

Noah. The appearance of the child was so exceptional that Lamech feared lest he was a child of one of the Fallen Angels, who produced "on the earth giants not according to the spirit, but according to the flesh."²⁴

In some later texts, traditions about the angels who descended from heaven and about the fall of Satan and of his host became mixed and were integrated into a new synthesis. It might be due to a later confusion between these two myths that the descent of the angels was presented in later literature as a fall, and that Satan was even connected to the angels of Genesis 6. In the later recension of the Slavonic *Secrets of Enoch* (18:3–4), the leader of the Fallen Angels became *Satanail*.

These are the Grigori, who with their prince Satanail rejected the Lord of Light, and after them are those who are held in great darkness on the second heaven, and three of them went down on to the earth from the Lord's throne, to the place Ermon.²⁵

As Mathias Delcor has aptly remarked in his thorough study of the etiological function of the myth in apocalyptic literature,²⁶ the *Books of Adam and Eve* provide an ingenious combination (unique in apocryphal literature) of the themes of the fall of Satan and the fall of the angels, and of both with the fall of Adam. Satan was banished—and fell from heaven, with his host of angels—because he did not want to worship Adam; and he himself then made Adam sin.²⁷ Note that here the two biblical myths about the origin of evil are linked, one becoming the consequence of the other.

In the *Apocalypse of Abraham*, the sin of the angels is mentioned only indirectly. The text presents a structural inversion of the positions of Abraham, whose place is in heaven, and Azazel, who now belongs to earth, since "he has made it the dwelling-place of his impurity," probably an allusion to the descent of the angels (chap. 13). In chapter 23, the

²⁴ *I Enoch* 106:1. In his commentary to 1QapGen, Fitzmyer writes (p. 81): "In the text which has been preserved we are not told why Lamech was so disturbed, but the reason . . . was probably something like the extraordinary things which the infant does in *Enoch* 106." This is not a completely satisfactory explanation, however. In *I Enoch* (e.g., chap. 65) Noah is saved from the flood because he is the only one on earth who did not learn "all the secrets of the angels" (v 6), i.e., sorcery, witchcraft, and similar arts. For the tradition adopted by the author of 1QapGen, Noah was unlike other men in his generation in that he was the son of his mother's husband—and not of one of the angels. F. Rosenthal's interpretation (*JNES* 18 [1959], 83), as quoted by Fitzmyer (pp. 81–82), is probably closer to the truth: ". . . the frightening possibility that Noah might not be his child. This, of course, would have tainted all Israel with the intolerable blemish of illegitimacy." We shall come back to Batenosh, Noah's mother, later.

²⁵ The Grigori obviously are the *egrēgoroi* ('*irīn*): Watchers. This source, called A by Charles, is presented by A. Vaillant as "additions du réviseur"; see his edition and translation, *Le livre des secrets d'Hénoch* (Textes publiés par l'Institut d'Etudes Slaves 4; Paris, 1952), 94–95.

²⁶ "Le mythe de la chute des anges et de l'origine des géants comme explication du mal dans le monde dans l'apocalyptique juive; Histoire des Traditions," *RHR* 190 (1976), 48.

²⁷ *Adam and Eve*, 12–17, esp. 14:3, 16:1.

same Azazel is said to stand between Adam and Eve in Paradise. He is described as a beast with a snake's body, human members, and wings, standing behind the tree. That is to say, he plays the role attributed in rabbinic literature to Sammael (*Pirke R. El.* 13). Here too, therefore, there seems to be a connection between Satan and the leader of the sinful angels.²⁸

In a different way, the Syriac *Apocalypse of Baruch* also insists upon the link between the sin of the angels and the first generation: "For he [man] became a danger to his own soul: even to the angels he became a danger." It is the women who seduced the angels (and not vice versa, as in the original tradition attested by the *Book of Watchers*). Succumbing to temptation, the angels lost the freedom with which they had been created (2 *Apoc. Bar.* 56.10–14). It must be pointed out that in this context, the sin of the angels is paralleled to the transgression of Adam (2 *Apoc. Bar.* 56.5).²⁹ It is not conceived of as an accident happening early in the history of mankind, rather it is projected back to the anthropogenic process.

Finally, the punishment of the sinful angels is mentioned twice—although not elaborated upon—in the New Testament. One of the references is Jude 6:

And the angels that did not keep their own position but left their proper dwelling have been kept by him in eternal chains in the nether gloom until the judgment of the great day.

A similar idea is expressed in 2 Pet 2:4 (the whole document is dependent upon Jude).³⁰

Rabbinic Texts

Despite the development of angelology in apocalyptic literature—or rather, as a reaction to this trend—one can detect in rabbinic texts, side by side with many an affirmation of the importance of angels, a systematic fight against angelology.³¹ The downgrading of the angels' role is particularly apparent in the exegesis of Gen 6:1–4. As will be seen in another

²⁸See G. N. Bonwetsch, trans., *Die Apokalypse Abrahams* (Studien zur Geschichte der Theologie und der Kirche I; Leipzig: Deichert [Böhme], 1897), 24, 33. In this text Azazel plays the role of Eve's seducer in paradise, a role which is attributed to Sammael in other Jewish texts. In *Pirke R. El.*, for instance, he is described as "riding the serpent"; see E. Urbach, *The Sages, Their Concepts and Beliefs* (Eng. trans.; Jerusalem: Magnes, 1975), I, 167–170, and corresponding notes in vol. II.

²⁹For a short discussion of the problem of the Fallen Angels in 2 *Apoc. Bar.*, see P. Bogaert, ed. and trans., *Apocalypse de Baruch*, II (SC 145; Paris: Cerf, 1969), 109.

³⁰As Fitzmyer convincingly argues, 1 Cor 11:9–10 does not seem to refer to the Fallen Angels of Genesis 6; see his "A Feature of Qumran Angelology and the Angels of 1 Cor 11:10," *NTS* 4 (1957–58), 48–58, repr. in his *Essays on the Semitic Background of the New Testament* (Missoula: Scholars, 1974), 187–204.

³¹E.g., A. Marmorstein, "Angeles et hommes dans l'Aggada," *REJ* 84 (1927), 37–50; Urbach, *The Sages*, chap. 8: "The Celestial Retinue" (text in vol. I, notes in vol. II).

chapter, the Rabbis made special efforts to challenge the identification of the *benei 'elohim* as angels; yet some texts do consider them as Fallen Angels.³²

The *Targum Yerušalmi* (*Pseudo-Jonathan*) on Gen 6:4 already reads, "Shemhazai and Azael, those who fell (נפלו) from heaven" (instead of linking their descent to Jared's name, as does the *Book of Watchers*).

A remarkable exegesis of Gen 6:1–4 occurs in *Pirque Rabbi Eliezer*, a midrashic work probably redacted in the early days of the Ummayyad dynasty, but which often records much earlier traditions. In chapter 22, it is said in the name of Rabbi (2nd century, Palestinian), that

the angels who fell from their place of holiness in heaven saw the [feminine] offspring of Cain, with their genitals exposed and their eyes painted like prostitutes; they were led astray by them, and took wives from among them.³³

R. Joshua added that angels have bodies of fire,³⁴ but that in order to sin with the Cainite women, they had to put on bodies of flesh. The children of these unions were the giants (הענקים),³⁵ who were prone to various crimes, including bloody ones (146 Higger). According to R. Levi, these giants were born "like reptiles, six by six." Like their fathers, they too committed sexual sins; in order to prevent mankind from growing, they adopted onanistic practices, as they themselves told Noah (146 Higger).³⁶

³²On the problem of the Fallen Angels in rabbinic literature, see M. Grünbaum, "Beiträge zur vergleichenden Mythologie aus der Agada," *ZDMG* 3 (1877), 224–235, 243–244; *idem*, *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Sprach- und Sagenkunde* (ed. F. Perles; Berlin: Calvary, 1901), 59–61, 63–66, 70–75, 442–448; B. Heller, "La chute des anges," *REJ* 60 (1910), 202–212; L. Jung, "Fallen Angels in Jewish, Christian and Mohammedan Literature, A Study in Comparative Folklore," *JQR* 15 (1924–25), 467–502; 16 (1925–26), 45–88, 171–205, 287–336; B. J. Bamberger, *Fallen Angels* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1952); and especially Alexander, "Early Exegesis of 'Sons of God.'" Ginzberg states that traces of the myth occur "in the non-authoritative writings of the synagogue" (*The Legends of the Jews*, V [Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1925], 156, n. 57). This language, however, is somewhat misleading, since it would suggest a clear-cut distinction, alien to rabbinic Judaism, between orthodox and heterodox views, expressed respectively in authoritative and non-authoritative writings. Moreover, Ginzberg himself remarks that the dependence of some of those "non-authoritative" texts upon the Talmud is "obvious" (*ibid.*, 170). Ginzberg refers here to a short text known, in a few slightly different medieval recensions, as the *Midrash of Shemhazai and Azael*. We shall deal with this work in a later section, since the myth does not appear there as a direct exegesis of Gen 6:1–4.

³³This appalling description of the deeds of the Cainites is also given by R. Meir (*Horeb* 9, 145–148 Higger). See G. Friedlander's translation (repr. ed., New York: Hermon, 1965), 158–163.

³⁴Cf. Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies* VIII.12–13, paraphrased below.

³⁵The new name given to the giants of Gen 6:1–4 shows a contamination of other (biblical) legends about giants, for instance the *benei 'anaqim* of Deut 1:28. γίγας is the only term used by the LXX to translate *gibbōr*, *neṣilim*, and *'anaq*.

³⁶The accusation of sexual sins made against the giants also appears in *Gen. Rab.* 27.4, J. Theodor, ed. (Berlin: Itzkowsky, 1903), 253–254, where the name *neṣilim* is exegeted as a reminder of the numerous aborted fetuses issued from their dissolute sexual practices:

אמר ר' לאור בשם ר' שמעון . . . נפילים שהפילו את העולם ונפלו מן העולם ושפלאו

The *Testament of Reuben*, like *Pirke Rabbi Eliezer*, offers a version of the myth which accuses both the angels and the women of being sinners. However, this is apparently the only text to specifically identify the women who attracted the angels as Cainites. Since the beginning of chapter 22 insists upon this crucial distinction, in all generations, between Sethites and Cainites, and since R. Joshua also mentioned the fact that the children of Israel were called Sons of God (147 Higger), this may well be a later attempt to harmonize two exegetical traditions, the one identifying the "Sons of God" with angels and the "daughters of men" with women, and the other identifying the former with a category of "good" men (Sethites) and the latter with "evil" women, i.e., Cainites.

The passage in Genesis 6 remained puzzling for later Jewish exegesis as well. An Oxford MS. of *'Agadat Berešit* mentions that the Sons of God were 'Uzza and 'Uz'el (both clearly derived from Azazel), who came down to earth from their place in the firmament. However, the same text subsequently identifies them as "sons of Cain," whereas earlier in the text, they were said to be not angels, but "the generation which sank low."³⁷

Apocalyptic literature manifested a particular attraction for a myth related but once in the biblical text. Its clear "remythologization," including acceptance of foreign myths (or mythologoumena), might have been one of the reasons for the rabbinic rejection of apocalyptic literature.³⁸

Philo and the Church Fathers

The Father's attitude towards the myth of Gen 6:1–4, like that of the Rabbis, was generally reserved. Indeed, we shall see in another chapter how rabbinic and Christian exegetes, in the light of their opposition to mythology, later interpreted the "Sons of God" and their fall in such a fashion as to destroy very clearly and consciously the myth itself. Suffice it here to note that Philo was the first witness of this demythologizing exegesis. In his work *De Gigantibus*, he developed an allegorizing interpretation of Genesis 6:

It is Moses' custom to give the name of angels to those whom other philosophers call demons [or spirits], souls, that is, which fly and hover in the air. And let no one suppose that what is here said is a myth.³⁹

את העולם נפלים מן הזנות שלהם.

³⁷Sh. Buber, ed., *Agadat Bereshit* (repr. ed., New York: Menorah, 1959), introduction, 37–39. Ginzberg, *Legends*, V, 170 also mentions occurrences of the same theme in kabbalistic literature: *Zohar* I, 96, 126a; *Zohar* III, 208a; *Zohar Ruth*, 99a.

³⁸See for instance Delcor, "La chute des anges," 53. The extent to which apocalyptic literature expresses new patterns of thought, or rather publicizes older patterns which were not represented in the highly selective canon, remains a matter for personal judgment.

³⁹καὶ μηδεὶς ὑπολάβῃ μῦθον εἶναι εἰρημένον, *De Gig.* II, 7. Again in II, 58: "Some may think that the Lawgiver is alluding to the myths of the poets about the giants, but indeed

In *Quaestiones in Genesin* 92, he added:

And he relates that their [the giants'] creation was a mixture of two things, of angels and mortal women. But the substance of angels is spiritual; however, it often happens that they imitate the forms of men and for immediate purposes, as in respect of knowing women for the sake of begetting Haiks.⁴⁰

According to these two different—but not incompatible—interpretations, Gen 6:2 in some way refers to the descent of souls into certain human bodies.

The Philonic exegesis was known to Origen, among others. In his *Contra Celsum*, he explicitly adopted Philo's exegesis in *De Gig.* II, 6:18:

We shall convince those who are able to understand the meaning of the prophet that one of our predecessors referred these words to the doctrine about souls who were afflicted with a desire for life in a human body, which, he said, is figuratively called "daughters of men."⁴¹

Elsewhere, however, he was less affirmative and simply stated Philo's view, without explicitly accepting or denying it:

Some have supposed that this descent would indicate in a covered way that of the souls into the bodies—the earthly vase being metaphorically referred to by "the daughters of men."⁴²

A similar demythologizing attitude is also found in a text of the Middle Platonist Alexander of Lycopolis. The passage is of particular significance,

myth-making (*μυθοπλαστῆιν*) is a thing most alien to him, and his mind is set on following in the steps of truth and nothing but truth." On this text, see Valentin Nikiprowetzky, "Sur une lecture démonologique de Philon d'Alexandrie, *de gigantibus*, 6–18," in G. Nahon and Ch. Touati, eds., *Hommages à Georges Vajda* (Louvain: Peeters, 1980), 43–71, esp. 71.

⁴⁰The beginning of the text reads: "The poets relate that the giants were earthborn, children of the earth. But he [Moses] uses this name analogically and frequently when he wishes to indicate excessive size of the body, after the likeness of Haik." (Haik is "the name of the Armenian eponymous hero for Greek Herakles" and thus refers to "giant"; see R. Marcus's note in his translation for the Loeb edition, 61). Prof. John Strugnell suggests that Philo might play here on *γηγένεις* and *γίγαντες*. Philo admits afterwards, however, that "Sons of God" is a name which can be given to good and excellent men too. We shall come back to this interpretation in Part II. The Giants of Greek mythology are sometimes called *Gegeneis*—so for instance in Apollonios Rhodios; H. J. Rose, *A Handbook of Greek Mythology* (London: Methuen, 1958⁶), 57.

⁴¹I quote the translation of H. Chadwick, *Origen: Contra Celsum* (Cambridge: University, 1965), 307. Text in M. Boret's edition, *Origène, Contre Celse* (SC 147; Paris: Cerf, 1969), 152.

⁴²*Com. in Ioh.* VI.42.217–218 (C. Blanc ed., SC 157; 294–296); also XIII. On this ambiguity in Origen's teaching, see L. R. Wickham, "The Sons of God and the Daughters of Men: Genesis VI 2 in Early Christian Exegesis"; *Language and Meaning. Studies in Hebrew Language and Biblical Exegesis, papers read at the Joint British-Dutch Old Testament Conference held at London, 1973* (OTS 19; Leiden: Brill, 1974), 142–143.

since its context is his controversy against Manichaeism, written towards the end of the 3rd century. Alexander wrote:

For example, when the history of the Jews speaks of the angels who consorted with the daughters of men in order to have sexual intercourse, this way of telling the story hints at the nurturing faculties of the soul which comes down hither from above.⁴³

Despite the importance of this allegorizing tendency, the myth of the Fallen Angels and their sin of lust did not completely disappear from early Christian literature. As late as the 4th century, clear echoes of the myth were heard. For Justin and for Athenagoras, for instance, the progeny of the angels and the women were demons.⁴⁴ Irenaeus, for his part, interpreted the angels' fall from heaven as a consequence of their disobedience. From his wording, it appears that overtones from the story of Satan's fall had permeated the theme of the angels' descent.⁴⁵ This amalgamation of myths is explicit in the *Acta Archelai*, the archetype of most Christian refutations of Manichaeism, which was written by Hegemonius in the 4th century:

Hence also some of the angels, refusing to obey God's command, resisted His will; and one of them fell like a flash of lightning upon the earth [he is then identified as the devil], while others, "harrassed by the dragon" (*a dracone afflicti*) united (*admixti*) with the daughters of men.⁴⁶

Tertullian, for his part, condemned in strong language the sin of the angels, to which he referred on several occasions.⁴⁷ Clement of Alexandria referred to another detail stemming from apocalyptic literature (*I Enoch* 7:1), when he said that the angels taught the women secrets.⁴⁸ Like Alexander of Lycopolis, both Lactantius and Eusebius expressly referred to Greek mythology. Lactantius quoted Hesiod,⁴⁹ while Eusebius claimed to follow Plutarch's interpretation and identified the giants of Genesis with

⁴³*Contra Manichaeos*, XXV, quoted according to P. W. van der Horst and J. Mansfeld, *An Alexandrian Platonist Against Dualism: Alexander of Lycopolis' Treatise "Critique of the Doctrines of Manicheus"* (Leiden: Brill, 1974), 95. Text in A. Brinkmann's edition (Leipzig: Teubner, 1895), 37.

⁴⁴Justin, *Apologia* II 5 (PG 6, 451). Athenagoras, *Legatio* 24,5 (PG 6, 947).

⁴⁵*Adv. Haer.* IV, 16.2 (II, 190 Harvey), where the angels (qualified as *transgressori*) are put in opposition to Enoch, the righteous (see also IV, 36.4; II, 279 Harvey).

⁴⁶Hegemonius, *Acta Archelai* 36.3 (ed. C. H. Beeson; GCS; Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1906), 51.

⁴⁷See for instance *De idolatria* 9 and *De Oratione* 22.5, *Opera* I (ed. A. Reifferscheid; CSEL 20; Vienna: Tempsky, 1890), 194, 365; *De Virginibus Velantis*, *Opera* IV (ed. Bulhart; CSEL 76; Vienna: Tempsky, 1957), 89. Cf. Pseudo-Cyprian, *De singulitate clericorum*, *Opera Omnia* (ed. G. Hartel; CSEL 3; Vienna: Geroldi, 1871), 204.

⁴⁸*Strom.* V,1, Clemens Alexandrinus, *Werke* II (ed. O. Stählin; GCS; Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1906), 332. Cf. *Paedag.* III, 2.14 (*ibid.*, I; Berlin: Akademie, 1972³), 244.

⁴⁹*Divinae Institutiones* II, *Opera* (ed. S. Brand, G. Laubmann; CSEL 19; Vienna: Geroldi, 1887), 162–163.

“the gods about whom the Greeks tell tales of fights,” just as Plutarch had identified these gods with Egyptian deities.⁵⁰

By far the most detailed treatment of the myth of the Fallen Angels in early Christian literature, however, is found in the Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies*. The close relationship of Pseudo-Clementine literature to Jewish Christianity (its substratum is the Ebionite *Kerygmata Petrou*) and its gnosticizing tendencies are significant in this respect.⁵¹ Purporting to argue against Simon Magus's dualism, the *Homilies* actually developed a veiled attack against Paul's theology. Indeed, for the *Homilies*, the myth of the Fallen Angels answered the problem of the origin of evil, whereas Paul referred to Adam's sin (Rom 5:12).⁵² In the *Homilies*, Peter presented the angels' descent as a punishment visited upon men for having deserted the Law of God (*Hom.* VIII.11). The angels, taking human (and animal) forms, first went down to earth with the intention of preaching to men and asking them to repent and obey God. But they soon fell prey “to the power of the flesh and of lust”; they united with the women, and, thus soiled, lost their proper and pure fiery nature, so that they were unable to return to heaven (*Hom.* VIII.12–13). It is significant that at the origin of this fall stands not a revolt in heaven, but rather *lust*, as the real source of evil.

In its attempt to harmonize the traditions reflected in *1 Enoch* 6ff. (and in *Jub.*), the text added that the angels first attracted the women by changing themselves (through their divine power), into various things such as pearls, precious stones, and gold (*Hom.* VIII.12). But after their sin, having lost this power, they were unable to give these gifts to their lovers, and so they themselves discovered precious stones, gold, and other metals in the earth and taught men techniques of magic, astronomy, etc.—all things which the human mind would never have discovered. In a word, all ornaments or pleasures of women are inventions of the demons fettered in the flesh (*Hom.* VIII.14,2–3; 127 Rehm). The offspring of their illegitimate *mixis* were bastards (*νόθοι*) later called giants on account of their height. They did not revolt against God, as related in the blasphemous tales of the Greeks, but did have an irresistible impulse to taste blood; thus, they were the first anthropophagites (*Hom.* VIII.15–16).

⁵⁰*Prep. Evang.* 5.4 (ed. and trans. E. H. Gifford; Oxford, 1903), I, 186d, p. 244. Cf. *De Isis et Osiride* 25, 360c (ed. J. G. Griffith; Cardiff: Univ. of Wales, 1970), 154. See also Commodianus, who in the 5th century retold the myth in verse form: *Instructiones I, adversus Gentium Deos* III, *Carmina* (ed. B. Dombart; CSEL 15; Vienna: Geroldi, 1887), 7.

⁵¹On the Jewish-Christian theology as it appears in the Pseudo-Clementine writings, see mainly H. J. Schoeps, *Theologie und Geschichte des Judenchristentums* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1964²), and G. Strecker, *Das Judenchristentum in den Pseudoklementinen* (TU 70; Berlin: Akademie, 1958). For the Gnostic affinities, see O. Cullmann, *Le problème littéraire et historique du roman pseudo-clémentin* (Paris: Alcan, 1930).

⁵²On the Homilist's treatment of the problem of evil, see H. J. Schoeps, “Der Ursprung des Bösen und das Problem der Theodizee im pseudo-klementinischen Roman,” in *Judéo-Christianisme, Recherches . . . J. Daniélou*, 129–141. It should be noted that the theological conceptions embodied in the *Kerygmata Petrou* are very close to those of the Elchasaites among whom Mani grew up.

This theme, already found in *I Enoch* 7:6, is an important element in subsequent developments. As a result of their behavior the earth became poisoned by so much bloodshed, men began to die early, and venomous beasts appeared. God decided to put an end to this deteriorating state of affairs, which threatened to corrupt all humanity to a point where no one would remain to be saved, and thus sent the flood in order to cleanse the world (*Hom.* VIII.17). The giants died in the flood, but their race did not disappear, for their souls led a separate existence, God having ordered them, through an angel, not to trouble men in any way. They were indeed demons, though not altogether evil ones, and their role remained, under God's command, to punish both unbelievers and sinners (*Hom.* VIII.18–19; 126–129 Rehm).

The treatment of the myth in the *Homilies* is particularly significant in our context, since it may indicate a transitional stage through which the myth reached the Gnostic circles. In the Jewish heterodox milieu, which is the *Sitz im Leben* of the *Kerygmata Petrou*, the angels' fall appears to have been of primary importance in explaining the origin of evil. This theme was thus developed in a particular way, which accounted not only for the angels' sin, but also for their initially good intentions (as in *Jubilees*), as well as for the existence of demons, identified with the offspring of the angels. The same identification may be found in many of the Gnostic texts. It is also interesting to note that the author of the *Homilies* was aware of the Greek myth of the Titans, the sons of Uranus and Gaia, and their revolt against the gods, but rejected any link between it and the biblical myth—although he identified Noah with Deucalion, as did the *Apocalypse of Adam*. For the Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies*, therefore, evil stemmed from sexual *mixis*, from forbidden unions between two different categories of beings. The problem was set forth in very similar terms in Gnostic contexts.

Gnostic Reinterpretation

In a way, the origin of evil in Gnostic mythology should be understood in terms of *mixis*; the creation of the world by the agents of evil is but one aspect of this permanent attempt at mixing unclean elements of darkness, or matter, with pure elements of light, or spirit. While there was a possibility of salvation if the pure elements remained untainted (that is to say, remained free from any contact with the unclean ones or managed to become disengaged from them), the forces of darkness perpetually strove, in history as well as in cosmogony or anthropogony, to mingle with the elements (the "children") of light. For Gnostic thought, the most obvious way for the evil rulers to achieve this *mixis* was through sexual relations with human beings. Thus Nicolaus was presented as speaking about the "fetid and unclean" *permixio*, which originated in the lust of darkness for light.⁵³

⁵³Pseudo-Tertullian, *Adv. Omn. Haer.* I (215 Kroymann). See also Sethian theology as

In his seminal study, H.-C. Puech analyzes various occurrences of the same theme of the angels' fornication with women.⁵⁴ He shows its importance in different Gnostic contexts, where the sending of the flood by the heavenly Mother was always presented as a direct consequence of these *permixiones* of angels and humans.⁵⁵ The myth is known not only in texts and traditions usually considered to be "Sethian," but also in Valentinian context.⁵⁶

In a more recent study of the theme of the angels' fornication with women in Gnosticism, Yvonne Janssens states that the myth as it appears in Genesis 6 cannot be found "à l'état pur" in Gnostic texts.⁵⁷ Yet the thrust of her article is precisely to focus attention on the recurrence of this theme in various Gnostic contexts. Although she quotes some Jewish sources for the theme (*1* and *2 Enoch*) and cites various Gnostic texts and parallels (the theme of the bridal chamber in *Gos. Phil.*, the attitude of Elohim in Justin's *Baruch*, etc.), she stops short of integrating the various pieces of evidence into a global understanding of this myth in Gnostic thought.

In Gnostic literature, however, the theme of the Fallen Angels is much more than what Janssens calls "un centre d'attraction littéraire." Indeed, I shall demonstrate that it played a major function in the development of Gnostic mythology, and that it is at the very core of the mythological expression of Gnostic consciousness. During the discussion generated by Janssens's paper at the Messina Conference, Hans Jonas hinted at the importance of what I propose to call provisionally a "cluster of themes." He suggested that one should attempt to build a typology of related, albeit different, themes such as the fornication of the angels, the seduction of the archons, abortions, and the demiurge's rape of Eve.⁵⁸ The following chapters may be regarded as a contribution towards a typology such as that proposed by Jonas. Through an analysis of the evidence for these themes in Gnostic texts and traditions, I shall try to determine possible relationships.

recorded by Hippolytus, *Elenchos* 5. 19.11–12 (118 Wendland), 'where a series of "conjunctions" (*συνδρομαί*) are reported to have taken place between heaven and earth, which are described like a womb. The animals, in their multitude, are said to be created out of a succession of such "conjunctions." See also Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* 1.30.5 (I, 230–233 Harvey), where the *mixis* is one between spirit and matter.

⁵⁴"Fragments retrouvés de l'Apocalypse d'Allogène," *Mélanges Franz Cumont*, II (Annuaire de l'Institut de Philologie et d'Histoire Orientales et Slaves 4; Brussels, 1936); repr. in *En quête de la Gnose*, I, 271–300. Puech quotes the passage on Audi in Agapius's *Kitab al-Unwan*, PO 7, 564: "He also says that the angels committed adultery with the daughters of men, and gave birth to children out of them, and that evil is the natural constitution of men" (repr. ed. pp. 275–276).

⁵⁵*En quête*, I, 287, n. 1. Other major references to the theme are found in Epiphanius, *Pan.* 39.3.1 (II, 73, Holl) or Pseudo-Tertullian, *Adv. Omn. Haer.* 3 (218 Kroymann).

⁵⁶Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.*, I, 10.3 (I, 95 Harvey). The theme is again mentioned in the *Pistis Sophia*, I, 15 (25 Macdermot). See also Pseudo-Jerome, *Indic. de Haer.* 9 (290 Oehler).

⁵⁷"Le thème de la fornication des anges," in U. Bianchi, ed., *Le origini*, 488–495.

⁵⁸*Ibid.*, 495.

In the introduction I noted that there are no "pure" or "degenerate" forms of a myth. If the Gnostic and the Jewish versions of the myth differ as much as they do, it is because Gnostic etiological concerns were different from Jewish ones. In a way, it may be said that the theological problem of the existence of evil as posed by Judaism (or, for that matter, by Christianity) is almost inverted in Gnosticism. In monotheistic theology, it is essential to account for the existence of evil in a world created by God, who is good. Dualist Gnosticism, on the other hand, takes evil for granted. The main emphasis, therefore, is placed on the explanation of the possibility of salvation—for some—in a creation seen as utterly evil. This peculiar focus of the problem—not so much of evil as of good—for Gnostic mythology, has not been accorded due attention.

The two biblical myths that could account for the presence of evil were sometimes integrated in apocalyptic literature, and Satan was linked to the Fallen Angels of Genesis 6 in some of the versions. This combinatory process was given new and systematic dimensions in Gnostic mythology. The two original myths were integrated into a much broader mythical frame, intended to make manifest the basic pattern of both history and cosmogony: the evil deeds of the lustful demiurge and his associates, the archons. For Gnostic mythology, indeed, evil stemmed from a series of sexual sins. In its new frame, the myth focused upon the escape of pure women from the lust of the angels (i.e. the archons). These women, having remained unsoiled, were thus able to transmit the pure seed.

Evidence for the importance of the myth in Gnosticism will be cited as we proceed to analyze the various related themes. One passage, however, which shows quite clearly how the myth of the Fallen Angels was connected with the very beginnings of mankind, is worth quoting at the outset. In *Val. Exp.* 38:22–37, the Devil, "one of the divine beings" (38:13–14) is said to have begotten

sons who [angered one another. And] Cain [killed] Abel his brother, for [the demiurge] breathed into [them] his spirit. And there [took place] the struggle with the apostasy of the angels and mankind, those of the right with those of the left, and those of heaven with those on earth, the spirits with the carnal, and the Devil against God. Therefore the angels lusted after the daughters of men and came down to flesh so that God would cause a flood.

The lustful angels are also mentioned in other Gnostic texts. In *Apoc. Adam* 83:14–17, for instance, they are explicitly said to have been "corrupted by their desire."⁵⁹

⁵⁹See also *Tri. Trac.* 135:1–5 and *Testim. Truth* 40:30–41:4. According to *Paraph. Shem* 44:13–17, a flood will come at the end of time because envy "of winds [or: "spirits"; Crum's *Coptic Dictionary*, 439 B s.v. ΤΗΥ] and the demons." Cf. *Gos. Eg.* III 61:1–3: "and the flood came as an example for the consummation of the aeon." The sin of the Fallen Angels is probably alluded to in *Gos. Eg.*, as Dorese saw (see the commentary to his translation, 347, n. 133; 348, n. 137; see esp. *Gos. Eg.* III, 61:16–23; 62:21–24; 64:3–4). For a reference to the rebellion of the angels, see also *Treat. Seth* 33:20–33. See also *Fragments of*

At various stages of this inquiry, it will become clear that the Gnostics' myths did not emerge only from their meditation upon the Greek text of Genesis; the Gnostic texts, indeed, reflect knowledge of various detailed interpretations of these themes in Jewish exegesis, whether the apocryphal writings or some other early traditions that were later recorded in rabbinic literature.

Heracleon, 40, on John 4:46–53 (in Origen, *Com. in Ioh.* XIII.60; 82 Völker), where Heracleon deals with the problem of the future salvation of the Fallen Angels of Genesis 6.

CHAPTER TWO

THE ARCHONS AS SEDUCERS

The Gnostics inherited the theme of *mixis*—together with the myth of the Fallen Angels and their copulation with women—from Jewish literature, in all probability directly, rather than through the mediation of Christian texts, as we shall see. Yet the etiological function of the theme of *mixis* in Gnostic mythology was so different that in its new setting, the myth underwent not only far reaching developments, but also a radical transformation, some of whose steps we shall attempt to follow.

The Daughters of Men

Following the Bible, some Jewish texts (e.g., *I Enoch*, *Jubilees*) integrated this episode into human history, a fact of obvious theological significance, for it meant that the origin of evil was not concomitant with God's creation. Gnosticism, on the other hand, had a vested interest in showing that the pattern of *mixis* had already begun in the very first generation of mankind. In some Gnostic texts, therefore, the responsibility for Eve and Adam's sin of concupiscence was attributed to the demiurge himself. In *Apoc. Adam*, for instance, it is he who was responsible for the "sweet desire" in Adam's heart. At least two explanations of concupiscence are implicit in this text. First, sexual impulse is seen as stemming directly from the male/female duality, i.e., from the separation of the androgynal protoplast which "the Ruler of the aeons" had made in his wrath (64:20–23). Second, Eve became sexually attractive to Adam only after her seduction by the demiurge, who here plays the role of the serpent in Jewish theology.¹

To this text, in which the (reversed) biblical themes can be easily recognized, may be contrasted *Gos. Phil.* 70:20–22: "Thus Eve separated from Adam since she was never united with him in the bridal chamber."² In this eclectic work of Valentinian affinities, the reason for Eve's fall is the adultery that she committed in her mind, i.e., her illegitimate desire for the serpent, which led to Cain's birth. According to the popular wisdom accepted by *Gos. Phil.* 78:12–20:

The children a woman bears resemble the man who loves her. If her

¹*Apoc. Adam* 66:25–67:4. Cf. *Ap. John* CG II, 24:27–28; see S. Giversen, *Apocryphon Iohannis* (Acta Theologica Danica 5; Copenhagen: Munksgaard, 1963), Commentary, 264.

²See also *Gos. Phil.* 68:22–24: "When Eve was still in Adam, death did not exist." The bridal chamber is here a symbol of the perfect marriage; cf. *Exeg. Soul* 133:31–134:6.

husband loves her, then they resemble her husband. If it is an adulterer, then they resemble the adulterer. Frequently, if a woman sleeps with her husband out of necessity, while her heart is with the adulterer with whom she usually has intercourse, the child she will bear is born resembling the adulterer.³

Such an attitude is similar to that expressed in *T. Reub.* 5:7, where the women who "united themselves with the angels" were, in fact, sleeping with their husbands, but committing adultery in thought.

An interesting treatment of the same theme occurs in the *Apocryphon of John*. In this text, one cannot properly speak of a *fall* of the angels, since they descended on purpose, sent by the evil demiurge in order to enslave humanity through concupiscence. In this text the sin of the angels is not regarded as the cause, but as the *consequence* of the flood.⁴ This latter motif, however, was strongly gnosticized: Noah—a positive figure here as in certain other Gnostic contexts⁵—and his kin from the unshakeable race (ΤΡΕΝΕΑ ΔΤΚΙΜ)⁶ did not enter the ark, but "went into a place and hid themselves in a luminous cloud,⁷ in order to escape the wrath of the demiurge. Angry at not being able to seize Noah, the demiurge decided ("with his powers") to send angels to the daughters of men "that they might take some of them for themselves and raise offspring for their enjoyment." They thus created a "despicable" or "opposing" spirit, as

³For *Gos. Phil.* "Indeed every act of sexual intercourse which has occurred between those unlike one another is adultery" (62:10–12; 65:1–26). See J. P. Mahé, "Le sens des symboles sexuels dans quelques textes hermétiques et gnostiques," in J.-E. Ménard, ed., *Les textes de Nag Hammadi, Colloque du Centre d'Histoire des Religions, Strasbourg 23–25 Octobre 1974* (NHS 7; Leiden: Brill, 1975), 123–145, esp. 138, as well as R. M. Grant, "The Mystery of Marriage in the Gospel of Philip," *VC* 15 (1961), 129–140, esp. 135 n. 22, where Grant points out that Empedocles (H. Diels, *Doxographi Graeci*, 423) had already come to the same solution of the problem of children who do not resemble their parents. The same idea is expressed in *Gen. Rab.* 27:4 (254 Theodor) in the very context of the women's sin with the Sons of God. R. Berachia described how women would give birth to sons who resembled lads they met in the market place and with whom they had fallen in love.

⁴Cf. M. Scopello, "Le mythe de la chute des anges dans l'*Apocryphon de Jean* (II.1) de Nag Hammadi," *RSR* 54 (1980), 220–230; she deals with only two of the contexts in which the pervasive myth is related, *I Enoch* and *Ap. John*.

⁵E.g., *Great Pow.* 38:22–39:2, where Noah preached piety for 120 years before escaping in the ark; 2 Pet 2:5, where Noah is called κήρυξ δικαιοσύνης. In *Apoc. Adam*, however, Noah is presented as the arch-servant of Sakla.

⁶For a thorough analysis of this concept in Gnostic thought and a demonstration of its Neoplatonic affinities, see M. Williams, *The Gnostic Concept of Stability* (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University, 1977), and his "Stability as a Soteriological Theme in Gnosticism," in Layton, ed., *Rediscovery*, II, 819–829.

⁷*Ap. John* 29:10–12. Clouds of light appear elsewhere as the proper and secret place of Gnostics and revealing angels; see *Gos. Eg.* III 49:1; *Apoc. Adam* 75:17–18; 69:20–21; 71:9–10. Cf. Matt 24:30, Mark 13:26, and Luke 21:27, where the Son of Man appears in the clouds. A cloud of light also appears in Matt 17:5, Luke 9:34, and already in Dan 7:13. But clouds may also be connected with darkness, i.e., with flesh and lust; *Gos. Eg.* III 56:25; *Apoc. Adam* 80:22; 81:16–17; 83:7–8; *Paraph. Shem* 5:12; 47:21; *Treat. Seth* 70:2. See the discussion of νεφέλη by Eduard Norden, *Die Geburt des Kindes; Geschichte einer religiösen Idee* (Studien der Bibliothek Warburg 3; Leipzig–Berlin: Teubner, 1924), 92–99.

the Coptic renders the important Gnostic notion of *ὁ ἀντίμιμον πνεῦμα*.⁸ The text then describes, in a way strongly reminiscent of Jewish apocryphal writings, how

the angels changed themselves in their likeness into the likeness of their [i.e. the women's] husbands, filling them with the spirit of darkness, which they had mixed for them, and with evil. They brought gold and silver and a gift and copper and iron and metal and all kinds of things. (*Ap. John* 29:26–33)

Finally,

They begot children out of the darkness according to the likeness of their spirit. And they closed their hearts, and they hardened themselves through the hardness of the despicable spirit until now. (30:8–11)

In another context, these angels (or demons—both words are used with the same meaning) are said to have

taught men many errors with magic and potions and idolatry, and shedding of blood, and altars, and temples and sacrifices, and libations. . . . (*Orig. World* 123:4–13)⁹

Now the story as told in *Ap. John* clearly reveals an unintentional contamination between two traditions attested in Jewish literature. The demythologizing exegesis of *T. Reub.* noted above had its own logic: since spiritual beings like angels could not sin, it was the women who, in their lust, had to bear the burden of responsibility for the illegitimate union, which was, in fact, no more than an illicit thought. In the case of *Ap. John*, however, the reason why the angels took the shape of the husbands is less clear. The Gnostic author did not refrain from describing the strange, beastly physical form of the demiurge and the archons. So the angels' taking the shape of the husbands here appears to be slavishly

⁸*Ap. John* 29:16–24: *οὐ πῆνᾶ ἐψῶης* (cf. Crum, 375–376); cf. 26:20: *πῆνᾶ ἐτῶβιαεῖτ*, “the opposing spirit.” Both expressions render the Greek *ὁ ἀντίμιμον πνεῦμα*, retained in the version of *Ap. John* in BG. *οὐ πῆνᾶ ἐψῶης* (“the despicable spirit”) might be a translation of *τὸ ἄτιμον* (instead of *ἀντίμιμον*) as Prof. J. Strugnell has suggested to me. On the *antimimon pneuma*, see Giversen, “The Apocryphon of John and Genesis,” *ST* 17 (1963), 73, and esp. A. Böhlig, “Zum Antimimon Pneuma in den koptischen-gnostischen Texten,” *Mysterion und Wahrheit* (AGJU 6; Leiden: Brill, 1968), 162–175. To this evil spirit is opposed the *parthenikon pneuma* (*Eugnostos* 89:2–3). See W. Bousset, “Gnosis,” *PW*, VII. 2, 1514, and Tardieu, *Trois Mythes*, 65 n. 91, who refers to the “spiritual virgins” of *Orig. World* 102:18. The *antimimon pneuma*, a purely Gnostic concept, is not found in philosophical texts.

⁹The theme of the wicked angels who taught men “things contrary to nature” and thus “led them into evil things” also appears in the fragment of *Asclepius* found at Nag Hammadi (73:5–12). The same text mentions the punishment of the demon who has done evil deeds—“He is suspended between heaven and earth” (77:8). This might refer to the binding of the Fallen Angels in *I Enoch*.

copied from its source, but out of its original context; the redactor did not notice that the detail was not only absolutely meaningless in his own, new version of the myth, but that it even contradicted it. This source, which remains unidentified, followed the tradition attested to by *T. Reub.*

The second element coming from Jewish texts is the mention of the gold and silver, gifts and metals, etc., which the angels of the demiurge brought to the women. This can be easily recognized as derived directly from the description of the angels' fall in *1 Enoch* 8:1, for although it was significant in the early version of the myth (where the origins of evil and of moral depravation were linked to the origins of civilization), this element appeared as a mere literary vestige in the Gnostic story, without any specific function. It can therefore be safely assumed that the author—or the redactor—of *Ap. John* knew and used the Jewish traditions embodied in various pseudepigraphic works and integrated them into his own version of the myth, albeit not always wisely. This analysis, however, falls short of proving that the author was in close contact with Judaism. In the 2nd century, when *Ap. John* was probably written, these texts already circulated far beyond the Jewish communities, indeed they were current primarily in Christian circles if our evidence is to be trusted. But the lack of Christian elements in *Ap. John* greatly weakens the hypothesis of a Christian intermediary. Roel van den Broek therefore argues quite plausibly that the author of *Ap. John* knew, accepted, and reinterpreted some Jewish Alexandrian traditions.¹⁰

The Seduction of Eve

A glance at the other "seduction story" related in *Ap. John*, namely, the case of Eve, may provide a further clue towards a solution of the problem of the traditions worked over by the Gnostics in their myth-making. The text reports that when Yaldabaoth, the first archon, saw "the virgin who stood by Adam," with the luminous Epinoia of life shining in her, he decided to seduce her. While Pronoia "snatched life out of Eve" (cf. *Hyp. Arch.* 89:17–29), he begot from her two sons, Elohim and Jahwe—"And these he called with the names Cain and Abel, with a view to deceive" (*Ap. John* 24:8–25). In other words, he gave them these names in order to conceal their archontic nature. Yaldabaoth's sons had beastly appearances: Elohim had a bear face, and Jahwe, a cat face. Both shared their father's ugliness; they were *amorphoi*, just as he was *amorphos*.¹¹ Yaldabaoth, the first archon, then "planted in Adam a desire for generation," with the result that Adam generated from Eve his first-born, Seth, who

¹⁰"The Creation of Adam's Psychic Body in the *Apocryphon of John*," in van den Broek and Vermaseren, eds., *Studies in Gnosticism*, 38–57.

¹¹Cf. *Marsanes* 25:1–4. *Ap. John* 10:26–35 also tells of Yaldabaoth's offspring: "And he joined with his madness (*ἀπρόνοια*) which is in him and begot authorities for himself." Of his twelve sons, the sixth was called Cain—"he whom the generations of men call the sun"—and the seventh Abel. Cf. *CG IV* 26:19–20. See also *Apoc. Adam* 66:26–28 (corrupt text) and *Trim. Prot.* 40:4–7.

was like himself.

The description of Eve's marital relationships in this text is unlike the one given in *Gos. Phil.* 70:22, since in *Ap. John* Eve is not accused of adulterous thoughts during her second union, the one with Adam. On the contrary, this union seems to have been a pure one, for it produced Seth, the father of the "unshakeable race," to which the *pneuma* was sent by the Mother and which was thus in perpetual opposition to the bearers of the *antimimon pneuma*. What remains puzzling is the fact that it is the evil Yaldabaoth who planted sexual desire in Adam,¹² desire through which the pure seed was transmitted. In order to have Seth belong to the spiritual race, the intervention of the Mother was required. So, in a sense Seth was not simply Adam's son, but also linked to the heavenly world. It seems that the Gnostic author, confronted with the problem that the fathers of both the pure and the evil race were born from Eve, offered a radical solution by asserting that Eve's first two sons were actually the product of a rape. Nevertheless, this author could not free himself completely from the more traditional attitude, according to which even the sexual relations between Adam and Eve stemmed from an unclean desire. A more logical or consistent stand based on the same premises was presented in *Gos. Phil.* 68:22–24, where the original androgyny of Adam and Eve actually became a symbol of the mystery of spiritual, or perfect, marriage, which itself was an archetype of salvation: "When Eve was in Adam, death did not exist." In the Valentinian context of *Gos. Phil.*, the theme of androgyny, which, as noted, also occurred in *Apoc. Adam*, was interpreted as the union in the bridal chamber, symbolizing metaphysical realities and eschatological salvation: at the end of time Achamoth, the mother of the spiritual seed, would enter the Pleroma and receive the savior as her bridegroom.¹³

Eve's seduction is mentioned or developed elsewhere both in the patristic testimonies and in the various Gnostic texts. In the heresiologists' reports, one finds several references to Eve's relations with the demiurge or the archons, and to the "non-Adamic" birth of Cain and Abel. In his discussion of these Gnostics—whom he laconically calls *alii*, "others,"—Irenaeus claimed that according to them, Eve gave birth to sons "who are called angels" as a result of her sexual relations with Yaldabaoth and the lustful archons.¹⁴

¹²This desire is part of the dominion of death and ignorance (*Ap. John* 64:20–67:13). On the original androgyny of human beings, a theme which can be traced back to Plato's *Symposium*, see C. A. E. Jessen, "Hermaphroditos," *PW*, VIII. 1, 714–721.

¹³Cf. Grant, "The Mystery of Marriage in the Gospel of Philip," *VC* 15 (1961), 129–140, esp. 131. See also J.-E. Ménard's commentary on *Gos. Thom.*, logion 15, in his *L'Evangile selon Thomas* (NHS 5; Leiden: Brill, 1975), 101–103. Some of the texts referred to by Ménard in his discussion of Valentinianism (p. 102), such as *Gos. Eg.* or the fragment of the *Gospel of Eve* preserved by Epiphanius in his chapter on the "Gnostics" (*Pan.* 26,3.1; I, 278 Holl), show that later on the theme was not limited to Valentinian theology.

¹⁴*Adv. Haer.* I, 30.78 (I, 233–234 Harvey).

This is repeated by Pseudo-Tertullian, who stated that according to the Cainites, Abel was created by an inferior being, while according to the Sethians, both Cain and Abel were the sons of angels.¹⁵ He added that great discord arose among the angels on their account, and that the supreme power (*virtus*), whom the Sethians called the Mother, willed Seth to be born instead of Abel. The Mother thus intended to fight the angels who had created Cain and Abel, "since this pure seed (*hoc semen mundum*) rises and is born" from Seth. "For (*enim*) they speak about iniquitous *permixtiones* of angels and men, which prompted the Power to send the flood, in order that "that seed of permixture" be swept away and only the pure seed be kept intact (*integrum*) (218 Kroymann). From this testimony, and especially from the use of *enim*, the Gnostics whom Pseudo-Tertullian called Sethians clearly connected their teachings about the birth of Cain and Abel to the general pattern of the *permixtiones* between angels and humans. The same conceptions were known to Epiphanius, who mentioned in his description of the Sethians' theology their belief that Cain and Abel were the sons of two angels who fought one another through them "and so caused Abel to be killed by Cain."¹⁶

There is at least one direct Christian refutation of this Gnostic doctrine; based on quotations from Genesis and Ecclesiasticus, it argued that Cain's evil character was due not to his birth but to his subsequent evil acts. This refutation is found in a Pachomian fragment, which quotes "one of the books written by the heretics" as saying: "When Eve had been misled and she had eaten of the fruit of the tree, it was with the devil that she conceived Cain."¹⁷ Similarly, Epiphanius, in his report on the Archontics, wrote:

Another myth is related by these folk: The devil (ὁ διάβολος) it says, came to Eve and had intercourse with her (συνήφθη) as a man does with a woman, and begot with her Cain and Abel.¹⁸

Or again:

His [i.e. Cain's] father was the devil, and the devil's father is the archon who is a liar, whom the foolish ones, bringing blasphemies upon their own heads, identify with Sabaoth.¹⁹

Finally, in the system that the Gnostic Justin set forth in his book *Baruch*,

¹⁵ *Contr. Omn. Haer.* 2 (217–218 Kroymann).

¹⁶ *Pan.* 39, 2.1–2 (II, 72 Holl). See Tardieu's annotated translation of the whole chapter, in *Tel Quel* 88 (1981), 64–91.

¹⁷ Fragment 53, edited by L. Th. Lefort, *Les vies coptes de Saint Pachôme* (Louvain, 1943), 370–371. Discussed by T. Säve-Söderbergh, "Holy Scriptures or Apologetic Documentations," in J.-E. Ménard, ed., *Les Textes de Nag-Hammadi*, 9.

¹⁸ *Pan.* 40, 5.3 (II, 85 Holl).

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 40, 5.7 (II, 86 Holl); also 40, 6.9 (II, 87, Holl). The archontics here denounce Sabaoth in terms usually reserved for his father Yaldabaoth. Sammael is probably meant by "the devil."

a highly syncretistic work which retains clear traces of deeply rooted Jewish influences, the serpent is said to have had sexual relations with both Eve and Adam:

For going to Eve he deceived her and committed adultery with her, which is contrary to the law; and he went also to Adam and used him as a boy, which is also against the law. Hence arose adultery and pederasty.²⁰

Yet the clearest evidence before the Nag Hammadi texts came to light was embodied in a few quotations from the *Apocalypse of the Strangers* and the *Book of Demands*, which the schismatic Audians were said to have read from the 4th century until at least the 8th, when Theodore bar Khonai met them.²¹ H.-C. Puech identified, organized, and translated these quotations from the works of oriental Church Fathers.²² I shall give an English translation of these passages.²³ According to him four distinct references to Eve's seduction can be distinguished from our sources.

(1) God [i.e., the demiurge] said to Eve: "Be pregnant of me, lest Adam's creators [i.e., the archons] approach you" (Bar Khonai; *Apoc. Strangers*). Or: "Be pregnant of me, before Adam's creators come to you" (Bar Hebraeus).

(2) God said to Eve: "Be pregnant of me before the archons²⁴ come and have relations with you" (Bar Hebraeus). Or: "The Father of Life created Eve and then said to her: 'be pregnant of me lest the gods who are below me impregnate you.' She conceived from him, gave birth, and the race issued of her multiplied" (Agapius).

(3) "The authorities²⁵ say: 'Come, let us throw our semen upon her

²⁰Hippolytus, *Elenchos* 5, 26.23 (130 Wendland). On the Jewish influences on *Baruch*, see K. Dvideland, "Elohims Himmelfahrt," *Temenos* 10 (1974), 68–78; R. van den Broek, "The Shape of Eden according to Justin the Gnostic," *VC* 27 (1973), 35–45.

²¹On the Audians, see H.-C. Puech, "Audianer," *RAC*, I, 910–915.

²²Puech, "Fragments retrouvés."

²³My translation differs in a few places from Puech's and/or from the editors' renderings. The texts are (1) Agapius, *Kitab al 'Unwān* (10th century), PO 7, 562–564, ed. and trans. A. Vasiliev; also ed. P. L. Cheikho (CSCO, *Scriptores Arabici* series tertia, 5; Beirut: Typog. Cathol., 1912), 289–290; (2) Bar Hebraeus, *Mnarat Qudshe* (late 12th century), PO 13, 259–260, ed. and trans. F. Nau; and (3) Theodore bar Khonai, *Liber Scholiorum*, XI, ed. A. Scher (CSCO, *Scriptores Syri*, series secunda, 66; Paris, 1910), 319–320.

²⁴*benei šallitā*. Puech and Nau translate: "Les Dominateurs." Actually the Syriac is the precise translation of the Greek *ἀρχων* (which also exists as a loan word in Syriac: *arḫunā*). To prevent confusion, I prefer to keep the traditional *terminus technicus*, archon.

²⁵*šalliṭanē*. Pognon translates "Les Puissances," and Puech "Les Dominations." Puech ("Fragments retrouvés," 398 n. 1) says that the term *šalliṭanē* corresponds to the Greek *ἐξουσίαι* and refers to the seven planetary archons. He points out that this word translates *ἐξουσίαι* in the Syriac version of Epiphanius's *Anakephalaiosis* and adds that *šalliṭanē* refers to planets in Bardesanes. See *Book of Laws of Countries*, PS 2, 567–568; cf. *Poimandres*, 9, l.18, in Nock-Festugière, *CH*, I, and n. 27, p. 20.

and let us make use²⁶ of her first, so that what will be born of her will be under our dominion'” (Bar Khonai; *Apoc. Strangers*). Or: “The authorities . . . : Come, let us lie with Eve, that what will be born be ours” (Bar Khonai; *Book of Demands*)

(4) “The authorities led Eve and lay with her, so that she would not go to Adam” (Bar Khonai; *Book of Demands*). Or: “They led Eve far from this Adam’s face and knew her” (*Apoc. Strangers*).

Eve and the Archons in Nag Hammadi texts

The theme of Eve’s seduction by the archons, the authorities, or their leader (Sammael) reappears in certain texts discovered at Nag Hammadi which embody, in different ways, the Sethian myth about the origins of mankind and of the pure seed. For example, *Hyp. Arch.* 89:17–28 relates,

Then the authorities (ἐξουσίαι) came up to their Adam. And when they saw his female counterpart speaking with him, they became agitated with great agitation; and they became enamored of her. They said to one another, “Come, let us sow our seed (σπέρμα) in her,” and they pursued her. And she laughed at them for their witlessness and their blindness; and in their clutches she became a tree, and left before them her shadowy reflection resembling herself; and they defiled (it) foully. . . .²⁷

In this text, the authorities are simply said to have fallen in love with the spiritual Eve (89:11); in a way, they were “seduced” by her. This is, *in*

²⁶Obviously a sexual reference. Although Payne-Smith, *A Syriac Thesaurus* does not give such a meaning under the entry ܫܡܫ, the sexual connotations of the root ܫܡܫ are well attested in Jewish Aramaic and in rabbinic Hebrew. See Jastrow, *Dictionary of the Talmud*, 1601b. For a semantic equivalent in Hebrew (זקק), see Ginzberg, *Legends*, V, 122 n. 128. Similarly, χράομαι may also refer to sexual intercourse. See LSJ, 2002b. The use of a compound of this verb in Coptic, with the same meaning, is attested in *Exeg. Soul* 128:6. Cf. *Hyp. Arch.* 92:31, where the arrogant archon says to Norea: 𐩌𐩨𐩣𐩪 𐩢𐩪 𐩨𐩣𐩪𐩣𐩪 𐩠𐩨𐩣𐩪 𐩠𐩨𐩣𐩪, translated by Layton: “You must render service to us” (*HTR* 67 [1974]). In his commentary (*HTR* 69 [1976], 64, n. 114) Layton recognizes that the intention here is sexual and adds that 𐩢𐩪 𐩠𐩨𐩣𐩪 probably translates δουλεύειν (see Crum, 30a, b). A sexual meaning of δουλεύειν, however, is not attested in Greek. It is thus probable that the Greek *Vorlage* of *Hyp. Arch.* read here χράομαι (intended in the sexual sense), which the Coptic translator misunderstood and translated in the sense of “to be subject to,” possible both for χράομαι and for 𐩢𐩪 𐩠𐩨𐩣𐩪. On the Greek *Vorlage* of *Hyp. Arch.* see P. Nagel, *Das Wesen der Archonten* (Halle, 1970), 19.

²⁷The tree is the tree of knowledge. But see B. A. Pearson, “‘She Became a Tree’—A Note to CG II, 4:89, 25–26,” *HTR* 69 (1976), 413–415, for precise iconographic references to a similar pagan myth. It is impossible here to go into a detailed analysis of this passage in the context of *Hyp. Arch.* On this see Layton’s notes 58–61 (*HTR* 69 [1976], 56–57) and Tardieu, *Trois Mythes*, 130. Tardieu analyzes the various steps of Gnostic anthropogony reflected in *Hyp. Arch.* and *Orig. World* and notes, “Ce n’est pas l’Eve supérieure qui est souillée, mais sa ressemblance, son reflet dans la personne de la compagne du troisième Adam.”

nuce, the typical Gnostic notion of the "seduction of the archons," to which we shall return at greater length. Eve escaped before the archons could unite with her, but the defilement of her "shadow" is a docetic device, one which lets the heavenly Eve keep her purity untainted.²⁸

A slightly different view is expressed in *Orig. World* 116:13–19. When the seven archangels sent by the authorities saw Eve speaking with Adam, they said to one another:

What is this (female) light-being? For truly she is like the likeness which appeared to us in the light. Now come, let us seize her and let us cast our seed (σπέρμα) on her, so that when she is polluted she will not be able to ascend to her light, but those whom she will beget will serve us (ὑποτάσσεσθαι). (116:13–19)

As told here, the myth is significantly different from the version in *Hyp. Arch.*,²⁹ for the authorities were not simply moved by their lustful love for Eve. Since they realized with awe that Adam and Eve had been granted life (i.e., spirit) by the power on high, they intended to use this lust in their mischievous plan,³⁰ to maintain their domination over mankind. Indeed Eve was Zoe (life), Sophia's daughter, whom her mother sent as an instructor to Adam in order to awaken him and to give him a soul, which would turn his offspring into vessels of light (*Orig. World* 115:31–36). To oppose Eve's awakening of Adam (116:1–5),³¹ the authorities again tried to make him sleep.

But here, too, Eve succeeded in foiling the plot:

Then (the Life-) Eve, since she existed as a power (δύναμις), laughed at their intention (γνώμη). She darkened their eyes and left her likeness there stealthily beside Adam. She entered the tree of knowledge and remained there. (*Orig. World* 116:25–29)³²

It should be pointed out that since Eve escaped the rapist demiurge by disobeying his order to stay away from the tree, her biblical "fall" can in no way be related to the origin of evil.³³

²⁸On Gnostic docetic attitudes, see U. Bianchi, "Docetism. A Peculiar Theory about the Ambivalence of the Presence of the Divine," in his *Selected Essays on Gnosticism, Dualism and Mysticism* (Suppl. to *Numen* 38; Leiden: Brill, 1978), 303–311.

²⁹This difference was not noted by Tardieu, who claims that "the two texts mean one and the same thing" (*Trois Mythes*, 130).

³⁰See also the quotation from the *Book of Demands* (*supra*): "so that she [Eve] would not go to Adam."

³¹Sleep is a symbol of death, matter, and ignorance. See G. W. MacRae, "Sleep and Awakening in Gnostic Texts," *Le origini*, 496–507. Cf. Nock-Festugière, *CH*, I, n. 44, p. 22.

³²Cf. *Hyp. Arch.* 89:25 and n. 27 *supra*. A *dynamis* is a heavenly figure. See Bauer's *Lexicon*, s.v. *δύναμις*. Cf. Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* I.15.6 (I, 155–156 Harvey), where the Christian hymn against Marcos claimed that through Azazel, "the angelic *dynamis*," his father Satan permitted him to accomplish his evil deeds.

³³See also Justin's *Baruch* (n. 20 *supra*), where the tree of knowledge was identified with Naas, the biblical serpent who became the third angel of Edem. The inversion process is

By this stratagem, Eve was able to escape the followers of Sammael, "the blind one" *par excellence* according to a traditional etymology harking back to Jewish sources.³⁴ These handicapped archons could not really see her, but only her shadowy likeness, which they mistook for her true nature. Thus,

They were troubled, thinking that this was the true Eve. And they acted recklessly, and came to her and seized her and cast their seed upon her. (*Orig. World* 117:1–4)

As a consequence of the rape, Eve's likeness "first conceived Abel from the first archon; and she bore the rest of the sons from the seven authorities and their angels" (117:15–18). Surprisingly enough, this text not only fails to mention Cain, it implies that Eve had seven other sons, from Yaldabaoth's seven sons (101:24–25).³⁵ The singling out of Abel as the son of the first archon is not quite clear. It may somehow be related to the "Cainite" theologoumenon reported by Pseudo-Tertullian, according to which Abel was created by "an inferior being."³⁶ Indeed, in "Cainite" contexts, with their thoroughgoing "inversion" of the biblical text, Cain is more valued than his brother on the basis of an overly literal exegesis of Gen 4:1b: "She [i.e. Eve] conceived and bore Cain and she said: 'I got a man from the Lord.'"³⁷ The same view of Cain's conception is found in Marcionite theology.³⁷

Irenaeus related the myth in the following way: "The jealous Yaldabaoth wanted a plan for depriving man [of the moist nature of light] through woman, and from his own desire he brought forth a woman whom Prunikos [= Sophia] took and invisibly deprived of power. The others [*reliques*; presumably the other archons] came and admired her beauty, and called her Eve; they desired her and from her generated sons

more thoroughly developed in Naassene theology, where the serpent became good. See the discussion in Jonas, *The Gnostic Religion*, 92–94.

³⁴According to this exegetical etymology, "Sammael" is derived from Aramaic סומא (= blind). Sammael appears in both *Hyp. Arch.* 87:3–4; 94:25–26 and *Orig. World* 103:18, where he is also called Yaldabaoth. On his birth and his nature, see *Orig. World* 100:1–26. Cf. Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies*, III.39, where Simon Magus taught that Adam, created in the image of the biblical God, was born blind. This is based upon an exegesis of Gen 3:5–7. B. Barc has argued that the figure of Sammael, which already occurs in *Ascens. Isaiah* 1:11; 2:1, originated in the *semel haqin'a* of Ezek 8:3–6; see the introduction to his *L'Hypostase des Archontes* (BCNH; Textes 5; Québec-Louvain: Presses de l'Univ. Laval-Peters, 1980), 34–35, and his "Samaël-Saklas-Yaldabaoth. Recherche sur l'origine d'un mythe gnostique," in *Colloque international sur les textes de Nag Hammadi* (BCNH; Etudes 1; Québec-Louvain: Presses de l'Univ. Laval-Peters, 1981), 123–150.

³⁵In *Hyp. Arch.* 91:11–14, Cain seems to be the son of the authorities, while Abel is the son of Adam; see Layton's commentary, *HTR* 69 (1976), 60, n. 84. See also *Apoc. Adam* 66:26–28, where the corrupt text is partly reconstructed by MacRae, but the identity of the son of Eve and Sakla remains unclear.

³⁶2, 217 Kroymann.

³⁷On Cainite theology, see Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* I.31.1 (I, 241–242 Harvey). For Marcion, see *ibid.*, I.27.2 (I, 218 Harvey).

who are called angels."³⁸ Here Eve, who is evil, did not escape the archons. Once deprived of power, however, she was identical to the shadowy Eve in *Orig. World*. The archons, seduced by the carnal Eve's beauty, behaved like the Sons of God in Gen 6:2 and generated angels just as the latter had generated giants. To the seven sons of Eve by the demiurge, who ruled the seven planets, the Sethians opposed the seven *Allogeneis*, the mythical sons of Seth.

In these last versions of the myth, there is no "fall" of Eve in the Christian, metaphorical use of the word, which implies sin and/or guilt. The spiritual Eve deliberately surrendered her shadowy likeness to the archons in order that she herself become the pure "Mother of Life." Her spiritual figure thus probably lies at the origin of the "Mother on High," or, simply "the Mother," who appears in many of the heresiologists' reports. This Mother stands in opposition to "the first mother," who is the demiurge's mate:

Now all this [Eve's rape] came to pass according to the will of the First Father (**αρχιγενετωρ*), so that the first mother might beget within herself every mixed seed which is joined together (*ἀρμόζειν*) with the Fate (*είμαρμένη*) of the world. (*Orig. World* 117:18–23)³⁹

The various aspects and the ambiguity of Eve in these texts (as both soiled and pure, giver of life and cause of death) have been thoroughly analyzed by Tardieu⁴⁰ and need not be dealt with here. For the purpose of our study, it is sufficient to emphasize the way in which the text integrated the two interpretations: Eve's rape by the evil powers and her escape from their lust.

Eve and the Serpent

Although the mythologoumenon of Eve's sexual relationships with the demiurge did not originate with Valentinianism, it was integrated into Valentinian theology in a peculiar way. Thus in the *Extracts of Heracleon*, the material ones (*choïkoi*) "have the devil for father" and are the children neither of Abraham nor of God (the passage is an exegesis of John 8:44).⁴¹ More precisely, the *choïkoi* were sons of the Devil by nature, while the *psychikoi* were his sons only by intent.⁴² In the words of Theodotus, there were the sons of Cain and Abel respectively, while the *pneumatikoi*, the Gnostics by nature, were the sons of Seth.⁴³ Similarly, in *Gos.*

³⁸ *Adv. Haer.* I.30.7 (I, 233–234 Harvey).

³⁹ See *Orig. World* 113:5–10: "All this happened according to the *πρόνοια* of Pistis . . ."; *Hyp. Arch.* 88:9–10: "All these things happened according to the will of the Father of All." See also Yaldabaoth's role in Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* I.30.8 (I, 234 Harvey).

⁴⁰ *Trois Mythes*; see particularly Eve's hymn in *Orig. World* 114:4.

⁴¹ Fragment 44, in Origen, *Com. in Ioh.* XX.20 (83 Völker).

⁴² Fragment 46, in Origen, *Com. in Ioh.* XX.24 (83–84 Völker).

⁴³ *Extr. Theod.* 54.1 (170 Sagnard).

Phil. 61:5–7, Cain was the son of the serpent: “First adultery came into being, afterward murder. and he was begotten in adultery, for he was the child of the serpent.” This conception was systematically integrated to the soteriological process in *Gos. Phil.* Mary was, in a sense, the anti-Eve, “the virgin whom no power defiled” (55:27–31). She united not with the serpent, but with the Father of everything, so that Christ “was born from a virgin to rectify the fall which occurred in the beginning” (71:3–21).

In *Val. Exp.* 38:22–27, both Cain and Abel were said to be sons of the Devil. The same theme also appeared in later dualist systems such as Manichaeism and Bogomilism. According to the *Interrogatio Iohannis* (a work of Bogomil inspiration later imported from Bulgaria by the Cathar Bishop Nazarios), for instance, the Devil was the *initiator peccati*. Through various means and in the guise of the serpent, he united with Eve and impregnated her with both Cain and his twin sister Kalomena (or Kalmena). He then poured lust “on the head of the angel who was in Adam.” Adam then impregnated Eve with Abel, who was killed by Cain as soon as he was born.⁴⁴

The same themes that we have followed in Gnostic literature also occur in some rabbinic texts mentioning Eve’s sexual relations with Satan or the serpent. The evidence suggests that this theme originated in Judaism.⁴⁵ Actually, the theological questions raised both by the serpent’s seduction of Eve and by the birth of the murderer Cain are far from confined to Gnosticism. Even before the Gnostics, Jews could have combined these two questions into one by arguing that the serpent (or Satan) was directly responsible for Cain’s birth (but not Abel’s!), for he himself had had sexual relations with Eve. This Jewish conception already occurred in the Gospel of John 8:44: “You are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father you will do. He was a murderer from the beginning.”⁴⁶ Like the seduction of the women by the angels, this theme was probably borrowed from Jewish traditions. In rabbinic Judaism, such traditions

⁴⁴Puech has collected the relevant sources in his book, written in collaboration with A. Vaillant, *Le traité contre les Bogomiles de Cosmas le Prêtre* (Travaux publiés par l’Institut d’Etudes Slaves 21; Paris: Droz, 1945). See the edition of A. Reitzenstein (in collaboration with L. Troje) of the *Interrogatio Iohannis*, in his *Vorgeschichte der christliche Taufe* (Leipzig–Berlin: Teubner, 1929), 297–311, esp. 301–302. The text is quoted by Puech, *ibid.*, 201; he refers to parallels from the heresiological literature on Audians and Archontics (*ibid.*, 339 and nn. 2, 3) but nevertheless regards Manichaeism as the more probable source of Bogomil speculation. See now the new ed., trad., and comment. of E. Bozoki, *Le livre secret des Cathares, Interrogatio Iohannis, Apocryphe d’origine bogomile* (Textes, dossiers, documents 2; Paris: Beauchesne, 1980).

⁴⁵For a similar argument, based upon a detailed analysis of the role of the serpent of Genesis in Jewish and Gnostic texts, see B. A. Pearson, “Jewish Haggadic Traditions in the *Testimony of Truth* (CG IX, 3),” “*Ex Orbe Religionum*”: *Studia Geo Widengren Oblata*, 1 (Suppl. to *Numen* 21; Leiden: Brill, 1972), 457–470. But see doubts raised by A. Henrichs, in W. Wuellner, ed., *Jewish Gnostic Nag Hammadi Texts*, 8–14.

⁴⁶On the background and the implications of this verse, see N. Dahl, “Der Erstgeborene Satans und der Vater des Teufels (Polyk. 7:1 und John. 8:44),” *Apophoreta: Festschrift für Ernst Haenschen* (Berlin: Töpelmann, 1964), 70–84.

appeared in different *midrashim*. In Gnosticism, however, they gained a higher status, as it were, and became integrated into an etiological myth.

Hyp. Arch. 89:31–32 states, “Then the Female Spiritual Principle came (in) the Snake, the Instructor.” We have here (partly obscured, since Eve’s name is not mentioned) what must originally have been a pun in Aramaic on the words Eve (חווה), the snake (חויא), and the instructor (*חווה, or rather מַחווה).⁴⁷ The same pun is known from rabbinic sources, where it seems to have originated, but with a very different meaning. While in *Hyp. Arch.* the snake is the instructor of Gnosis, the rabbis considered him to have taught Eve the evil ways of lust.

And Adam knew . . . [Gen 4:1]: R. Huna and R. Jacob in the name of R. Abba: he knew what his serpent (חוייה) [i.e., Eve, his tempter] had done to him. R. Aha added: The serpent was your serpent, and you were Adam’s serpent (חוייה חוייה דאדם).⁴⁸ (*Gen. Rab.* 22.2; 204–205 Theodor)

Another explanation of Eve’s name is the following:

Adam called his wife Eve [Gen 3:20]. She was given (to him) as an adviser, and he showed her (חוייה ליה) how many generations she had destroyed. (*Gen. Rab.* 20.11; 195 Theodor)

These passages should be read in the context of similar Jewish traditions. Already in targumic literature, the sexual relations between Eve and Sammael were mentioned, e.g., in Pseudo-Jonathan:

And Adam knew that Eve (ידע ית חווה) his wife had conceived from Sammael, the angel of the Lord, and she became pregnant and bore Cain (וילידת ית קין), and he was like those on high, not like those below; and she said: “I have acquired the angel of the Lord as a man.”⁴⁹

The Targum here interprets the two particles את (Aramaic ית) in Gen 4:1. The difficulty—how can Eve acquire a man from (את) the Lord immediately after Adam is said to have known (ידע את) her?—is removed if the

⁴⁷See Layton’s commentary on *Hyp. Arch.*, 55 n. 57. See also *Orig. World* 113:32–33: “But the Hebrews call his mother Eve of life, i.e. ‘the instructor of life.’” What we have here is a double pun, since it also plays upon the biblical etymology of Eve’s name, “mother of all living” (Gen 3:20). In *Orig. World* 113:21–34, the birth of the instructor (πρεφταμο) in the form of a drop of light on the water sent by Sophia is described. This drop of light took the shape of a woman’s body, and the woman was called by the Hebrews “Eve of life” (עַוְלַת נְשָׁה), i.e., the instructor of life (πρεφταμο . . . מִשְׁנָה). On this passage see Böhlig’s note in his edition of the text, 72–74. Cf. *Orig. World* 104:28–31, where the daughter of Pistis is called Zoë.

⁴⁸Trans. H. Freedman, in *Midrash Rabbah I* (London: Soncino, 1939), 180.

⁴⁹Gen 4:1 in D. Rieder, ed., *Targum Jonathan Ben Uziel* (Jerusalem, 1974). On the Satanic origins of Cain in rabbinic literature, see further J. Bowker, *Targums and Rabbinic Literature* (Cambridge: University Press, 1969), 132.

first particle introduces a clause rather than the direct object of the verb. The second **את**, on the other hand, is taken as indicating the direct object. It follows that Cain is the son of an evil angel; like his father, he is described as having a heavenly appearance.

The same pattern of exegesis is found in later rabbinic texts, where Sammael is associated with the snake. *Pirque R. El.*, for instance, offers:

[Sammael] riding on the serpent came to her, and she conceived; afterwards Adam came to her, and she conceived Abel, as it is said: "And Adam knew his wife" [Gen 4:1]. What is the meaning of "knew"? [He knew] that she had conceived and she saw his likeness that it was not of the earthly beings, but of the heavenly beings, and she prophesied and said: "I have gotten a man with the Lord" [Gen 4:1].⁵⁰

The theme of Eve's intercourse with the serpent is expressed elsewhere in an even cruder way, very reminiscent of the Gnostic texts; like them, it describes rape rather than adultery. This tradition is based upon an exegesis of Gen 3:13 ("And the woman said: the snake tempted me [**השיאני**] and I ate"), where **הנהש השיאני** is understood as "the snake seduced me." This verse thus means "the serpent came upon Eve and threw impurity [i.e., semen] in her."⁵¹ In both Jewish and Gnostic contexts, Sammael appears as the villain, identified with Satan in the Jewish traditions and with the chief archon in the Gnostic ones. *Ap. John* 59:15–18, for instance, specifies, "This archon who was weak had three names: the first is Yaldabaoth; the second is Saklas; the third is Sammael."⁵²

The parallelisms in the texts quoted above thus reveal the existence of definite links between the Jewish and the Gnostic versions of Eve's adultery and/or seduction. As to the direction of this influence, the linguistic arguments support a Jewish influence on the Gnostic texts. Such a hypothesis does not, of course, imply that the redactor of *Hyp. Arch.* knew the pun in its original context. It does suggest, however, that in the

⁵⁰140–141 Higger. See chap. I, n. 33 *supra*; pp. 150–151 in Friedländer's trans. Cf. *Pal. Targs.* on Gen 4:1, *Midr. Haggadol* on Genesis, 112 (ed. Margalioth; Jerusalem: Mossad haRav Kook, 1947); *Zohar* I.31a, 54b; III.117a. For the related but more general theme of Eve's relations with male spirits (as well as Adam's relations with female spirits), see *Gen. Rab.* 20.11, 24.6 (195, 236 Theodor), *b. Erub.* 18b; *Tan. B.* I, 20; and *Zohar* I, 54b; III, 76b. See *Pirque R. El.* 14 (110 Higger) for a description of the fall of Sammael and his acolytes from their holy abode in heaven. *Pirque R. El.* is dependent there on *Adam and Eve*; cf. I. Levi in *REJ* 18, 86ff., and Ginzberg, *Legends*, V, 114 n. 106. This fall from heaven is somewhat similar to the fall of Truth, which was also ordered by God since it opposed the creation of man. In *Pirque R. El.*, Sammael voluntarily went down from heaven in order to work evil deeds with the help of the snake (105 Higger). Further research might reveal connections between these themes and the Gnostic fall of Sophia.

⁵¹*b. Sabb.* 145b–146a; *b. Yebam.* 103b (in the name of R. Yoḥanan); *b. Abod. Zar.* 22b. See also *Gen. Rab.* 19:13 (182 Theodor, as well as Theodor's notes there on **השיאני** meaning sexual intercourse).

⁵²See Barc, "Sammael-Saklas-Yaldabaoth," and G. Scholem, "Jaldabaoth Reconsidered," in *Mélanges d'histoire des religions offerts à H.-C. Puech* (Paris: PUF, 1974), 405–421.

Gnostic milieu where *Hyp. Arch.* originated, there was some knowledge of rabbinic exegesis—knowledge which could have hardly reached these milieus through non-Jews. Moreover, the myth of Eve's sexual relations with the serpent does not seem to have been widely known in early Christian literature, a fact which strengthens the hypothesis of Jewish influence on the Gnostic mythologoumena. Although the rabbinic texts were probably redacted at a later date than the Greek or Aramaic *Vorlage* of the Gnostic texts, a previous oral tradition may be assumed. The evidence of the Targum—and of the Gospel of John—reflects the early date of the original Jewish exegetical traditions. Moreover, it is easier to understand Gnostics attributing previously known legends about the serpent to the demiurge, than to imagine rabbis integrating scandalous Gnostic sayings about God the Creator into their own thought simply by transferring them to Satan or the serpent. It is thus reasonable to see in the Gnostic texts the radicalization of Jewish conceptions.

Birth of Cain and of Seth

While *Ap. John* (24:32–34) hypostasized Cain and Abel into Elohim and Jahwe, the archons who are “over principalities (ἀρχή) so that they rule over the tomb,”⁵³ it described the conception and birth of Seth in a very different fashion:

And when Adam recognized the likeness of his own foreknowledge (πρόγνωσις), he begot the likeness of the son of man. He called him Seth according to the way of the race in the aeons. Likewise the Mother also sent down her spirit which is in her likeness and a reflection (ἀντίτυπος) of those who are in the pleroma, for she will prepare a dwelling-place for the aeons which will come down. (*Ap. John* 24:34–25:7)⁵⁴

Commenting on this passage, G. MacRae⁵⁵ states that it “explicitly associates the human Seth with the heavenly Seth mentioned in an earlier phase of the myth (9:11–17; BG, 35:20–36:7). The ‘son of man’ is of course the celestial son of the heavenly Adam, but it may also be an interpretation of Gen 5:3.” MacRae then connects this text with *Apoc. Adam* 65:5–9, where Adam declares to Seth, “For this reason I myself have called you by the name of that man who is the seed of the great generation or from whom (it comes).”

⁵³I.e., the bodies of later generations. See Giversen, *Apocryphon Johannis*, 264.

⁵⁴Giversen's translation (*ibid.*, 95), “He called him ‘Seth’ as among the generation of aeons,” is inadequate. The shorter recension of *Ap. John* mentions Seth's birth only briefly (BG, 63:12–14). On Gnostic conceptions of anthropogony, see H. M. Schenke, *Der Gott ‘Mensch’ in der Gnosis: ein religionsgeschichtlicher Beitrag zur Diskussion über die paulinische Anschauung von der Kirche als Leib Christi* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1962), *passim*.

⁵⁵“Seth in Gnostic Texts and Traditions,” 19.

We have seen that the genealogy of Cain was problematic for Gnostic as well as for Jewish theology. The opposition of Abel to Cain is so clearly expressed in the Bible that it did not generate particularly difficult questions in the exegesis of the first chapters of Genesis. Indeed, most of the rich midrashic developments on the relationships between these two figures are rather predictable.⁵⁶ While Abel was opposed to his brother Cain (Gen 4:2: "And again, she bore his brother Abel"), he was also associated with Seth in a way that stressed the difference between the two brothers. At Seth's birth, Eve said, "God has appointed for me another child instead of Abel, for Cain slew him" (Gen 4:25b). This fact—together with the assumption that Abel died without offspring and was thus almost irrelevant to later *Heilsgeschichte*—may account for the ambivalence of the Gnostic sources towards him; sometimes Cain alone was described as being born from Sammael, while in other texts his brother was granted the same satanic fatherhood.

In order to understand the basis for the Gnostic exegesis of the antagonism between Cain (or Cain and Abel) and Seth, I wish to offer the following hypothesis. We have already noted the Jewish exegesis of Gen 4:1b: "and she [Eve] conceived and bore Cain, saying: 'I acquired a man from the Lord.'"⁵⁷ Yet this verse must have been read by Jews in connection with the two verses recounting Seth's birth:

And Adam knew his wife again, and she bore a son and called his name Seth, for she said: "God has appointed for me another seed⁵⁸ instead of Abel, for Cain slew him." (Gen 4:25)

When Adam had lived a hundred and thirty years, he became the father of a son in his own likeness, after his image⁵⁹ and named him Seth. (Gen 5:3)

Now any reasonably alert reader of Genesis would obviously relate this last verse to Gen 1:26a: "Then God said 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.'"⁶⁰ Therefore, when the Gnostics came to meditate

⁵⁶For these, see V. Aptowitzer, *Kain und Abel in der Aggada, den Apokryphen, der hellenistischen, christlichen und muhammedanischen Literatur* (Veröffentlichungen der Alexander Kohut Memorial Foundation I; Vienna: Löwit, 1922).

⁵⁷The Hebrew reads קניתי איש את ה'. The ambiguity has disappeared in the LXX: ἐκτίσαμεν ἄνθρωπον διὰ τοῦ θεοῦ.

⁵⁸זרע אחר; LXX: σπέρμα ἕτερον.

⁵⁹בצלמותו; LXX: κατὰ τὴν ἰδέαν αὐτοῦ καὶ κατὰ τὴν εἰκόνα αὐτοῦ.

⁶⁰בצלמותנו; LXX: κατ' εἰκόνα ἡμετέραι καὶ καθ' ὁμοίωσιν. For a medieval formulation of the problem, see, for instance, Maimonides, *Guide of the Perplexed*, I, 7, for whom "in his likeness" refers to understanding, which is human perfection. (S. Pines, trans. [Chicago-London: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1963], 32-33.) He adds that Adam's children born before Seth were animals having the shape of men, an apparently new (philosophical) synthesis between two traditions. According to the first one, embodied in *Pal. Tgs.* to Gen 5:5; *b. Erub.* 18b or *Pirke R. El.* 22, Adam's first two sons were not created in his own image. The second tradition is preserved in *Gen. Rab.* 23:6 and 24:6 (227, 235 Theodor). The latter *midrash*, commenting on Gen 5:1, notes that "the generations of Adam" included only Adam, Seth, and Enosh, since these were the only generations "in the likeness and