦ Πατρός ὄψιν ἐρχόμενα, Ἀδιόνες νοεροὶ γενόμενα, εἰς τοὺς νοεροὺς καὶ αἰωνίους γάμους τῆς συζυγίας. Ο ὁ δὲ τοῦ δείπνου μὲν “ἄρχητρικλανος”, τῶν γάμων δὲ αράνυμφος, “τὸν Νυμφίον δὲ Φίλος, ἐστίς ἐμπροσθεν τοῦ νυμφίου, ἀκούον τῆς φωνῆ τοῦ Νυμφίου, χαρὰ χαίρει.” Τοῦτο αὐτοῦ “τὸ λήρωμα τῆς χαρᾶς” καὶ τῆς ἀναπαύσεως.
psychic and spiritual humans will ultimately disappear. The eschatological wedding feast is an eschatological fulfillment of the transformation of the soul described in the allegory of Israel.\textsuperscript{700} There is, however, a parallel version of the description of the eschatology in Irenaeus, which may be a summary of the account in \textit{Exc. C}:

\begin{quote}
The spiritual ones, moreover, having put off their souls and having become intellectual spirits, will enter the Fullness without being apprehended or seen and will be given as brides to the angels who surrounded the Savior. Even the Demiurge himself will go into the region of his Mother, Sophia, into the middle. The righteous souls will also remain in the middle. For nothing of psychic essence enters the Pleroma.\textsuperscript{703}
\end{quote}

Basically, Irenaeus's version is compatible with Clement's longer account. Eschatological salvation is accomplished in two phases. In the first phase the pneumatics – i.e. those who have been made perfect already during their earthly life – will find rest in Ogdoad together with Sophia, who keeps their souls as wedding garments. This would mean that the psychic soul served as an instrumental soul-body for the spiritual seed. These perfect beings were contrasted with the “other faithful souls,” who were staying in the realm of the Demiurge. In the second phase, these psychic souls ascended to the Ogdoad, where they were made equal with the pneumatics, who have ascended before them. During the equalization of the saved all will be transformed into pneumatics, who will strip off their psychic souls, i.e. the instrumental soul-body, and enter the Pleroma. The mission of the pneumatics was to form a union with the psychics, which was finally actualized in the common marriage feast.\textsuperscript{702} The Demiurge, however, is left outside the Pleroma, and his repose is to watch the heavenly marriage feast common to all who were saved.\textsuperscript{703}

\textsuperscript{700} Dunderberg, \textit{Beyond Gnosticism}, 139-140; Elaine Pagels, “Conflicting Versions of Valentinian Eschatology: Irenaeus’s Treatise vs. the Excerpts from Theodotus,” \textit{HTW} 67 (1974), 35-53. McCue has defended the view according to which the hylic, psychic and spiritual categories were fixed and salvation was for the spiritual ones alone. The psychics will receive together with the Demiurge inferior salvation than the spiritual ones. James F. McCue, “Conflicting Versions of Valentinianism? Irenaeus and the \textit{Excerpta ex Theodoto},” in \textit{Rediscovery of Gnosticism, Vol. 1, The School of Valentinus} (ed. Bentley Layton; Leiden: Brill, 1980), 414-416.

\textsuperscript{701} Iren. \textit{Haer.} 1.7.1. Τοὺς δὲ πνευματικοὺς ἀποδυσαμένους τὰς ψυχὰς καὶ πνεύματα νοερὰ γενομένους, ἀκρατήτως καὶ ἀοράτως ἐντὸς πληρώματος εἰσελθόντας νύμφας ἀποδοθήσεσθαι τοῖς περὶ τὸν Σωτῆρα ἀγγέλοις. Τὸν δὲ Δημιουργὸν μεταβῆναι καὶ αὐτὸν εἰς τὴν τῆς μητρὸς Σοφίας τόπον, τοιοῦτον ἐν τῇ μεσότητι· τῶν τὸν δικαίων ψυχῶν νικαίωσασθαι καὶ αὐτῶς ἐν τῷ τῆς μεσότητος τόπῳ. Μηδὲν γὰρ ψυχικὸν ἐντὸς πληρώματος χωρεῖν.


\textsuperscript{703} Heracleon seems to think that good psychics like the Demiurge will be transformed into spiritual beings in the process of salvation. Cf. Thomassen, “Heracleon,” 190. In \textit{Exc.Theod.} 63-65 the
Irenaeus comments on Valentinian eschatology by saying that nothing psychic can enter to the Pleroma. Irenaeus’s rhetorical strategy was to prove that Valentinian teaching does not give the hope of eternal reward for the ordinary, psychic Christians. However, if Irenaeus’s description is interpreted in the light of Exc. C, Valentinian eschatology is rather optimistic about the psychics and ordinary Christians. On the one hand, the salvation of the pneumatics is dependent on the perfection of the psychics. The pneumatics cannot enter the Pleroma until the “other faithful soul,” i.e. the psychics, ascend to the Ogdoad and are made equal with the pneumatics. On the other hand, the exclusion of the psychic essence from the Pleroma does not mean the exclusion of the psychic “persons,” but refers to the perfection of the psychics when their psychic soul-bodies are stripped away. The two-fold salvation of the psychics and the pneumatics has a spiritual image in the crucifixion and resurrection of the Savior. The departure of the spirit from the Savior on the cross and the resurrection of the psychic soul-body of Christ after three days describe the salvation of the pneumatics before the psychics. Finally, also the psychics are saved together with the pneumatics as the psychic soul of the Savior was resurrected on the third day.

The terms related to the equalization of the saved in Exc. Theod. 63-65 indicate that the unification during the eschatological wedding feast parallels the protological equalization of the aeons after the rupture caused by Sophia’s erroneous thought. It is stated that all aeons are made equal (ἀπισωθῇ πάντα) until they knew each other. Significantly, the verb from the same root is used in the account of Iren. Haer. 1.2.6, which describes the “equalization of aeons of the Pleroma” by the Holy Spirit: τὸ δὲ Πνεῦμα τὸ ἁγιον ἐξισωθέντας αὐτοὺς πάντας εὐχαριστεῖν ἐδίδαξεν καὶ τὴν ἀληθινὴν ἀνάπαυσιν εἰσηγήσατο. The Holy Spirit brought the aeons to rest (ἀνάπαυσις) and after the equalization, there were no more distinct aeons, but all were Christs, Truths, Holy Spirits, etc. In a similar manner, the equalization of the pneumatics and psychics in an eschatological marriage feast refers to the

---

704 Pagels has argued that Irenaeus intentionally changed the term τὰ πνευματικά into οἱ πνευματικοί to stress that salvation is for the spiritual persons only. I do not see the change of terminology as decisive. In most translations (Casey, Sagnard) the term τὰ πνευματικά is translated as “the spiritual element.” Grammatically, the neuter nominative plural can be understood as a group designation, which means, in this case, the group of spiritual beings. The same kind of grammatical phenomenon is attested in John. 1:11: εἰς τὰ ἴδια ἐλήθην, καὶ οἱ ἴδιοι αὐτὸν οὐ παρέλαβον. It would be absurd to translate that the Savior came into his own “elements.”

705 Exc. Theod. 61.7. Casey translates τὰ πνευματικά ὑπὲρ ἕκεινα σώζεται as “the pneumatic receive salvation superior to theirs, i.e. the psychics.” It may be grammatically possible but the context supports the temporal meaning. This means that the pneumatic will be saved before the psychics, i.e. those who did not receive perfection during their lifetime.
process through which the boundaries between the psychic and pneumatic categories are finally removed and all the saved are made equal with angels.

In Philo, the final destiny of human beings was to become a non-bodily intellect similar to angels and to be integrated into the collective human personality referred to as the heavenly man. This is also the spiritual goal of the saved in the Valentinian accounts. In the end, the pneumatics are united with the angels as they enter the Pleroma. The unification with the Pleroma means the transformation of the soul into an angel. Therefore, the transformation of the soul into an angel refers to the transformation of the soul into the form of intellectual aeons and integration into the Pleroma. The Valentinian system parallels Philo, who maintains that the saved will become angels and will be integrated into the intelligible cosmos as a collective personality. This concerns both those who have made themselves perfect during their lifetime (e.g. Abraham) and those who only made some progression (e.g. Abel and Jacob).706

The nuptial imagery was rather common in Christian and Jewish sources as a metaphor for the mystical union with God. Nuptial angelology, however, does not have an exact parallel in the Early Christian sources and it is quite likely a Valentinian invention.707 It is possible, however, that Valentinian angelology may have some Hellenistic Jewish archetypes, which can also be found in the writing of Philo. The rational spirit of the earthly souls will be united with the heavenly man and integrated to the intelligible cosmos of the Logos. Then, the soul will become equal to angels, which also are called logoi.708 In Philo, there is not any notion of bridal imagery in the process of unification with the angels. Philo considered, however, the marriages of the patriarchs as symbols of the spiritual enlightenment and unification with the Wisdom of God. The marriage of Isaac with Rebecca was seen by Philo as a mystical marriage with Sophia. Rebecca comes to Isaac and comes down from the camel in a similar manner as Wisdom comes to the mystic and is veiled as are the inner secrets of the mystery (QG IV.140-146). Wisdom is both the mother and the wife of the wise man. It is rather likely that Valentinian teachers combined the Hellenistic Jewish ideas of the mystical

706 Gig. 31; Q.G. 3.61. Strikingly, in Exc. Theod. 27 Clement describes the soul’s journey to heaven which parallels the Valentinian view described above. Lilla suggests that this paragraph in Theodotus’ excerpts may belong to some gnostic author, possibly to Theodotus himself, rather than to Clement. It seems, however, that Clement was heavily influenced by Gnostic theology. Clement believed that the task of the angels was to watch the ascent of the soul through the heavens. Their main task was to prevent the ascent, if the soul was not yet properly purified and detached from the material things (Strom. 4.116.2). Cf. Lilla, Clement of Alexandria, 176-179, 182-183.


708 The unification with the angels is also attested in some apocalyptic Jewish literature. In 1 En. 39:4 the heavenly assembly of God consists of the union of the saints with the angels. The idea of communion with the angels is also found in 1QS XI 7-9. Cf. Thomassen, The Spiritual Seed, 325-326.
marriage and the union with angels to the marriage of the Savior and the church, which was based on Pauline theology (Eph. 5:22-33).

7.8 Conclusions

The closest parallels with the Valentinian sources and Philo can be found in the anthropological and soteriological allegories, which were discussed in this chapter. The Valentinian division of humankind into hylic, psychic and spiritual categories goes back to Hellenistic Jewish models. In Philo’s allegory of the soul, the heavenly man (Gen. 1:27) and earthly man (Gen 1:26, 2:7) no longer represent two distinct humans, but two categories of earthly men. The former was seen as the perfect man, who obeys the law of God spontaneously, whereas the latter represent the human being, who makes progress towards the virtuous life.

The Valentinians integrated these anthropological teachings into their cosmic myth in which the healing of Sophia’s emotions through knowledge was paradigmatic for all humans. The progressive humans have their origin in Sophia’s conversion, whereas the material ones were related to Sophia’s pernicious emotions. The perfect ones have their origin in Sophia’s joyful contemplation of the angels of the Savior. In Exc. C the division of humankind results from Adam’s incapability to mediate his spiritual essences to his children. This is illustrated on the ground of the metaphysics of prepositions, which can be understood in the light of Philo’s teaching in Cher. 125-128. Adam could mediate only his irrational soul in an active stage, while the image of the higher self was distributed potentially within psychic soul to be activated through right teaching.

Especially, the allegories of Cain, Abel and Seth and the Israelites as a prophetical race, which sees God, which are related to the three-fold division of humankind, bring Philo and the Valentinian exegetes rather close together. In these allegories, Seth is not regarded as a historical progenitor of a certain “race,” as in the Sethian Gnostic anthropology, but as a symbol of a virtuous person. Abel stands for the reasonable human being, who is in the middle and is able to make progress according to his choice. Cain in both Philo and Valentinian sources is a symbol of an irrational human being who is spiritually dead before his physical death. It is noticeable that the two passages in Exc. Theod. 56.5 and Philo’s Fug. 208 are the only surviving instances where Isaac as a “lawful son of Abraham” and the allegory of Israel have been brought together. It is plausible to suggest that the Valentinian teachers got to know these teachings from Philo.

In Valentinian soteriology, the salvation of Sophia and the healing of her emotions through gnosis by the Savior was paradigmatic for the salvation of all human beings. The role of emotions was also essential in Philo, who was influenced by Stoic theories. Both Philo and the Valentinians shared the Aristotelian view about the perfect man, who lives contemplative life being
self-taught and self-instructed. The healing of the emotions was seen as an outcome from spiritual reversion of the separation of Adam and Eve. As long as the irrational soul, i.e. Eve, controls the mind, i.e. Adam, the soul is mortal, but when Adam converts back to his Father and Mother, i.e. Wisdom, the mind is integrated to his higher self, Eve is reunited with her husband and death and evil spirits will no longer have any power.

Valentinian soteriology differed from the doctrines of nascent orthodoxy, which derived salvation from the atonement of the cross and resurrection. Valentinus taught that the gifts of salvation and immortality were already present in the creation of Adam. These gifts must be activated through the “practice of dying,” which refers to the annihilation of the passions through philosophical and contemplative way of life. Both Philo and the Valentinians taught that in most cases the salvation was an outcome of the laborious and progressive cultivation of the soul. There may have been, however, some exceptional human beings, like Isaac or Moses in Philo’s writings, who were perfect from birth. It is possible that Apostle Paul may have played the role of a “super-sage” among the Valentinians, which parallels the role of Moses in Philo.

Philo and the Valentinians taught that the ultimate telos of the human soul was to be assimilated into the intelligible cosmos. Although there may have been different methods to reach salvation, the goal was the same for the perfect ones and those who were only making some progress during their lifetime. In the Valentinian description of the heavenly wedding feast, the psychics and pneumatics will be finally equal before entering the Pleroma and being assimilated as part of heavenly ecclesia of Aeons. This assimilation was seen as the transformation into an angel. Valentinian theologians elaborated Hellenistic Jewish angelology on the grounds of early Christian nuptial imagery and Valentinian protologial myth. At the end, all those who are saved will be stripped of their instrumental, psychic soul-body and will be united with their archetypical angelic model.
In this study, I have investigated various parallels between the teachings of Philo of Alexandria and the Valentinians. In addition to some fragments of Valentinus, my analysis focused on the Valentinian source included in Clement’s *Excerpta ex Theodoto* 43.2-65 (= *Exc. C*). In light of the critical analysis of the text, we have reason to believe that *Exc. C* is not Clement’s own description of the Valentinian system, but it is the exact copy of the primary source itself. It is then, the oldest surviving exposition of Valentinian myth and it must predate the account of Irenaeus in Iren. *Haer.* 1.1-7, because Irenaeus evidently knew a somewhat elaborated version of it, which was made by the disciples of Ptolemy in Rome. In addition, *Exc. Theod.* 6-7 and *Iren. Haer.* 1.8.5 contain a protological commentary on the prologue of the Gospel of John, which is vital in understanding the development of the protological systems in the Valentinian sources.

It is evident that Valentinus’s fragments contain some Philonic themes. Valentinus was dependent both on the Hellenistic Jewish heavenly man – traditions and Gnostic anthropology, but he reformulated the distinctively Gnostic motifs in the light of the concept of “free speech” mentioned in the Book of Wisdom and in Philo’s writings as well. Valentinus’s psalm *Harvest* can be interpreted in the light of Philo’s allegories of the Tabernacle and the High Priest in which the sympathy of the soul and the sympathy of the cosmos are intertwined. It would seem that if someone tried to compose a psalm on the ground of Philo’s anthropological allegories, it would be a fairly similar kind of literary work as we have in Valentinus’s psalm. Also, Valentinus’s interpretation of Gen. 2:17 parallels the theory of immortality in Philo, who distinguished between physical death and the death of the soul. The annihilation of the bodily passions, i.e. the “practice of dying,” was the sign of the wise human being because it returned the soul to the prelapsarian stage before the separation of the sexes.

The closest parallels with Philo’s allegorical interpretations are found in *Exc. C* (including *Exc. Theod.* 6-7) and related passages in Iren. *Haer.* 1.1-8. In the protological exegesis of the Valentinian theologians the biblical proof-text for the creation of the intelligible cosmos was not Gen. 1-5 as in Philo’s *Opificio Mundi*, but the prologue of the Gospel of John. However, the Valentinians twisted the semantic and logical structure of the prologue of John’s gospel in a way which indicates that they knew some of Philo’s protological innovations. The prepositional metaphysics concerning the verse “in the beginning,” the association of the “beginning” with the Logos, and the creation of the “light” as referring to the intelligible cosmos, connect the
Valentinian protological commentary to Philo’s exegesis of Gen. 1:1-5. It is also noticeable that in Philo the intelligible cosmos already contains a conflict between intelligible light, i.e. the Logos, and its rival, i.e. the intelligible darkness. Although Philo did not associate the darkness explicitly with matter, as the Valentinians did, he maintained that intelligible darkness must be controlled in order to sustain the harmony of the intelligible realm.

In the Valentinian accounts, Wisdom has manifold associations as the rebellious heavenly being in the Pleroma, the mother of the visible world and the mother of the human soul, which are related to the dyadic and monadic aspects of pre-cosmic Wisdom. These associations are found in an initial stage in Philo’s texts. It is of note that the Valentinians and Philo identified the Platonic Receptacle with the dyadic aspect of Wisdom. In addition, the Valentinian teachers and Philo were evidently dependent on the same kind of theory concerning the separation of the cosmic matter into four cosmic elements by the Demiurge on the grounds of its physical characteristics, although the essence of the cosmic elements was linked in the Valentinian accounts to the emotions of Sophia. Taking into account all these protological and cosmological parallels, it is reasonable to suggest that the Valentinian teachers were working in the allegorical tradition in which many of Philo’s interpretations were adopted, rejected and reformed.

The closest parallels with Philo are found in the anthropological interpretations of Genesis, which form the basis for soteriology and ethics. Philo and the Valentinians interpreted the creation narratives of Adam in the light of Middle Platonic anthropological theories. It became common among Middle Platonic teachers to postulate a mediating soul-body which served as an instrumental body for the intellect. The Valentinians and Philo can also be located in the philosophical tradition according to which nous is undescended and it is only the image of nous, which incarnates into the soul. In this model, salvation was seen as an awakening of the image of the undescended nous, which Philo depicts as the heavenly man and the Valentinians as archetypical angels. According to Philo and the Valentinians, the human soul was only conditionally immortal, which was a deviation from purely Platonic anthropology. Both Philo and the Valentinians thought that the soul can die, which is not only an existential experience but an ontological desolation.

In the exegesis of Gen. 1:26 and Gen. 2:7, Philo’s innovation was to interpret these texts as complementary descriptions of the creation of the earthly soul by the assistants of God into which God breathed the image of the heavenly man. The Valentinian accounts contain the same hermeneutical pattern. The Demiurge created the soul-body together with his assistants into which the image of the angelic archetype was breathed. Both Philo and the Valentinians distinguished the soul-body created in Gen. 1:26 and Gen. 2:7 from the physical body which was created when Adam was clothed with the garment of skin. In the Valentinian accounts, Gen. 1:27 describes the creation of the images of the Savior’s angels by Sophia. These images are depicted as
the “spiritual seed” or the “inner man” or the “image of the ecclesia above.” The archetypal angels in the Valentinian accounts can be equated with Philo’s heavenly man, who was created as an image of the Logos (Gen. 1:27). The angels and the heavenly man did not incarnate, but their images did when they were inserted into the earthly soul of Adam and his descendants to be integrated into their angelic archetypes and monadic realm of the heavenly man through knowledge.

The Valentinian anthropological allegories can be understood in the light of Philo’s ethical theory according to which the heavenly man created in Gen. 1:27 was not an archetype for the multitude of the earthly minds in a strict Platonic sense, but the former was an ethical idealization of the latter. Also, the Valentinian tripartite division of humankind into hylic, psychic and spiritual categories goes back to the Hellenistic Jewish models attested in Philo’s writings. Philo maintains that the heavenly man (Gen. 1:27) and earthly man (Gen. 1:26, 2:7) no longer represent two distinct humans, but two categories of earthly human beings. The former was seen as the perfect man, who obeys the law of God spontaneously, whereas the latter represent the human being, who makes progress towards the virtuous life. The Valentinians integrated these anthropological teachings into the cosmic myth in which the healing of Sophia’s emotions through knowledge was paradigmatic for all humans. The progressive humans have their origin in Sophia’s conversion, whereas the material ones were related to Sophia’s pernicious emotions. The perfect ones have their origin in Sophia’s joyful contemplation of the angels of the Savior.

The division of humankind forms the background for Philo’s allegory of Cain, Abel, and Seth and the allegory of Israel as a spiritual human being who sees God. In the former allegory, the figure of Seth is a symbol of virtue and of all those who have reached perfection, while Abel represents an imperfect human being whose spiritual progression is suspended. Cain stands for the material human being who fights against reason. The Valentinian version of the allegory parallels Philo. Seth is not regarded as a historical progenitor of a certain “race,” as in the Sethian Gnostic anthropology, but as a symbol of a virtuous person. Abel stands for the reasonable human being, who is in the middle and is able to make progress according to his choice. Cain in both Philo and Valentinian sources is a symbol of an irrational human being who is spiritually dead before his physical death. Philo’s allegory of Israel as a spiritual human being who sees God has an exact parallel in Exc. C. It is noticeable that the two passages in Exc. Theod. 56.5 and Philo’s Fug. 208 are the only surviving instances where Isaac as a “lawful son of Abraham” and the allegory of Israel have been brought together. It is plausible to suggest that the Valentinian teachers got to know these allegories from Philo.

In Exc. C the division of humankind resulted from the fact that Adam could not distribute the essence of his soul equally to his descendants. While the body and the hylic soul were inherited through natural procreation, the image of the higher self was distributed in a potential stage within the
psychic soul to be activated on the grounds of one’s choice. It is not excluded, however, that there were some exceptional human beings, like Isaac or Moses in Philo, who were perfect since their birth. Although some spiritual humans may have been born as sages and obey the will of God spontaneously, most pneumatics were psychics, who were re-born as sages as a result of laborious cultivation of the soul. There may also have been some material human beings, who were born without any possibility of salvation. In most cases, however, the hylics were disillusioned progressive human beings whose spiritual growth was suspended. At the end, however, all will be made equal, both the progressive psychics, those who have reached perfection during their lifetime and those who were perfect since their birth. This parallels Philo’s eschatological allegory according to which the race of the progressive ones (e.g. Abraham and Jacob) were integrated into the genus of the perfect ones (e.g. Isaac), which was referred to as the heavenly man.

On the grounds of comparison with Philo’s writings, it is reasonable to suggest that there was a historical relationship between Philo and the Valentinians. The relation was restricted, however, to one group of Valentinians whose teachings can be derived from the accounts in Exc C (including Exc. Theod. 6-7) and related sections in Iren. Haer. 1.1-8. Although Exc. C apparently goes back to the Valentinian traditions in Alexandria, it was elaborated by the disciples of Ptolemy in Rome before Irenaeus got to know of it. In addition, Ptolemy’s Letter to Flora contains the division of Mosaic Law and the spiritual interpretation of its cultic commandments which link Ptolemy to the Hellenistic Jewish traditions attested in Philo’s works. We can conclude, thus, that the Valentinian texts that contain the closest parallels with Philo go back in one way or another to Ptolemy and his disciples.

It is not clear whether the Valentinian teachers in the school of Ptolemy got to know of Philo’s allegories directly by reading Philo’s works, or indirectly through notebooks or oral transmission. Although the use of notebooks as a part of intellectual paideia was a widely-known method of transmission of literary traditions, I suggest, however, that the first option is the most probable one. Irenaeus got to know an elaborated version of Exc. C in Rome, which was among his source material in his work Against Heresies. This means that this particular Valentinian document must have been written at the latest about 180 CE or possibly some years earlier in Alexandria. We do not have any information about the sources at that time, which would have contained borrowings from Philo’s teachings and served as source material for the Valentinians, except the extant works of Philo. The most reasonable conclusion would be that some Valentinians participated in the intellectual circles of Alexandria where Philo’s works were studied and Ptolemy may have been one of them before his arrival to Rome, where he possibly met Valentinus and founded a school of his own.
THE VALENTINIANS AND THE SURVIVAL OF PHILO’S WORKS: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The similarities between Philo and the Valentinian teachers do not only raise the question of historical relation but they may also serve as a lens through which the Valentinian tradition can be seen in a new light. This study reveals that the Valentinian teachers not only shared a common Middle Platonic worldview with Philo, but they also adopted some of his allegorical innovations and incorporated them into their system. Philo’s allegories were not chosen accidentally, but they provided valuable hermeneutical strategies which were useful in Valentinian allegorical exegesis. On the one hand, the Valentinians interpreted the allegories attested in Philo’s writings in the light of the myth of Sophia. On the other hand, the Valentinian exegetes reformed the preceding Gnostic myth in the light of teachings that they found in Philo’s writings. The Valentinian teachers downplayed the Gnostic mythopoiesis and motifs, such as the denigration of the creator God and the radical rupture between the Ideal world and the visible world, which were dominant elements in the Sethian Gnostic traditions.

The findings of this study are important not only concerning the development and elaboration of Gnostic traditions but they can at least partially resolve the question concerning the preservation of Philo’s writing. David Runia has proposed that it was Pantaenus, the head of the Catechetical School of Alexandria, who rescued Philo’s writings from the ruins of the Jewish community of Alexandria and deposited them in the library of the school. Clement of Alexandria would thus have had access to Philo’s writings when he started his career as the head of the school.709 This is a solution that does not explain who acquired Philo’s works before Pantaenus, who came to Alexandria in about 180 CE, possible from Sicily and how they were preserved for over 100 years.

It is possible that the writings of Philo were already the property of the catechetical school of Alexandria before Pantaenus’ arrival.710 This would mean that librarians and scribes of the Catechetical School of Alexandria saved and preserved the writings of Philo after the Jewish revolt in Egypt. The main problem with this thesis is that we do not have any reliable evidence that the Catechetical School of Alexandria was functioning before the time of Pantaenus. It is more likely that the school was founded at the end of the second century, although Eusebius tries to give the impression that the school of Alexandria had existed “from ancient custom.”711 There was not, thus, any institutionalized ecclesiastical authority that would have been in charge of the preservation of Philo’s library.

709 Runia, Philo in Early Christianity, 22-23.
711 It seems that the Catechetical School of Alexandria was founded at the same time when Demetrius was nominated Bishop of Alexandria. Cf. Wilfred Griggs, Early Egyptian Christianity from its Origins to 452 C.E. (Leiden: Brill, 1990), 61, 66-67.
The most probable context for Philo’s group was a private school in his home or a personally owned structure for advanced students who could carry out extended philosophical study of the Bible.\textsuperscript{712} Philo had his private library, probably in his home, in which his works became an essential part. After his death, Philo’s writings became a part of the private library of some of his students.\textsuperscript{713} It is unlikely, however, that the works of Philo would have been owned by any Jewish student of Philo after the revolt in 115-117 CE. The fact that Philo’s writings survived after the revolt implies that some group of early Christian intellectuals in Alexandria possessed them already before the revolt.\textsuperscript{714} The Valentinian traditions investigated in this study can be located in mid-second-century Alexandria, which was during that time supposedly the only environment where the contacts to Philo’s writings may have been possible before Origen took the copies of Philo’s works and went to Palestine in the beginning of the third century. It is probable that some Valentinian teachers belonged to the circle of Alexandrian Christian Platonists who saw Philo’s works as valuable and preserved them after the revolt before they became the property of the Alexandrian Catechetical School, that is, at the end of the second century.

\textsuperscript{712} Sterling, “The School of Sacred Laws,” VC (53) 1999, 149-151.
\textsuperscript{713} Sterling, “The School of Sacred Laws,” 159-161. Eusebius reports in Hist. eccl. 2.16-17 that some writings of Philo have been deposited in the public library in Rome when Philo was visiting the city during the reign of Claudius. This information is commonly considered unreliable.
\textsuperscript{714} Sterling, “The School of Sacred Laws,” 163-164.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

9 BIBLIOGRAPHY

SOURCES, TEXTS AND TOOLS


Origen. *Contra Celsum* by Henry Chadwick Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953


**LITERATURE**


BIBLIOGRAPHY


Snyder, Gregory H. “The Discovery and Interpretation of the Flavia Sophe Inscription: New Results.” In *Vigiliae Christianae* 68 (2014).


BIBLIOGRAPHY


Turner, John D. “The Curious Philosophical World of Later Religious Gnosticism: The Symbiosis of Late Antique Philosophy and Religion.” In


