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The Nag Hammadi Codices as Monastic Books

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The Nag Hammadi Codices and Graeco-Egyptian Magical and Occult Literature*

Dylan M. Burns

Hugo Lundhaug and Lance Jenott's 2015 monograph, *The Monastic Origins of the Nag Hammadi Codices*, does much to help us situate the production of the Nag Hammadi Codices in the context of Coptic Monastic literature from the fourth century and beyond. Significantly, Lundhaug and Jenott begin their monograph by dispatching with alternative theories regarding the provenance of the codices: groups of "Gnostics," as suggested by Doresse and, more recently, Alastair Logan. The suggestion that we are dealing with an Egyptian "Gnostic" library is, I agree, untenable, for the reasons that Lundhaug and Jenott outline.[1]

Meanwhile, inspired in part by the work of Aleksandr Khosroyev, Stephen Emmel has suggested that at Nag Hammadi, we have:

> The products of a kind of Egypt-wide network (more or less informal) of educated, primarily Greek-speaking (that is, having Greek as their mother tongue), philosophically and esoteric-mystically like-minded people, for whom Egypt represented (even if only somewhat vaguely) a tradition of wisdom and knowledge to be revered and perpetuated. Perhaps they stood in the same tradition as that group of people who were responsible for producing texts (in Greek) ... that claimed to be translations of the old Egyptian priestly literature ... Once the idea of written Egyptian, in the form of standardized Coptic, became current (in the third century, let us say), it is easy to imagine a kind of rush to create a new "esoteric-mystical Egyptian wisdom literature" – being "Egyptian" above all by the virtue of being in Coptic rather than in Greek.[2]

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* A draft of this paper was presented at International Association for Coptic Studies' panel "The Nag Hammadi Codices and Early Egyptian Monasticism," in Claremont, CA, 26 July 2016. I thank the panel and audience members for their questions and criticisms. I am also indebted to the editors of this volume, who kindly offered further comments and criticisms to my initial drafts of this paper.

[1] Hugo Lundhaug and Lance Jenott, *The Monastic Origins of the Nag Hammadi Codices* (STAC 97; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015), 56–73.

[2] Stephen Emmel, "The Coptic Gnostic Texts as Witnesses to the Production and Transmission of Gnostic (and Other) Traditions," in *Das Thomasevangelium: Entstehung-Rezeption-Theologie* (ed. Jörg Frey et al.; BZNW 157; Berlin: De Gruyter, 2008), 48, re: Aleksandr Khosroyev, *Die Bibliothek von Nag Hammadi: Einige Probleme des Christentums in Ägypten während der ersten Jahrhunderte* (ASKÄ 7; Altenberge: Oros, 1995), 62, 98–102. Khosroyev's nod to Zosimus of Panopolis is also favored by Przemysław Piwowarczyk and

Lundhaug and Jenott reply that Emmel's hypothesis is unlikely. Rather, they argue,

> The Nag Hammadi texts were most likely translated into Coptic so that they could be read and understood by Coptic speakers who had inadequate knowledge of Greek…It is unlikely that people who belonged to the urban elite would have translated literary texts like these from Greek into Coptic, or that they would have chosen to read such texts in Coptic rather than in Greek if both were available. There is simply no indication that urban intellectuals would have read literary texts in Coptic.[3]

"There is simply no indication that urban intellectuals would have read literary texts in Coptic." I cannot contest this statement. The mysterious character of the origins of the Nag Hammadi Codices owes, as Khosroyev, Emmel, Lundhaug, and Jenott all recognize, to the fact that the books contain texts in Coptic. Moreover, even if we acknowledge the possibility of their manufacture in the fifth or even sixth centuries CE,[4] the Nag Hammadi Codices retain their position as some of the earliest Coptic literary manuscripts we possess. If we prefer the traditional, earlier dating of roughly mid-fourth century CE, the translation of their contents into Coptic and the subsequent production of the books stand next to the beginnings of Coptic literature itself. This is why Lundhaug and Jenott's move to contextualize the codices in fourth and fifth-

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Ewa Wipszycka, "A Monastic Origin of the Nag Hammadi Codices?" *Adamantius* 23 (2017): 446, 452. On Zosimus, see further below. The present approach to the question, however, is chiefly inspired by the phrasing of Garth Fowden, *The Egyptian Hermes* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993), 170–71: "Both collections illustrate that interlocking of the technical and philosophical approaches ... The overall emphasis of the Thebes cache is technical, that of the Nag Hammadi codices philosophical and theological. But there is enough common ground to confirm that the view of Hermetism we find in Zosimus and Iamblichus reflected a broader consensus" (ibid., 172). The "Thebes cache" (or "Theban Magical Library") is an archive of third–fourth-century CE Greek and Demotic scrolls containing formularies of magical texts; it constitutes a vitally important part of the PGM (Greek Magical Papyri) discussed below, n. 5, but is not coterminous with it. On the discovery of the Theban Magical Library, see Korshi Dosoo, "A History of the Theban Magical Library," *BASP* 53 (2016): 251–74, followed by Jacco Dieleman, "The Greco-Egyptian Magical Papyri," in *Guide to the Study of Ancient Magic* (ed. David Frankfurter; RGRW 189; Leiden: Brill, 2019), 292–93. "These two papyrus collections are tangible products of Upper Egyptian milieux related to, though linguistically at least more native than, that of the Hermetica. The only other comparable source we have is the alchemist Zosimus" (Fowden, *Egyptian Hermes*, 173; followed by Michèle Mertens, "Introduction historique," in Zosimus of Panopolis, *Mémoires Authentiques* [ed. and trans. by Michèle Mertens; Les Alchemistes Grecs 4; Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1995], xi–cxii, xvii; Emilio Suárez de la Torre, "The Library of the Magician," in *Contesti magici = Contextos mágicos: atti del convegno internazionale, Roma, Palazzo Massimo, 4-6 novembre 2009* [ed. M. Piranomonte and F.M. Simón; Roma: De Luca editori d'arte, 2012], 302). Fowden rejects the hypothesis of the monastic origins of the Nag Hammadi Codices, with caution (*Egyptian Hermes*, 172–73, n. 69).

[3] Lundhaug and Jenott, *Monastic Origins*, 101.

[4] On this window of dating, see Emmel, "The Coptic Gnostic Texts," 38.

century Egyptian monasticism is so important and compelling: monasticism furnished one of the very few literary cultures we know to have existed for the Coptic language during the period in which the Nag Hammadi manuscripts were made, and it is certainly the context where we have the most plentiful evidence. While some scholars have looked towards the scribes behind the grand Coptic editions of Manichaean texts discovered at Medinet Madi, the trajectory of investigation into Manichaean evidence to understand the Nag Hammadi Codices remains tertiary at best.[5] So although we know Egyptian Hellenophones like Zosimus to have been very interested indeed in the sort of literature we have preserved at Nag Hammadi, Lundhaug and Jenott remind us that we do not know of any specifically Coptic literary culture of the fourth–sixth centuries in which individuals like Zosimus featured. Khosroyev and Emmel, in taking the Nag Hammadi Codices as our sole evidence of such a group of bilingual, esoterically-minded, "conversation partners" for Zosimus, can offer us only speculations as to whether such individuals even existed, much less how they could be related to the manufacture and production of the Nag Hammadi Codices.

However, we do know of a bilingual, scribal culture that existed in fourth–sixth century Egypt, produced and traded materials which share content with the Nag Hammadi texts and likely appealed on some level to Zosimus's esoteric interests, and which was at times also networked with scribes of literary texts: the world of private incantations and rites that scholars sometimes, for heuristic reasons, refer to as the world of late antique Egyptian "magic."[6] While

[5] The question of Manichaean origins for the NHC has been discussed in Khosroyev, *Bibliothek*, 104–31 and is suggested in Piwowarczyk and Wipszycka, "A Monastic Origin," 457. This is hardly to preclude the possibility of Manichaean intertexts with some Nag Hammadi texts; see recently Dylan M. Burns, "Gnosis Undomesticated: Archon-Seduction, Demon Sex, and Sodomites in the *Paraphrase of Shem* (NHC VII,1)," *Gnosis* 1–2 (2016): 140–44; René Falkenberg, "What Has Nag Hammadi to Do with Medinet Madi? The Case of *Eugnostos* and Manichaeism," in *The Nag Hammadi Codices in the Context of Fourth- and Fifth-century Christianity in Egypt* (ed. Hugo Lundhaug and Lance Jenott; STAC 110; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2018), 261–86.

[6] The present study is less interested in "magic" *per se* – a contested term, to say the least – than various ancient texts and devices used to pursue private, practical goals via ritualized interactions with superhuman forces (see Dieleman, "Greco-Egyptian Magical Papyri," 283). These texts and devices are best known today from the PGM (see above, n. 2) and concomitant Demotic, Coptic, and Jewish evidence. For heuristic reasons, the adjective "magical" is here used loosely to discuss these sources. Numeration and text of the PGM follows the standard edition of Karl Preisendanz and Albert Henrichs, eds., *Papyri Graecae Magicae* I–II (2 vols.; Stuttgart: Teubner, 1973–1974), and the translation in Hans-Dieter Betz, ed., *The Greek Magical Papyri in Translation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986). The secondary literature on "magic in the ancient Mediterranean world" is vast; for bibliography and summary of the attendant debate(s), see William Brashear, "The Greek Magical Papyri: An Introduction and Survey; Annotated Bibliography (1928–1994)" in

Lundhaug, Jenott, and others have provided us with many suggestive parallels between Nag Hammadi and Egyptian monastic texts, we also know that a number of Nag Hammadi texts make use of *voces magicae*, *nomina barbara*, and prayers we also find in magical recipes and formularies. Conversely, some scribes of magical texts made use of Gnostic terminology or literary traditions that are found in the Nag Hammadi literature, suggesting their operations in milieux where such Gnostic terminology had currency.

The various work on "magic and Nag Hammadi" has been spread across many disparate publications, and so it is worthwhile, in any case, to bring all these materials together in a single article, if nothing else to facilitate further research into Graeco-Egyptian magic and Nag Hammadi alike. The difficulty posed by the material – and, this author hopes, the concomitant need for a survey of it – may perhaps be brought into relief by observing that in David Frankfurter's mammoth *Guide to Ancient Magic* (2019), there is no chapter on the interface of Gnostic and Egyptian magical literature.[7] Therefore, the present contribution shall gather the various intertexts between Nag Hammadi and magical literature, and evaluate their import for the "monastic hypothesis." In short, the many *voces magicae* and invocations shared between some Nag Hammadi texts and contemporary Graeco-Egyptian magical literature reminds us that an important aspect of the Nag Hammadi texts answers directly to the

ANRW II.18.5 (ed. Wolfgang Haase; Berlin: De Gruyter, 1995), 3391 n. 4; Marco Frenschkowski, "Magie," *RAC* 23 (2009): 857–957, esp. 858–76; Michela Zago, "Le nom physique du Dieu," in *Noms Barbares I: Formes et contexts d'une pratique magique* (ed. Michel Tardieu, Anna van den Kerchove, and Michela Zago; Bibliothèque de l'École des Hautes Études 162; Turnhout: Brepols, 2013), 207 n. 4; more recently, Bernd-Christian Otto, "Towards Historicizing 'Magic' in Antiquity," *Numen* 60 (2013): 308–47; David Frankfurter, "Ancient Magic in a New Key: Refining an Exotic Discipline in the History of Religions," in *Guide to the Study of Ancient Magic* (ed. David Frankfurter; RGRW 189; Leiden: Brill, 2019), 3–20. Stimulating is Bernd-Christian Otto, "Historicizing 'Western Learned Magic'," *Aries* 16 (2016): 162–82. Even thorough treatments often neglect the subject of "Jewish magic," for which see Gideon Bohak, *Ancient Jewish Magic: A History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), esp. 34–69. A crucial critique of "magic" is Jonathan Z. Smith, "Trading Places," in *Ancient Magic and Ritual Power* (ed. Marvin Meyer and Paul Mirecki; RGRW 129; Leiden: Brill, 2001), 13–28; for a response to Smith that emphasizes the virtues of the pragmatic (without actually settling on defending the term "magic"), see Frankfurter, "Ancient Magic in a New Key," 11–12, 20. Cf. the approaches of Kocku von Stuckrad, "Astral Magic in Ancient Jewish Discourse: Adoption, Transformation, Differentiation," in *Continuity and Innovation in the Magical Tradition* (ed. Gideon Bohak, Yuval Harari, and Shaul Shaked; JSRC 15; Leiden: Brill, 2011), 250–51 (suggesting focus on works presupposing a "doctrine of correspondences"), or Marvin Meyer and Richard Smith, eds. and trans., *Early Christian Magic: Coptic Texts of Ritual Power* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1994), 1–7 (suggesting focus on "ritual power").

[7] Despite mention of the issue (as bound up with "mysticism") by Frankfurter himself ("Ancient Magic in a New Key," 18–19) and a brief engagement by van der Vliet (discussed below).

world of ancient magic. Comparison to other Egyptian literature of late antiquity should continue apace, but we must regard it as a given that the Nag Hammadi texts are deeply connected to the greater "*koinē*" of late ancient Egyptian magic.

This fact brings up some interesting questions regarding the origins of the Nag Hammadi *manuscripts* (as opposed to the Nag Hammadi *texts*, which evince remarkable "textual fluidity"),[8] for the context of Graeco-Egyptian and Coptic magical literature of late ancient Egypt furnishes us with a bilingual, scribal milieu that was active at the same time that the Nag Hammadi Codices were produced, and that was distinct from the monastic phenomenon – but which also has significant overlaps with it. In other words, looking towards other scribal milieus relevant to the NHC may not bring us to urban, Hellenophone intellectuals, but it may bring us to those trading in and producing magical texts – and these individuals included monks. On the other hand, some of the Nag Hammadi evidence – above all NHC X, containing the work *Marsanes* – should lead us to ask if there existed, at least for a very short time, individuals interested in alchemy, Gnostic and Hermetic literature, and what we might – given their reception-history in the modern world – loosely term "occult sciences," who did want to read about these "esoteric" topics in Coptic after all.[9]

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[8] For a useful, recent discussion of the importance of distinguishing between texts and manuscripts in the study of ancient and medieval literature in general, and on the key notion of "textual fluidity" – "the fact that in a manuscript culture, texts are inevitably changed, both intentionally and unintentionally, when they are copied, and so they develop, sometimes in major and significant ways, along their histories of transmission" – see Hugo Lundhaug and Liv Ingeborg Lied, "Studying Snapshots: On Manuscript Culture, Textual Fluidity, and New Philology," in *Snapshots of Evolving Traditions: Jewish and Christian Manuscript Culture, Textual Fluidity, and New Philology* (ed. Liv Ingeborg Lied and Hugo Lundhaug; TUGAL 175; Berlin: De Gruyter, 2017), 1–19 (quote immediately preceding at 9). Lundhaug and Lied are inspired in part by the emphasis laid on *mouvance* (fluidity) in medieval literature and manuscripts by the medievalist Paul Zumthor, *Toward a Medieval Poetics*, translated by Philip Bennet (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992). On textual fluidity in the Nag Hammadi Codices, see Hugo Lundhaug, "An Illusion of Textual Stability: Textual Fluidity, New Philology, and the Nag Hammadi Codices," in *Snapshots of Evolving Traditions: Jewish and Christian Manuscript Culture, Textual Fluidity, and New Philology* (ed. Liv Ingeborg Lied and Hugo Lundhaug; TUGAL 175; Berlin: De Gruyter, 2017), 20–54, and now idem, "Textual Fluidity and Post-Nicence Rewriting in the Nag Hammadi Codices," in *Nag Hammadi à 70 ans. Qu'avons-nous appris? (Colloque international, Québec, Université Laval, 29-31 mai 2015)* (ed. Eric Crégheur, Louis Painchaud, and Tuomas Rasimus; BCNH.É 10; Leuven: Peeters, 2019), 47–67.

[9] I use the term "occult" in this essay to denote the elements of the ancient materials at hand that have enjoyed such a vibrant reception-history in religious currents, from the sixteenth century to today, that are commonly known as "occult sciences": astrology, alchemy, and magic (see Wouter J. Hanegraaff, "Occult/Occultism," *Dictionary of Gnosis and Western Esotericism* [ed. Wouter J. Hanegraaff, Antoine Faivre and Roelof van den Broek; Leiden: Brill, 2004], 887; see also Christopher Partridge, "Introduction," in *The Occult World*

And even if we regard the world of Egyptian monasticism as the sole Coptophone scribal milieu we know of that could have produced the NHC, then we must highlight that some of these Coptophone monks were very interested indeed in the sort of literature that preoccupied intellectuals like Zosimus.

[ed. Christopher Partridge; Routledge Worlds; London: Routledge, 2015], 3–6). These elements in ancient materials include use of *voces magicae* and *nomina barbara* in the invocation and praise of certain superhuman beings, cryptography, alchemy, and references to the efficacious properties of syllables and words for interacting with angels. Discourse about "occult" practices is inextricable from, but not identical to, that regarding what scholarship sometimes refers to as "(Western) esotericism" (Hanegraaff, "Occult/Occultism," 888). For recent survey of methodological considerations regarding both "occult(ism)" and "esoteric(ism)," see Julian Strube, *Sozialismus, Katholizismus und Okkultismus im Frankreich des 19. Jahrhunderts. Die Genealogie der Schriften von Eliphas Lévi* (RVV 69; Berlin: De Gruyter, 2016), 12–23. On the heuristic use of the terms "esoteric" and "occult" in an ancient context given the importance of ancient and medieval sources for the development of "esoteric" and "occult" currents of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, see Dylan M. Burns, "μίξεώς τινι τέχνῃ κρείττονι – Alchemical Metaphor in the *Paraphrase of Shem* (NHC VII,1)," *Aries* 15 (2015): 103; idem, "Ancient Esoteric Traditions: Mystery, Revelation, Gnosis," in *The Occult World* (ed. Christopher Partridge; Routledge Worlds; London: Routledge, 2015), 17, 26–29; cf. also Partridge, "Introduction," 2–3. On the intertwined histories of the earliest modern publication and reception of the PGM and the *voces magicae* found in the Askew and Bruce Codices, see Dylan M. Burns, "Gnosticism, Gnostics, and Gnosis," in *The Gnostic World* (ed. Garry Trompf, Jay Johnston, and Gunnar Mikkelsen; Routledge Worlds; Abingdon: Routledge, 2019), 16–17, with reference to the key discussion of Brashear, "Greek Magical Papyri," 3406, 3422. For the pivotal role played by the Theosophical Society in popularizing early research about the Askew and Bruce Codices in relation to ancient magic and the modern "occult revival," see Antoine Faivre, "Le terme et la notion de 'Gnose' dans les courants ésotériques occidentaux modernes (essai de périodisation)," in *Les textes de Nag Hammadi: Histoire des religions et approches contemporaines* (ed. Jean-Pierre Mahé, Paul-Hubert Poirier, and Madeleine Scopello; Paris: AIBL – Diffusion De Boccard, 2010), 94–95; Dylan M. Burns, "Weren't the Christians Up Against a Gnostic Religion? G.R.S. Mead at the Dawn of the Modern Study of Gnosticism," in *Hermes Explains: Thirty-One Questions about Western Esotericism* (ed. Wouter J. Hanegraaff, Peter Forshaw, and Marco Pasi; Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press), 60–69; further work on this question is apace in Sweden, undertaken independently by Petter Spjut and Paul Linjamaa. On the reception of Coptic Gnostic materials in contemporary magick, see recently Jay Johnston, "Binding Images: The Contemporary Use and Efficacy of Late Antique Ritual Sigils, Spirit-Beings, and Design Elements," in *New Antiquities: Transformations of Ancient Religion in the New Age and Beyond* (ed. Dylan M. Burns and Almut-Barbara Renger; London: Equinox, 2019), 254–74; however see also Otto, "Historicizing," 187–88, on the limited impact of the PGM on ritual magick in the early twentieth century.

1. *Voces Magicae* and Superhuman Beings

The interface of the content of the Nag Hammadi texts with our Graeco-Egyptian magical evidence is largely focused on the names of angels, demons, and deities shared between the two sets of corpora. Howard Jackson's classic study of "The Origin in Ancient Incantatory *Voces Magicae* of Some Names in the Sethian Gnostic System," for instance, not only reviewed the evidence regarding the names Sabaōth, Yaladabaoth, Barbelo, Yao, and Abraxas – all commonplace names in magical texts – but showed how less well-known names, such as Abrana, Archentechtha, Banenephroum, Barbar, Bissoum, and more – appear both in the PGM and in the list of angelic creators of Adam's psychic body in the long recension of the *Apocryphon of John* (NHC II,1 15.29–19.10 and par.). Taking up the example of Abraxas, Jackson observes that our earliest certain attestation of the name is to be found in Irenaeus of Lyons' report on the thought of Basilides, and therefore of early second-century coinage;[10] yet, given Abrasax's ubiquity in magical papyri and gems, Jackson presumes that Basilides "borrowed the name from the magic tradition." Basilides's pilfering of the figure of Abraxas from magical texts, on Jackson's reading, is the best way to explain how Abrasax became a Gnostic deity *par excellence*.[11] In the same fashion, he avers, did the Gnostics "pillage the 'glossolalia' of the sorcerers."[12] More recently, Einar Thomassen has shown that the name "Meirotheos" – hitherto only known from the Sethian texts *Zostrianos*, *First Thought in Three Forms*, *Gospel of the Egyptians*, and the *Three Steles of*

[10] Irenaeus, *Haer*. 1.24.7.

[11] Howard M. Jackson, "The Origin in Ancient Incantatory 'Voces Magicae' of Some Names in the Sethian Gnostic System," *VC* 43 (1989): 75. Useful, more recent treatments of many of the same names include Attilio Mastrocinque, *From Jewish Magic to Gnosticism* (STAC 24; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005); Brashear, "Greek Magical Papyri," 3422–23; Zago, "Le nom physique du Dieu"; Anna van den Kerchove, "Les noms barbares dans le traité gnostique Melchisédek (NH IX, 1)," in *Noms Barbares I: Formes et contexts d'une pratique magique* (ed. Michel Tardieu, Anna van den Kerchove, and Michela Zago), 265–85; Piwowarczyk and Wipszycka, "A Monastic Origin," 446, 452. It is to my regret that the present article was already in press at the time of the publication of Przemysław Piwowarczyk, *Lexicon of Spiritual Powers in the Nag Hammadi "Library" in the Light of the Texts of Ritual Power* (Katowice: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, 2021), which should be the starting-point for subsequent research on this set of data.

[12] Jackson, "Origin," 71. Similarly, Brashear, "Greek Magical Papyri," 3423: "on the whole, the papyri were not so much influenced by Gnosticism as Gnosticism was by magic"; Suárez de la Torre, "The Library of the Magician," 302. Mastrocinque draws the opposite conclusion: "what we have referred to as Gnostic magic was in fact the Gnostic religion. The prayers inspired by Gnosticism in magical papyri were part of this religion ..." (*From Jewish Magic*, 204).

Seth – appears in a famous Aramaic inscription alongside the name Sēsēngēn Barpharangēs (an Aramaic name, as demonstrated by Gershom Scholem).[13]

Indeed, it is well-known that other beings from the "Sethian" corpus at Nag Hammadi populate Greek and Coptic magical texts, chief among them being the Barbeloite-Sethian "Four Luminaries," particularly Ēlēlēth.[14] The name Ēlēlēth – usually together with Davithe, who also is found independently of Ēlēlēth in some magical texts – appears in many extant texts, ranging in date from the third or fourth century CE to the end of the first millennium. I have surveyed this material recently elsewhere, and so will discuss it here only in brief.[15] A cogent (if late) example is the recently-published Macquarie magical codex, where, for instance, the magician invokes Sabaōth "in the name of Mōsēl, Piēl, the great Hermōsēl, Hermōpiēl, Elēthe, Davithe, Ēlēlēth, Souriaēl – these who are within the four great luminaries, luminous, ineffable. Davithe, prepare for me your 240,000 angels ..."[16] This passage is part of a longer invocation with which the codex begins, an invocation that incorporates material also known from BL Or. 5987 and P. Berol. 5527.[17] The editors of the codex – Malcolm Choat and Iain Gardner – thus envision here a lost source shared between these disparate MSS, which they hypothesize to have been a "Sethian

[13] Einar Thomassen, "Sethian Names in Magical Texts: Protophanes and Meirotheos," in *Gnosticism, Platonism, and the Late Ancient World: Essays in Honor of John D. Turner* (ed. Kevin Corrigan et al.; NHMS 82; Leiden: Brill, 2013), 71–75; Gershom Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism, Merkabah Mysticism, and Talmudic Tradition* (New York: The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1960), 84–100; see also Brashear, "Greek Magical Papyri," 3440.

[14] Noted by Marvin Meyer, ed. and trans., *The Magical Book of Mary and the Angels (P.Heid.Inv.Kopt. 685). Text, Translation, Commentary* (Heidelberg: Winter, 1996), 79; Christoph Markschies, *Gnosis: An Introduction* (trans. John Bowden; London: T&T Clark, 2003), 96; Dylan M. Burns, *Apocalypse of the Alien God: Platonism and the Exile of Sethian Gnosticism* (Divinations; Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014), 196 n. 16; van den Kerchove, "Les noms barbares," 279.

[15] Dylan M. Burns, "Magical, Coptic, Christian: The Great Angel Eleleth and the 'Four Luminaries' in Egyptian Literature of the First Millennium C.E," in *The Nag Hammadi Codices in the Context of Fourth- and Fifth-century Christianity in Egypt* (ed. Hugo Lundhaug and Lance Jenott; STAC 110; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2018), 141–62.

[16] *P.Macq. 1*, 2.21–27; for the text, see Malcolm Choat and Iain Gardner, eds. and trans., *A Coptic Handbook of Ritual Power (P.Macq. I 1)* (Macquarie Papyri 1; Turnhout: Brepols, 2014). See also ibid., 2.6–12, 4.11–19, 5.13, 7.26–8.1, 10.18–19 (re: Davithe, as well as other well-known figures from magical and Gnostic literature: Seth, Bainchooch, and Sēsēngēnbarpharankēs). See also Jacques van der Vliet, "Christian Spells and Manuals from Egypt," in *Guide to the Study of Ancient Magic* (ed. David Frankfurter; RGRW 189; Leiden: Brill, 2019), 342.

[17] Walter E. Crum, *Catalogue of the Coptic Manuscripts in the British Museum* (London: British Museum, 1905), 418 (no. 1008), re-edited in Choat and Gardner, *Coptic Handbook*, 107–10; Walter Beltz, "Die koptischen Zauberpapyri der Papyrus-Sammlung der Staatlichen Museen zu Berlin," *APF* 29 (1983): 61.

Gnostic" text.[18] Similar appearances of Ēlēlēth and/or Davithe may be adduced, from BL Or. 6794, as well as the famous "Magical Book of Mary" (*P.Heid.Inv.Kopt. 685*) and parallel versions of the "prayer of Mary."[19]

Nor does all of the evidence regarding Ēlēlēth's appearances in magical spells postdate the Nag Hammadi corpus. Roy Kotansky has published a Greek spell written on gold-foil (probably an amulet) that beseeches Ēlēlēth et al. to heal an epileptic named Aurelia.[20] Amongst those invoked are the "God of Abraham," "Lord Iaō, Sabaōth," "Raphaēl, Gabriēl ... Abrasax," and "Sesengenbarpharangēs Iaō aieiuaei Iēou Iaō Sabaōth, Adōnaie, Ēlēlēth, [I]akō." Kotansky dated the amulet on palaeographical grounds to the third century CE, while Kearsley demurred, arguing the amulet's use of the Chi-Rho sign and a "Gnostic" deity are signs of its production in the fourth century.[21] Regardless, the amulet's implication for the development of Sethian Gnostic mythologoumena is the same: by the fourth century CE (i.e., contemporary with the earliest possible date for the production of the Nag Hammadi Codices), we see at least one of the Barbeloite-Sethian "Four Luminaries" at work in a Greek magical text from Egypt.

It is here worth recalling the final treatises of NHC VI, the Hermetic works *Asclepius*, a *Prayer of Thanksgiving*, and the *Discourse on the Eighth and Ninth*. Here too, we find textual units and *nomina barbara* shared with the Graeco-Egyptian magical papyri. A version of the Hermetic *Prayer of Thanksgiving* (in both its Coptic and Latin versions) is to be found in the Mimaut Papyrus (Paris Louvre N 2391).[22] Michela Zago has observed further that the

[18] Choat and Gardner, *Coptic Handbook*, 34–35.

[19] *P. Lond. Or.* 6794 1.6–17, in Angelicus Kropp, ed. and trans., *Ausgewählte koptische Zaubertexte* (3 vols.; Brussels: Édition de la fondation égyptologique, 1930–1931), 1:29–30, 2:104–5; Meyer, *Magical Book*, 5, 58.

[20] Roy Kotansky, "Two Amulets in the Getty Museum: A Gold Amulet for Aurelia's Epilepsy: An Inscribed Magical Stone for Fever, 'Chills', and Headache," *J. Paul Getty Museum Journal* 8 (1980): 181–84.

[21] Kotansky, "Two Amulets," 181; cf. R. A. Kearsley, in *New Documents Illustrating Early Christianity, Volume 6: A Review of the Greek Inscriptions and Papyri published in 1980–81* (ed. S. R. Llewelyn, with R. A. Kearsley; Macquarie University: Ancient History Documentary Research Centre, 1992), 195.

[22] *Pr. Thanks.* 63.33–65.7 = *Asclepius* 41 (Arthur Darby Nock and André-Jean Festugière, eds. and trans., *Corpus Hermeticum. Tome II: Traites XIII –XVIII: Asclepius* [Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1945], 353–55) = PGM III.591–609; see Jean-Pierre Mahé, *Hermès en Haute-Égypte: Les textes hermétiques de nag hammadi et leurs parallèles grecs et latins, Tome I* (BCNH.T 3; Québec: Les Presses de l'université Laval, 1978), 15–16; Dieleman, "Greco-Egyptian Magical Papyri," 299–300. Hypotheses regarding the stemma of the source are summarized by Michela Zago, "Le pneuma éloquent: Un parallèle entre le *Papyrus Mimaut* et NHC VI,6," in *Pensée grecque et sagesse d'orient: Hommage à Michel Tardieu* (ed. Mohammad Ali Amir-Moezzi et al.; Bibliothèque de l'École des Hautes Études Sciences Reli-

noun phrase "spirit of speaking" (ⲡⲡⲛ̅ⲁ ⲛ̅ⲧ ϣⲁϫⲉ) in the *Discourse on the Eighth and Ninth* (53.31) echoes the phrase "eloquent spirit" (πνεῦμα λεκτικόν) in the Mimaut Papyrus (PGM III.588) as well.[23] The same Hermetic treatise employs strings of vowels which are cut with rows of omegas – amounting to 36 omegas in all – and the *nomina barbara* ϫⲱϫⲁⲑⲁϫⲱ and ϫⲱϫⲁϫⲱⲑ.[24] The latter recall the name of the fourth hypothesis generated by the laughing creator-god in the Leiden *Kosmopoïa* (also known as the *Eighth Book of Moses*): Ζωθαξαθωζ (PGM XIII.177).[25] Meanwhile, Christian Bull has recently suggested that the 36 omegas recall the 36 decans of Egyptian (and Hermetic) astrological lore; "the vowels and magical names clearly point in the direction of ritual performance, namely the singing of hymns, and were probably meant to convey the visionary through the fixed stars separating the material world from the Ogdoad."[26]

Our evidence regarding names for deities and angels, and *nomina barbara* more widely, that are shared between Gnostic, Hermetic, and magical texts and manuscripts has yielded surprisingly few answers to questions focused on priority and dating. What the example of the "Sethian Gnostic" Four Luminaries in late Egyptian magical literature shows is that it is impossible to establish whether a being like Ēlēlēth was "originally" "Gnostic" (much less "Sethian") and then became "magical," or vice-versa; the same is true with the example of Abrasax, or the Hermetic "Prayer of Thanksgiving" and the Mimaut Papyrus, or the name ϫⲱϫⲁⲑⲁϫⲱ, etc. Rather than engage in this kind of chicken-or-egg reasoning, we can simply observe that the Nag Hammadi texts and Egyptian magical texts belong to a common, Graeco-Egyptian religious *koinē*

gieuses 142; Turnhout: Brepols, 2009), 716–17 n. 9. See also Alberto Camplani, "Procedimenti Magico-Alchemici e Discorso Filosofico Ermetico," in *Il Tardoantio Alle Soglie del Duemila: Diritto Religione Società: Atti del Quinto Convegno Nazionale dell'Associazione di Studi Tardoantichi* (ed. Giuliana Lanata; Associazione di studi Tardoantichi, Atti dei Convegni 5; Pisa: Edizioni ETS, 2000), 86.

[23] "Le pneuma éloquent"; followed by Christian H. Bull, *The Tradition of Hermes Trismegistus: The Egyptian Priestly Figure as a Teacher of Hellenized Wisdom* (RGRW 186; Leiden: Brill, 2018), 347.

[24] See recently Camplani, "Procedimenti," 91; Zago, "Le pneuma éloquent," 722 n. 37.

[25] An etymology of the name Ζωθαξαθωζ has been proposed by Mahé, *Hermès*, 106–7, but Bull's ingenious analysis with reference to magical gems featuring Horus (*Tradition of Hermes*, 339–42; Christian H. Bull, "Monkey Business: Magical Vowels and Cosmic Levels in the *Discourse on the Eighth and the Ninth* (NHC VI,6)." *SMSR* 83 [2017]: 82–84) confirms the rival thesis of Michela Zago that the name phrase derives from a spell to make a leontocephalic Horus one's assistant or familiar spirit ("L'emploi des noms divins dans la *Kosmopoiia* (*PGM* XIII)," *Mediterranea* 4 [2007]: 208–9). On the *Eighth Book of Moses*, see further below.

[26] Bull, "Monkey Business," 75–94.

that goes back to the first century CE,[27] in which angels and *voces magicae* we know from Gnostic and Hermetic literature were also adapted by a variety of writers, scribes, and practitioners for their own purposes in "magical" texts. "The papyri show the spectacular role played by these magicians in a kind of underground labour of intercultural communication. Within those texts all frontiers (regional, cultural, religious, linguistic) disappeared. They succeeded in expanding a striking cultural *koinē* and, at the same time, they subtly showed that the Egyptian cultural canvas could harmonise universal wisdom ... for very practical aims."[28] As the references I have given in this section to post-Conquest material make clear, this Egyptian "magical *koinē*" survived late antiquity, extending into the world of the late first millennium CE. It also extended across defined religious boundaries: continuity in use of *voces magicae* and *charaktēres* is observable in the transition of the polytheistic worldview of so much of the PGM to the Christian cosmos that underlies virtually all Coptic magical texts, and in the apparent influence of Coptic Christian magic in Jewish spells found at the Cairo Genizah.[29] This is true for our Gnostic mythologoumena as well, as the cameo of Norea and six archontic angels from the *Apocryphon of John* in an eleventh-century CE incantation against male impotence discovered at the Cairo Genizah shows.[30]

[27] On this *koinē*, see, e.g., Fowden, *Egyptian Hermes*, 171–72; Suárez de la Torre, "'Library' of the Magician," 305 (quoted below); von Stuckrad, "Astral Magic," 251; Dieleman, "Greco-Egyptian Magical Papyri," 312–15. The characteristic "*voces magicae*, name formulae, vowel permutations, and *charaktēres* start to appear on first-century CE manuscripts … by the second c. CE, Greco-Egyptian idiom and more traditional Egyptian texts were no longer two exclusive categories" (Dieleman, "Greco-Egyptian Magical Papyri," 319–20).

[28] Suárez de la Torre, "'Library' of the Magician," 305, emphasis author's.

[29] See Otto, "Historicizing," 186–87; van der Vliet, "Christian Spells," 329–30. Conversely, magical texts also served as vehicles to draw and codify religious boundaries, as between late ancient "Jews" and "Christians"; see Ra'anan Boustan and Joseph Sanzo, "Christian Magicians, Jewish Magical Idioms, and the Shared Magical Culture of Late Antiquity," *HTR* 110 (2017): 217–40, esp. 233–40.

[30] The incantation forms part of a trio of spells, preserved on Genizah fragment T.-S. K. 1.162. See Reimund Leicht, "Gnostic Myth in Jewish Garb: Niriyah (Norea), Noah's Bride," *JJS* 51 (2000): 133–40. For text and translation, see Peter Schäfer and Shaul Shaked, eds. and trans., *Magische Texte aus der Kairoer Geniza. Band 3* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1999), § 61 1c 1.34–49, pp. 70, 76. For the dating of the fragment to the eleventh century on palaeographical grounds, see Schäfer and Shaked, *Magische Texte*, 65.

2. Three scribes of magical texts: Dioscurus and the Ophite Titles in PGM 13a, Besa and Valentinian features in PGM P21, and the Manichaean Vales

"These techniques are obviously inventions of a scribal mindset ... Greco-Egyptian private ritual was clearly the product of a scribal class."[31] What do we know about the scribes behind this "magical *koinē*" in which Gnostic mythologoumena and *nomina barbara* featured so prominently? The cases of two scribes – Besa, the scribe of a Greek Christian *charitēsion* of the fourth to sixth-centuries CE, and the sixth-century scribe made famous by Leslie MacCoull, Dioscorus of Aphrodito[32] – tell us that some of the scribes dealing with names and literary traditions central to the Nag Hammadi texts were bilingual.[33] Meanwhile, the case of the Manichaean scribe Vales, whose scribal network extended to the Manichaean community at Kellis, shows that there was some overlap between bilingual scribes of magical texts and networks of scribes producing literary texts.

A straightforward case of the sort of dynamics at work between Egyptian magical and Gnostic corpora has been discussed in recent articles by Theodore De Bruyn examining Papyrus Wessely Pragensis Graecus 1 (aka PGM P21), a Greek Christian *charitēsion* ("good luck charm") against demons. Palaeographic analysis of the charm have tended towards the fifth and even sixth centuries CE, although De Bruyn argues that the fourth century cannot be excluded.[34] De Bruyn contends that several features in the spell, particularly the description of the Son as the "name" and "form" of the father, may be usefully designated "Valentinian," since they recall the language distinctive language used for the Son in the *Gospel of Truth* from Nag Hammadi.[35] "It is not inconceivable," he states, that Besa, "the writer of the papyrus, who gives his name

[31] Dieleman, "Greco-Egyptian Magical Papyri," 286.

[32] Leslie MacCoull, *Dioscorus of Aphrodito: His Work and His World* (Transformations of the Classical Heritage; Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988).

[33] On Copto-Greek bilingualism in Coptic magical texts more generally, see van der Vliet, "Christian Spells," 328–29.

[34] Theodore De Bruyn, "A Late Witness to Valentinian Devotion in Egypt?" *ZAC* 18 (2013): 131–32.

[35] De Bruyn, "A Late Witness," 127–30; idem, "An Anatomy of Tradition: The Case of the *Charitēsion*," *ARG* 16 (2015): 41–42. On the Son as the "Name" of the Father in *Gos. Truth*, see Einar Thomassen, *The Spiritual Seed: The Church of the 'Valentinians'* (NHMS 60; Leiden: Brill, 2008), 162–63, and esp. Matthew Twigg, "Becoming Paul, Becoming Christ: The Nag Hammadi Apocalypse of Paul (NHC V,2) in Its Valentinian Context" (D.Phil. diss.; Regent's Park College, 2015), 48–64. I set aside here De Bruyn's less convincing argument that the spell's use of the *nomen sacrum* χρή(στο)ς with the very rare orthography including ēta, rather than the more common χρί(στο)ς, recalls the epithet for Jesus of Nazareth ⲭ̅ⲣ̅ⲏ̅(ⲥⲧⲟ)ⲥ̅ that appears at *Tri. Trac*. NHC I 136.1.

in a postscript written in Coptic" – note the scribe's bilingualism – "was affiliated with them [i.e., Valentinians]." The spell then "is an example of how a set formula ... was adapted by incorporating the language and conventions of a particular cultic idiom," namely Valentinianism.[36] For De Bruyn, this spell is a good example of how *charitēsia* in general show how ancient scribes of magical texts would "convey tradition ... by making one's own what is or has been someone else's (or what is everyone else's), however proximate or remote the cultic orientation of the material being appropriated. This activity of adaptation is both the product and the producer of 'authoritative tradition'."[37]

Meanwhile, some names for the first principle we know from the Ophite Gnostic works *Eugnostos the Blessed* and the *Wisdom of Jesus Christ* also appear in an incantation that is preserved in multiple texts.[38] These epithets are ⲡⲁⲛⲧⲟⲕⲣⲁⲧⲱⲣ, ⲡⲣⲱⲧⲟⲅⲉⲛⲉⲧⲱⲣ, ⲁⲩⲧⲟⲅⲉⲛⲉⲧⲱⲣ: "almighty, first begetter, self-begetter." While ⲡⲁⲛⲧⲟⲕⲣⲁⲧⲱⲣ is a common epithet for God the Father, Christ, or the Holy Spirit in early Christian literature, in the *Wisdom of Jesus Christ* it is used to denote Yaldabaoth, the malevolent world-ruler.[39] Meanwhile, both *Eugnostos the Blessed* in NHC III and the *Wisdom of Jesus Christ* in BG employ the rarer word ⲁⲩⲧⲟⲅⲉⲛⲉⲧⲱⲣ to describe the self-generating character of the Father.[40] Finally, both *Eugnostos* in NHC III and the *Wisdom of Jesus Christ* in NHC III and BG use the term ⲡⲣⲱⲧⲟⲅⲉⲛⲉⲧⲱⲣ for a variety of heavenly beings.[41] The three epithets appear in a row in a sixth century Greek papyrus, P. Cair. Masp. II 67188 verso – also known as PGM 13a – an apotropaic

[36] De Bruyn, "Anatomy of Tradition," 42; with more reserve, cf. De Bruyn, "A Late Witness," 130–31.

[37] De Bruyn, "Anatomy of Tradition," 45.

[38] On the "Ophite" Gnostic literary tradition, see Tuomas Rasimus, *Paradise Reconsidered in Gnostic Mythmaking: Rethinking Sethianism in Light of the Ophite Evidence* (NHMS 68; Leiden: Brill, 2009), 9–62.

[39] On usage of the term παντοκράτωρ for the Father, Christ, or the Holy Spirit in early Christian literature, see PGL 1005. For use of the term for the evil world-creator in *Wis. Jes. Chr*., see NHC III 107.3–4; BG 103.15, 119.9. Both usages are well-attested in Coptic.

[40] NHC III 75.7; BG 107.4. The term αὐτογενέτωρ was allegedly used by Marcus Magus for the Logos (Ir. *Haer*. 1.14.3, cit. PGL 268b); ⲁⲩⲧⲟⲅⲉⲛⲉⲧⲱⲣ is also used with reference to the Christ-aeon in *Ap. John* BG 34.9, 35.8.

[41] For ⲡⲣⲱⲧⲟⲅⲉⲛⲉⲧⲱⲣ as the heavenly Adam, see *Eugnostos* NHC III 81.10, paralleled in *Wis. Jes. Chr*. NHC III 105.11 and BG [100].12. For ⲡⲣⲱⲧⲟⲅⲉⲛⲉⲧⲱⲣ as the male name of one of the six androgynous beings begotten by the Savior with Pistis Sophia, see *Eugnostos* NHC III 82.16. For ⲡⲣⲱⲧⲟⲅⲉⲛⲉⲧⲱⲣ as the Son of Man and Savior, see *Eugnostos* NHC III 85.13; further, *Wis. Jes. Chr*. BG 108.4. For ⲡⲣⲱⲧⲟⲅⲉⲛⲉⲧⲱⲣ as Christ, the Son, see *Wis. Jes. Chr*. NHC III 104.15 and BG [99].7, [99].14. It has been suggested to emend the references at BG [99].7, [99].14 to ⲡⲣⲟⲧⲟⲅⲉⲛⲛⲏⲧⲟⲥ, but I follow Barry in leaving the text as it stands; see *La Sagesse de Jésus-Christ (BG,3; NHC III,4): Texte établi, traduit et commenté* (ed. and trans. Catherine Barry; BCNH.T 20; Québec: Les Presses de l'université Laval, 1993), 76. The term ⲡⲣⲱⲧⲟⲅⲉⲛⲉⲧⲱⲣ is also used for the benevolent demiurge ("Son") in the so-called *Untitled Treatise* in Codex Bruce; see *The Books of Jeu and the Untitled Treatise*

invocation copied by Dioscurus of Aphrodito. Recognizing these names, MacCoull hypothesized that the "pairing of the" terms "leads us straight into the world of Nag Hammadi Gnosticism."[42] Observing the proximity of Nag Hammadi and the White Monastery, MacCoull speculated further about "a transmission of Gnostic writings from Sohag downriver to Antinoe, and/or all the way to Alexandria where Dioscorus had studied philosophy as well as rhetoric ... In these five lines we see him in typical Egyptian fashion, making his own deal with the unseen."[43]

The path from Dioscurus "into the world of Nag Hammadi Gnosticism" is not as "straight" as MacCoull makes out. All three epithets – ⲡⲁⲛⲧⲟⲕⲣⲁⲧⲱⲣ, ⲡⲣⲱⲧⲟⲅⲉⲛⲉⲧⲱⲣ, and ⲁⲩⲧⲟⲅⲉⲛⲉⲧⲱⲣ – only appear in the *Wisdom of Jesus Christ* (ⲡⲁⲛⲧⲟⲕⲣⲁⲧⲱⲣ is not extant in *Eugnostos*), and only in the version in BG. Nor does BG feature the epithets in a row, as we find in P. Cair. Masp. II 67188 verso/PGM 13a; it uses the epithets for a variety of beings who appear at different stages of its theogonies. In any case, David Jordan has pointed out that the apotropaic invocation copied by Dioscurus is centuries older; a version of it is found on a terracotta bowl from Antinoopolis dated to the third century.[44] According to Jordan, "the papyrus text we have today is unlikely to be anything other than a traditional incantation, superficially Judaeo-Christianized and used now for protection rather than divination; Dioskoros would no doubt have jotted it down as a model for whenever he or his clients might require a papyrus amulet."[45]

So much for MacCoull's hypothesis of Dioscurus's knowledge of Gnostic writings. Rather, Dioscurus knew an older invocation, as evidenced by the terracotta bowl identified by Jordan; the epithets used to invoke the deity in the spell, ⲡⲁⲛⲧⲟⲕⲣⲁⲧⲱⲣ, ⲡⲣⲱⲧⲟⲅⲉⲛⲉⲧⲱⲣ, and ⲁⲩⲧⲟⲅⲉⲛⲉⲧⲱⲣ, were also used in very different contexts in the version of the *Wisdom of Jesus Christ* in BG, and the terminology extends further, with still different usages, in *Eugnostos* and the *Wisdom of Jesus Christ* in NHC III. Nonetheless, the evidence nonetheless serves as a stark reminder of the mutual penetration of the worlds of magical and Gnostic texts, here through their shared use of distinctive combinations of

in the Bruce Codex (ed. Carl Schmidt; trans. Violet MacDermot; NHS 13; Leiden: Brill, 1978), 249.9–10, 250.3–4, 257.7–12.

[42] Leslie MacCoull, "P. Cair. Masp. II. 67188 Verso 1–5: The Gnostica of Dioscurus of Aphrodito," *Tyche* 2 (1987): 95.

[43] MacCoull, "Gnostica," 97.

[44] *Suppl. Mag*. II 65 (Robert W. Daniel and Franko Maltonmini, eds. and trans., *Supplementum Magicum Vol. II* [PapyCol 16.2; Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1992], 71–75).

[45] David R. Jordan, "A Prayer Copied by Dioskoros of Kome Aphrodites (PGM 13a)," *Tyche* 16 (2001): 88. We need not follow the implication of Jordan's remarks – that the prayer is "non-Christian" and only "superficially Judaeo-Christianized" by Dioscurus – to acknowledge that Dioscurus was working with older material which shares a combination of epithets also found in *Eugnostos* and *Wis. Jes. Chr*.

epithets for superhuman beings. Altogether, then, we can say that in roughly the third century CE – i.e., prior to the manufacture and burial of the Nag Hammadi Codices, including *Eugnostos* and the *Wisdom of Jesus Christ* – the epithets ⲡⲁⲛⲧⲟⲕⲣⲁⲧⲱⲣ, ⲡⲣⲱⲧⲟⲅⲉⲛⲉⲧⲱⲣ, ⲁⲩⲧⲟⲅⲉⲛⲉⲧⲱⲣ already were being used together for the supreme God in at least one Greek incantation. The epithets wound up in these Coptic "Ophite" texts as well, referring to a variety of beings, but the earlier, Greek incantation continued to be used until at least the sixth century, when the bilingual scribe Dioscurus took a fancy to it.

Finally, we also know of Manichaean scribes trading in magical incantations, as shown by Paul Mirecki, Iain Gardner, and Anthony Alcock, in their seminal article about the scribe Vales, a Manichaean copying a magical text and sending it to Pshai, a Manichaean scribe at Kellis.[46] Indeed, given that "the features of Vales' writing style ... evidence a scribal convention concerning 'text layout' (line and column design), similar to that found, for example, in the seven Medinet Madi codices,"[47] we can state in all certainty that non-monastic producers of fourth–fifth-century CE Coptic literary manuscripts could – and did – produce and exchange magical spells. Just as Lundhaug and Jenott remind us that the scribal colophons in the Nag Hammadi manuscripts indicate a network of bilingual, Coptophone scribes exchanging these works,[48] the case of Vales reminds us that bilingual, Coptophone scribal networks could involve the production and trading of both literary and magical texts.

3. *Zostrianos* (NHC VIII,1) – the Colophon, the *Charaktēres*, the Bodmer Amulet (P. Bod. XLIII), and the "Prayer of Seth" (P. Berol. 17207)

We see all this come together in the case of *Zostrianos* (NHC VIII,1) which shows us how some features of texts we usually associate with magical literature can be blended even into a highly literary Nag Hammadi text, and one at that which also shares an important intertext with other Nag Hammadi documents as well as a Greek incantation. Most famous is its colophon written in code; as Dieleman (followed by Lundhaug and Jenott) observes, the key to this same code has been found in a writing exercise unearthed at a monastery.[49]

[46] Paul A., Mirecki, Iain Gardner, and Anthony Alcock, "Magical Spell, Manichaean Letter," in *Emerging from Darkness: Studies in the Recovery of Manichaean Sources* (ed. Paul A. Mirecki and Jason D. BeDuhn; NHMS 43; Leiden: Brill, 1997), 1–32, re: P. Kell. Copt. 35.

[47] Mirecki, Gardner, and Alcock "Magical Spell," 4.

[48] Lundhaug and Jenott, *Monastic Origins*, 205–6, 213–14.

[49] Jacco Dieleman, "Cryptography at the Monastery of Deir El-Bachit," in *Honi soit qui mal y pense: Studien zum pharaonischen, griechisch-römischen und spätantiken Ägypten zu*

Also well-known is Papyrus Bodmer 43, which preserves the text of pages 119–21 of *Zostrianos* in Nag Hammadi Codex VIII. The texts seem to be copied from the same Coptic exemplar, as there are very few discrepancies between them, even in the realm of orthography. Kasser and Luisier, observing folds in the Bodmer Papyrus, hypothesize that the page was torn out of a codex and folded up and used as an amulet, probably towards the turn of the fifth century.[50] Meanwhile, to the best of my knowledge there is almost no commentary on the *charaktēres* we find at the bottom of page 52 of the manuscript. The first letter of line 25, a tau crossed with what may be an upsilon, appears in PGM VII; it is of the very common type identified by Richard Gordon as constituted by "pseudo-letters," some of which are constituted by simply superimposing one basal *charaktēr* on top of another.[51] However briefly, NHC VIII,1 uses *charaktēres*, and so appears to seek to communicate the sense of numinous, paratextual power so characteristic of Greco-Egyptian and Coptic magical texts.

It is worth taking a moment to focus on William Brashear's publication of the "Prayer of Seth" (P. Berol. 17207), a leaf from a papyrus codex. The "prayer" is written as space filler prior to a colophon. Brashear finds the script to recall second or third-century hands, but, given the parallels with the Nag

Ehren von Heinz-Josef Thissen (ed. Hermann Knuf, Christian Leitz, and Daniel von Recklinghausen; OLA 194; Leuven: Peeters, 2010), 515; Lundhaug and Jenott, *Monastic Origins*, 194, with full bibliography on the colophon. On Coptic Cryptography in general, see recently Tonio Sebastian Richter, "Markedness and Unmarkedness in Coptic Magical Writing," in *Ecrire la magie dans l'Antiquité - Scrivere la magia nell'Antichità. Proceedings of the International Workshop (Liège, October 13-15, 2011)* (ed. Magali de Haro Sanchez; Papyrologica Leodiensia 5; Presses universitaires de Liège, 2015), 93; on cryptography in monasticism, see Frederik Wisse, "Language Mysticism in the Nag Hammadi Texts and in Early Coptic Monasticism I: Cryptography," *Enchoria* 9 (1979): 101–20.

[50] Rodolphe Kasser and Philippe Luisier, "P. Bodmer XLIII: Une Feuillet de Zostrien," *Mus* 120 (2007): 251, 257. As Hugo Lundhaug reminds me, it is impossible to know when the page was folded; the estimate given by Kasser and Luisier rests on the page's similarity to its counterpart in NHC VIII.

[51] On "pseudo-letters," see Richard Gordon, "Charaktēres between Antiquity and Renaissance: Transmission and Re-Invention," in *Les savoirs magiques et leur transmission de l'Antiquité à la Renaissance: Colloque Fribourg 17-19 mars 2011* (ed. Véronique Dasen and Jean-Michel Spieser; Micrologus' Library 60; Florence: SISMEL, Edizioni del Galluzzo, 2014), 266–67. The upsilon-tau *charaktēr* in P. Lond. 121 = PGM VII.403, a Greek papyrus of the third–fourth century CE, adduced in the *apparatus criticus* of the Bibliothèque copte de Nag Hammadi edition of *Zost*. (Barry, et al., *Zostrien*, 336) as a *comparandum* for the crossed *charaktēr*, on lines 24 and 25. However, identification of this cryptic character as upsilon is not assured: the scribe of NHC VIII writes upsilon in the style of the two-stroke, bimodular, curved upsilon of the "Alexandrian uncial" common in the NHC, while the cryptic character uses the bold, straight strokes one would expect from a "Biblical uncial." I hope to return to this *datum* in a future publication.

Hammadi material, dates the papyrus to the fourth or fifth century CE.[52] Further work on the artifact has been reported by Uwe-Karsten Plisch: Myriam Krutzsch, conservator of papyrus at the Berliner Papyrussammlung, has opined that the style of the construction of the papyrus page itself cannot be said to antedate the mid-third century CE, and it has been maintained that the greetings formula and decorative cross on the reverse of the papyrus that conclude the "prayer" cannot antedate the fourth century.[53] Just as MacCoull recognized some of the epithets of PGM 13a from the Nag Hammadi hoard, Brashear saw epithets from the "Prayer of Seth" – namely, ⲙⲉⲗⲗⲫⲁⲛⲉⲩⲥ, ⲉⲗⲉⲙⲁⲱⲛ, ⲓⲥⲙⲟⲩⲛ, and ⲉⲡⲧⲁⲱⲛ – to be used in similar clusters in *Allogenes* (NHC XI [54].28–37) and the *Three Steles of Seth* (NHC VII [126].5–13).[54] Why should one mention this prayer in the context of NHC VIII? Another name from the "Prayer of Seth" may appear in *Zostrianos* NHC VIII [52].2: ⲓⲁ̀ⲧⲟ[ⲙⲉⲛⲉ]. More importantly, John D. Turner has noted that, immediately preceding the "Prayer of Seth" shared with NHC VII and P. Berol. 17207, *Allogenes* (NHC XI [54].9–25) shares further text with *Zostrianos* (NHC VIII 86.16–20, 88.10–19) that evidences a separate, common doxological source than the "Prayer of Seth." Since in *Zostrianos* the prayer is uttered by a female speaker who is probably Barbelo,[55] for the sake of clarity I refer to this separate textual unit identified by Turner as the "Prayer of Barbelo."[56] In his commentary on *Zostrianos*, Turner provides a synopsis of this "Prayer of Barbelo" shared by NHC XI and NHC VIII, which, he maintained, is "obviously a part of the Sethian liturgical tradition."[57] Somewhat inexplicably, Turner does not offer a synopsis that represents both the source he identified (NHC XI [54].9–25; NHC VIII 86.16–20, 88.10–19) as well as the "Prayer of Seth" (NHC XI [54].28–37; NHC VII

[52] William Brashear, "Seth-Gebet," *APF* 42 (1996): 26–27. See now also Uwe-Karsten Plisch, "Zostrianus, der philosophisch orientierte Sethianismus und das Gebet des Seth," in *Die Nag-Hammadi-Schriften in der Literatur- und Theologiegeschichte des frühen Christentums* (ed. Jens Schröter and Konrad Schwarz; STAC 106; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017), 280–93.

[53] Plisch, "Zostrianus," 289.

[54] Some of these names are also used in *Trim. Prot.* (NHC XIII 39*.1–3), but sparingly; see Paul-Hubert Poirier, ed. and trans., *La pensée première à la triple forme* (BCNH.T 32; Québec: Les Presses de l'université Laval, 2006), 250.

[55] John D. Turner, "Commentary: *Zostrianos*," in *Zostrien* (ed. Catherine Barry et al.; BCNH.T 24; Québec: Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 2000), 622.

[56] The speaker of the prayer in *Allogenes* is also a female speaker, but probably the angel Youēl – see the gloss ad loc. in Wolf-Peter Funk and Madeleine Scopello, "Texte et traduction," in *L'Allogène (NH XI,3)* (ed. and trans. Wolf-Peter Funk, Madeleine Scopello, and John D. Turner; BCNH.T 30; Québec: Les Presses de l'université Laval, 2004), 207. Since the female speaker (probably Youēl) first utters both the "Prayer of Barbelo" as well as the "Prayer of Seth" immediately following, the phrase "Prayer of Youēl" would be unhelpful for denoting the former unit alone.

[57] Turner, "Commentary: *Zostrianos*," 566.

[126].5–13; P. Berol. 17207) that immediately follows upon it in NHC XI, nor any comment of how all this evidence fits together.

Zostrianos NHC VIII 86.13–24, 88.9–25, 51.24–52.8 (BCNH)	*Allogenes* NHC XI [54].8–37 (BCNH)	*Steles Seth* NHC VII [126].5–13 (CGL)	P. Berol. 17207, 1–6
86.13 ⲛ̄ⲧ̄ⲕ ⲟⲩⲛⲟⲥ ⲁ̄ⲫ̄ⲣ[ⲁ̄ⲁ̄ⲱⲛ] ⲛ̄ⲧ̄ⲕ ⲟⲩⲧⲉⲗⲓⲟⲥ ⲛ̄ⲉ̄ⲫ̄[±4] ⲉⲥⲭⲱ ⲙ̄ⲙⲟⲥ ⲉⲧⲉⲫ-ⲣⲩⲓ̣[ⲁ]ⲣ̄ⲍⲓⲥ ⲁⲉ ⲛ̄ⲧ̄ⲕ ⲟⲩⲛⲟⲥ ⲇⲏⲓⲫⲁ[ⲛⲉⲩ] **ϯⲑⲛⲉⲣⲣⲓⲁ** ⲛ̄ⲧⲁϥ ⲙ̄ⲙ ⲟⲩⲱⲛ̣[ⲉ] ⲁⲩⲱ ⲟⲩ-**ⲙ̄ⲛ̄ⲧ̀ⲛⲟⲩⲧⲉ** ⲧ̣[ⲉ] **ⲛ̄ⲧ̄ⲕ ⲟⲩⲛⲟⲥ ⲉ̣ⲁⲣⲙⲏ-ⲁⲱ[ⲛ]** ⲡⲁⲛⲓⲉⲟⲟⲩ [ⲧ]ⲏ̣[ⲣ]ⲟⲩ **ⲉⲡⲓⲫ-[ⲁⲛⲉ̄ⲩ̄]** ⲧⲉⲩⲙⲛ̄ⲧ̀- ⲛ̣[ⲁ]ⲕⲁⲣⲓ[ⲟⲥ] ⲇⲉ ⲙ̄ⲛ̣ ϯⲙⲛ̄ⲧ̀ⲧⲉⲗ[ⲓⲟ]ⲥ ⲛ[ⲧⲉ] ϯⲙⲛ̄ⲧ̣̀ⲟⲩⲱⲧ̀ **88.9** ⲥⲛⲟⲩ ⲉ[±11] ⲭⲉ **ⲏ̣ⲣⲃⲏ[ⲣ]ⲗ̄[ⲑⲉ̄ⲩ̄ ⲏⲣⲓⲅⲉⲛⲁⲱⲣ] ⲱⲣ[ⲓⲙⲉⲛⲓ]ⲉ ⲁⲣ[ⲁ-ⲙⲉⲛ] ⲁⲗⲫⲗ[ⲉⲅⲉ]ⲉ̣· ⲏⲗⲓⲗⲓⲟ̣[ⲩⲫⲉ̄ⲩ̄] ⲗⲁⲗⲁ-ⲙⲉ̄ⲩ̄· ⲛ̄ⲟⲛⲟⲉ̄ⲩ̄** [·ⲭⲉ] **ⲟⲩⲛⲟⲥ ⲡⲉ** ⲡⲉⲕⲣⲁⲛ ⲁ[ⲩⲱ] ⲭⲟⲟⲣ· **ⲡⲏ ⲉⲧ̀[ⲉ]ⲓⲙⲉ̣ [ⲉⲣⲟⲕ] ⲭⲓⲙⲉ ⲉⲛⲁⲓ . . ⲧⲏⲣⲟⲩ· ⲛ̄ⲧ[ⲕ] ⲟⲩⲁ ⲛ̄ⲧ̄ⲕ ⲟⲩⲁ** ⲥ̣ⲓⲟⲩ ⲉ̄.[.] **ⲁ̄ⲫ̄ⲣⲏ-ⲁⲱⲛ ⲛ̄ⲧⲟⲕ ⲡⲉ ⲡ[ⲓⲉ]-ⲱⲛ ⲛ̄ⲧⲉ ⲛⲓⲉ̣ⲱⲛ** ⲛ̄ⲧⲉ ⲡ[ⲓ]ⲙⲟⲥ ⲛⲧⲉⲗ[ⲓⲟ]ⲥ ⲡⲱ[ⲟⲣ]ⲓ̣̀ ⲛ̄ⲕⲭⲥ̣ ⲛ̄-ⲧⲉ ϯ[ⲙ]ⲉⲣⲱ[ⲟⲙⲛⲧⲉ] ⲛ̄ⲙⲉⲛⲉⲣⲧⲓⲁ̣	**[54].8** [8±ⲕ]ⲁⲧⲁ ϯⲙⲛ̄ⲧ̀ⲱⲛ̄ⲣ̄ [ⲉⲧ]ⲛ̣ⲧ̣- [ⲁⲕ ⲙ̄ⲛ] **ϯⲫⲟⲣ̄ⲓ** ⲛ̄- **ⲉⲛⲉⲣ[ⲅ]ⲓ[ⲁ]** ⲧⲏ ⲉⲧ[ⲉ]- ⲉ̣ⲃⲟⲗ ⲙ̄ⲙⲟⲥ ⲧⲉ **ϯⲙⲛ̄ⲧ̀ⲛ̣ⲟⲩⲧⲉ· ⲛ̄ⲧ̄ⲕ ⲟⲩⲛⲟⲩ̣ ⲁⲣⲙⲏⲁⲱⲛ** [·] ⲛ̄ⲧ̄ⲕ ⲟⲩⲧⲉⲗⲓⲉ̣[ⲥ] **ⲉⲡⲓⲫⲁⲛⲉⲩ̄·** ⲕⲁⲧⲁ ⲇⲉ ϯⲉⲓ̣[ⲉ]ⲣⲓⲁ ⟦ⲇⲉ⟧ ⲉⲧⲏⲧⲁⲕ· ϯⲟⲟⲙ ⲙ̄ⲙⲉⲣⲥⲛ̄ⲧⲉ ⲙ̄ⲛ ϯⲙⲛ̄ⲧ̀- ⲉⲓⲙⲉ· ⲧⲏ ⲉⲧⲉⲉⲃⲟⲗ ⲙ̄ⲙⲟ<ⲥ> ⲧⲉ ϯⲙⲛ̄ⲧ̀- ⲙⲁⲕⲁⲣⲓⲟⲥ· ⲁⲩⲧⲟ**ⲏⲣ-ⲃⲏⲣⲓⲟⲉ̄ⲩ̄· ⲏⲣⲓⲅⲉⲛⲁⲱⲣ· ⲱⲣⲓⲙⲉⲛⲓⲉ· ⲁⲣⲁⲙⲉⲛ· ⲁⲗⲫⲗⲉⲅⲉⲥ ·ⲏⲗⲏⲗⲓⲟⲩ-ⲫⲉ̄ⲩ̄· [ⲗ]ⲁⲗⲁⲙⲉ̄ⲩ̄·** ⲓⲉⲑⲉ̄ⲩ̄ · **ⲛⲟⲛⲟⲉ̄ⲩ̄**[·] **ⲛ̄ⲧ̄ⲕ ⲟⲩⲛⲟⲥ ⲡⲏ ⲉⲧ̀ⲉⲓⲙⲉ ⲉⲣⲟ[ⲕ] ⲭⲓⲙⲉ ⲉⲡⲧⲏⲣⲩ̄· ⲛ̄ⲧ̄ⲕ ⲟⲩⲁ ⲛ̄ⲧ̄ⲕ ⲟⲩⲁ** ⲡⲏ ⲉⲧⲛⲁⲛⲟⲩⲥ **ⲁ̄ⲫ̄ⲣⲏ̣-ⲁⲱⲛ· ⲛ̄ⲧⲟⲕ ⲡⲉ ⲡⲉⲱⲛ ⲛ̄ⲧⲉ ⲛⲉⲱⲛ** ⲡⲏ ⲉⲧ̀- ⲱⲟⲟⲡ ⲛ̄ⲟⲩⲟⲉⲓⲱ ⲛⲓⲙ· ⲧⲟⲧⲉ ⲁⲥⲥⲙⲟⲩ ⲉⲡⲓⲟⲩⲁ ⲧⲏⲣⲩ̄ ⲉⲥⲭⲱ ⲙ̄ⲙⲟⲥ ⲭⲉ ⲗⲁⲗⲁⲙⲉ̄ⲩ̄· ⲛⲟ̣[ⲏⲑ]ⲉ̣ⲩ̄· **ⲥ̄ⲏⲛⲁⲱⲛ·** ⲁⲥⲓⲛⲉ[ⲩ· ⲱ]ⲣⲓⲫⲁⲛⲓⲉ **ⲙⲉⲗⲗⲉ-ⲫⲁⲛⲉ̄ⲩ̄**[·] **ⲉⲓⲉⲛⲁⲱⲛ**	**126.5** [ⲡⲓⲕ]ⲭⲥ̄ ⲡⲓ-ⲙ[ⲁ]ⲕⲁⲣⲓⲟⲥ **ⲥ̄ⲏⲛⲁⲱⲛ** [ⲡⲉⲧ]ⲭⲡⲟ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ⲙ̄ⲙⲟⲩ ⲟⲩⲁⲁ[ⲩ ⲁⲥⲓ]ⲛⲉ̄ⲩ̄· **ⲏ̣ⲉⲫⲛⲉ̄ⲩ̄ ·ⲟⲡⲧⲁⲉ̣ⲱⲛ· ⲉⲗⲉⲛⲁⲉ̣ⲱⲛ̣** ⲡⲙⲟⲟ ⲛ̄-ⲟⲟⲙ·ⲉⲙⲟⲩⲙⲓⲁⲣ ⲙ̄ⲡ-	]ⲟ̈ ⲁⲱ[[ⲙ]]ⲛ ⲉ- [±10 **ⲙ[ⲉⲗⲗ .-** **ⲫⲁⲟⲩ ⲉⲗ[ⲗ]- ⲉⲙⲙ[.]ⲓ̈ⲥⲥⲙⲟⲩⲛ ⲉ̄ⲡⲧⲁⲱⲛ̄** γ[. . .

51.24 ·ϯϫ ογα ⲛ̄ϯϫ	ⲓ̈·ϭⲛⲟⲩⲛ· ⲟ̈ⲡⲧⲁⲱⲛ ⲡⲏ	ⲃⲁⲣⲉⲩ· ⲕⲁⲛⲇⲏⲫⲟⲣⲉ·	.]σε και δοξα-
[ογα ⲛ̄]·ϯϫ ογα ⲡⲁ	ⲉⲧ`ϣⲟⲟⲡ· ⲛ̄ⲧⲟⲕ ⲡⲉ	ⲁⲫⲣⲏⲇⲱⲛ·ⲭⲏⲫⲁⲛ-	ζω σε εξ εκ . [.
±9] ⲓ̈ⲁ̈ⲧⲟ[ⲙⲉⲛⲉ̈ ±10]	ⲡⲉⲧ`ϣⲟⲟⲡ ⲡⲓⲉⲱⲛ ⲛ̄ⲧⲉ	ⲉⲩⲥ· ⲛ̄ⲧⲟⲕ ⲉⲧⲉⲙ-	τ]ης νεωτερας
	ⲛⲉⲱⲛ· ⲡⲓⲁⲧ`ⲭⲡⲟ	ⲁⲣⲙⲏⲇⲱⲛ ⲛⲁⲓ̈ ⲡⲓⲣⲉⲭ-	της σης ε . . [. .
	ⲉⲧ`ⲭⲟⲥⲉ ⲉⲛⲓⲁⲧ`ⲭⲡⲟ	ⲭⲡⲉ ⲥⲟⲙ·ⲑⲁⲗⲁⲛⲁ-	.]ης της υψι-
	ⲓ̈ⲁ̈ⲧⲟⲙⲉⲛⲉ̈· ⲛ̄ⲧⲟⲕ	ⲑⲉⲩ·ⲁⲛⲧⲓⲑⲉⲩⲥ	φρωνης της[. .]
	ογⲁⲁⲕ		

At first sight, the evidence does not appear to be in a good enough state to tell us much; the end of page 51 and that of the beginning of 52 in NHC VIII are destroyed, as are the first ten lines of NHC XI, which prevents us from seeing where the doxologies go with respect to the rest of the (already fragmentary) lines of P. Berol. 17207. Nonetheless, a few provisional statements can be made. Brashear was unsure about his own paleographical analysis of P. Berol. 17207, but it is likely that this Greek prayer is contemporaneous to the Nag Hammadi manuscripts.[58] *Zostrianos*, which we already know to be a compilation or anthology of pre-existing texts, including philosophical sources (such as the Middle Platonic *Parmenides* Commentary, also known to Marius Victorinus),[59] appears to have cut up and redistributed for its own purposes the "Prayer of Barbelo," a source also known to *Allogenes*, which further draws upon the "Prayer of Seth" or something akin to it, as does the *Three Steles of Seth*.[60] Notably, neither the "Prayer of Barbelo" or the "Prayer of Seth" serve any immediate, worldly aim other than to praise a very abstract deity, in contrast to the more common use of *nomina barbara* in rituals to enlist help from superhuman beings for more prosaic purposes.[61] Most importantly for our purposes, the "Prayer of Seth" shows that doxological traditions (or doxological

[58] Thus Plisch, "Zostrianus," 288–89. Brashear's remarks on dating the papyrus are replete with hesitation ("Seth-Gebet," 26–27; noted by Plisch, "Zostrianus," 288). Turner, meanwhile, simply prefers Brashear's dating of the handwriting to the second or third century CE ("Commentary: *Zostrianos*," 567).

[59] On this evidence, see recently John D. Turner, "The Anonymous *Parmenides* Commentary, Marius Victorinus, and the Sethian Platonizing Apocalypses: State of the Question," in *Gnose et Manichéisme. Entre les oasis d'Égypte et la route de la soie: Hommage à Jean-Daniel Dubois* (ed. Anna van den Kerchove and Luciana Gabriela Soares Santoprete; BEHE.R 176; Turnhout: Brepols, 2017), 93–126.

[60] Nor can one exclude the possibility that the "Prayer of Barbelo" and "Prayer of Seth" could have also comprised a single textual unit (along the lines of its presentation in NHC XI), one part of which was cut up and redistributed in NHC VIII, other parts of which appear in NHC VII.

[61] As Dieleman states with reference to spells contained in, e.g., PGM IV (such as the so-called "*Mithras Liturgy*") and PGM XIII (such as the *Eighth Book of Moses*), "a few spells are not aimed at resolving a practical matter, but concerned with establishing intimate contact between the ritualist and the supreme deity ... These singular spells are clearly compo-

"macroforms," if one prefers)[62] used in the "Platonizing" Sethian literature circulated in Hellenophone Egyptian scribal circles, not just Coptophone ones.

To sum up, the case of *Zostrianos* serves as yet more evidence of the great porousness between even a Nag Hammadi text with literary features and contemporary magical texts. The cryptogram in its colophon recalls, broadly speaking, a rhetoric of esotericism *sensu stricto*,[63] and its particular cryptographical mechanism is known from a monastic context. Similarly, the *charaktēres* in NHC VIII remind us that even a literary, sophisticated Gnostic apocalypse could use a paratextual strategy almost exclusively found in practical, magical texts. If Kasser is correct, P. Bodmer 43 shows us that "Gnostic" doxologies literally ripped from literary manuscripts may have also been used for practical magic. Finally, the "Prayer of Seth" and "Prayer of Barbelo" are terrific examples of textual fluidity, and the former appears to have circulated in Greek contemporaneously (or even prior to) the production of the Nag Hammadi Codices, which contains three texts in which parts of it appear.

4. Alchemy, Zosimus of Panopolis …

Meanwhile, there is a paucity of scholarship that engages the Graeco-Egyptian alchemical literature alongside the Nag Hammadi corpus, despite the close association of "Gnosticism" and "alchemy" in twentieth-century historiography.[64] It is all the more a surprise given the proximity of alchemical and mag-

sites and betray several layers of redaction. Whatever the intentions of the original composers of the various parts may have been, the motivation for including them in the extant formularies was no doubt different" (Dieleman, "Greco-Egyptian Magical Papyri," 299–300). Cf. also Otto, "Historicizing," 163–65.

[62] Recalling von Stuckrad's helpful invocation of Peter Schäfer's distinction of "microforms" and "macroforms" moving across the various, variegated MSS of the Hekhaloth corpus ("Astral Magic," 250).

[63] On esotericism (in a literal sense) or "mystification techniques" as common scribal practice in Pharaonic as well as Graeco-Egyptian formularies, see Dieleman, "Greco-Egyptian Magical Papyri," 315.

[64] Treatment of the problem *sensu lato* has not advanced far beyond H. J. Sheppard, "Gnosticism and Alchemy," *Ambix* 6 (1957–1958): 86–101; see more recently Régine Charron, "The *Apocryphon of John* (NHC II, 1) and the Graeco-Egyptian Alchemical Literature," *VC* 59 (2005): 438–56, esp. 439–40; Bernard D. Haage, "Alchemy II: Antiquity–12th Century," in *Dictionary of Gnosis and Western Esotericism* (eds. Wouter J. Hanegraaff et al.; Leiden: Brill, 2006), 23–24. For a recent discussion of early Greek alchemy that makes integrative use of Nag Hammadi sources, see Olivier Dufault, *Early Greek Alchemy: Patronage and Innovation in Late Antiquity* (California Classical Studies; Berkeley: University of California Press, 2019).

ical literature in antiquity: alchemical manuscripts were found among the Theban Magical Library,[65] and alchemy belongs to the so-called "occult sciences" (alongside "magic" and "astrology") that played a major role in the development of early modern notions about "Gnosticism" as a kind of esoteric, superior teaching.[66] Several studies by Régine Charron have attempted to demonstrate that tincturing metaphors are used in works such as the *Apocryphon of John* (NHC II and par.) or the *Gospel of Philip*.[67] While Charron's arguments are enticing, they are hampered by the fact that these texts are ultimately intelligible without recourse to an alchemical lens. Conversely, Kyle Fraser has contended that baptismal language in alchemical texts are best understood as "Gnostic" influence from the *Apocryphon of John* and the like – again, a possibility worth entertaining, but no more.[68] Meanwhile, I have argued elsewhere that the cosmogony of the *Paraphrase of Shem* – a long, confusing description of hot and cold elements crashing together, releasing a divine byproduct as the result of their mixing – explains its metaphysics in terms of tincturing.[69] A representative example is as follows:

> Now, the light which was emitted with it from the silence moved, inside of the midpoint, returning to its place. And the vapor was luminous, and from it an unquenchable fire appeared. Now, the part that is separate from the wondrous product put on forgetfulness. It was deceived by the dark fire, and the shock of its disturbance cast off the weight of the vapor (ⲁϥⲛⲟⲩϫⲉ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ⲙ̄ⲙⲟϥ ⲙ̄ⲡⲙⲁⲣⲟⲥ ⲛ̄ⲧ̀ⲕⲗⲟⲟⲗⲉ). It was evil, since it was impure. And the fire mixed with the water, so that the waters might become dangerous.[70]

[65] See recently Burns, "μίξεώς τινι τέχνῃ κρείττονι," 85–86; Dosoo, "History," 256–60; Dieleman, "Greco-Egyptian Magical Papyri," 293.

[66] On the occult sciences and esotericism, see above. On the historiography of "Gnosticism" as bound up with esotericism and the ancient teaching of "occult sciences" such as alchemy, astrology, and magic, see Faivre, "Le terme et la notion de 'Gnose'," 87–101; Julian Strube, *Sozialismus, Katholizismus und Okkultismus*, 399–416, 524, 528, passim; idem, "Revolution, Illuminismus und Theosophie: Eine Genealogie der 'häretischen' Historiographie des frühen französischen Sozialismus und Kommunismus," *HZ* 304 (2017): 50–89, esp. 54–56, 63, focusing on nineteenth-century political contexts. The topic merits much further study.

[67] Charron, "*Apocryphon of John*"; more convincing is Régine Charron and Louis Painchaud, "God is a Dyer: The Background and Significance of a Puzzling Motif in the Coptic *Gospel According to Philip* (CG II,3)," *Mus* 114 (2001): 41–50. However, Hugo Lundhaug plausibly argues that the passage is intelligible without recourse to an alchemical lens (*Images of Rebirth: Cognitive Poetics and Transformational Soteriology in the Gospel of Phiilip and the Exegesis of the Soul* [NHMS 73; Leiden: Brill, 2010], 254–57, esp. n. 388).

[68] Kyle Fraser, "Baptised in *Gnōsis*: The Spiritual Alchemy of Zosimus of Panopolis," *Dionysius* 25 (2007): 33–54.

[69] Burns, "μίξεώς τινι τέχνῃ κρείττονι."

[70] *Paraph. Shem* 14.25–15.4.

These metaphors of tincturing would have been familiar to any ancient Graeco-Egyptian reader interested in "occult" lore, such as the alchemist Zosimus of Panopolis.

Indeed, if Zosimus had not existed, we would have to invent him: an Egyptian Hellenophone of the early fourth century CE pursuing what we might term "esoteric" or "occult" philosophy – not just in alchemy, but Platonism, Hermetism, and Gnosticism.[71] In a passage from his treatise *On the Letter Omega* – a brief exposition that ranges between alphanumeric and astrological lore, Stoic thought, Gnostic myth, and anti-Manichaean polemic – Zosimus paraphrases a lost source attributed to the prophet Nicotheus, which narrates some version of the myth of the archons' enslavement of the primordial Adam in the Garden of Eden by tricking him into donning a material body.[72] Here, our protagonist is a true Adam πνευματικός, for he has a body of air and light – hence his "true name," known only to Nicotheus, Φῶς ("light"):

> When Phōs was wafting about (διαπνεόμενος) in the Garden at the instigation of Fate (ὑπὸ τῆς εἱμαρμένης), they (i.e., the Archons) persuade him – since he was innocent and inactive (ἀνενέργητον) – to don the Adam they had created, the one which had come from Fate and from the four elements. And Phōs, on account of his innocence, did not refuse; and they swelled up with pride, thinking that he had become their slave.[73]

As Hans-Martin Schenke observed long ago in his *Habilitationsschrift*, the story has many parallels, not only in *Corpus Hermeticum* 1 (*Poimandrēs*), but several Nag Hammadi texts: the *Apocryphon of John*, the *Hypostasis of the Archons*, and *On the Origin of the World*.[74]

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[71] For discussion, see Fraser, "Baptised in *Gnōsis*"; Howard Jackson, "The Seer Nikotheos and His Lost Apocalypse in the Light of Sethian Apocalypses from Nag Hammadi and the Apocalypse of Elchasai," *NovT* 32 (1990): 269–75. For our evidence regarding Zosimus' biography, see Mertens, "Introduction historique," xii–xix; Howard Jackson, "Introduction," in Zosimus of Panopolis, *On the Letter Omega* (ed. and trans., Howard Jackson; SBLTT 14; Greco-Roman Religion 5. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 1978), 3–5. Recent discussions of Zosimus's intellectual milieu include Christian H. Bull, "Hermes between Pagans and Christians: The Nag Hammadi Hermetica in Context," in *The Nag Hammadi Codices in the Context of Fourth- and Fifth-century Christianity in Egypt* (ed. Hugo Lundhaug and Lance Jenott; STAC 110; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2018), 218–25, esp. 225: "Zosimus is a highly interesting figure for the type of person who would read Hermetica as well as Christian and Jewish apocryphal literature around the turn of the fourth century, and he was in all likelihood familiar with the type of rituals we see in the Hermetica"; Dufault, *Early Greek Alchemy*, 93–144.

[72] This treatise is itself only the prelude to a larger work, the *Authentic Memoirs* (Γνήσια ὑπομνήματα), for text and translation of which see *Mémoires Authentiques* (ed. and trans. Michèle Mertens; Les Alchemistes Grecs 4; Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1995). Useful remains the edition and commentary of Howard Jackson (see previous note).

[73] *Mem. Auth*. 1.11 (tr. in agreement with Mertens).

[74] Hans-Martin Schenke, *Der Gott 'Mensch' in der Gnosis. Ein religionsgeschichtlicher Beitrag zur Diskussion über die paulinische Anschauung von der Kirche als Leib Christi*

5. …and Occult Literature in Coptic? *Marsanes* (NHC X)

To the best of my knowledge, there are no other passages in Zosimus' extant corpus which directly recall sources from Nag Hammadi, but the name "Nicotheus" – putative author of the source which the Panopolitan quotes, here – leads us directly to NHC X, a highly fragmentary manuscript which contains a single tractate, *Marsanes*. The *Untitled* treatise in the Bruce Codex refers to the character of Nicotheus (ⲛⲓⲕⲟⲑⲉⲟⲥ) alongside a certain Marsanius (ⲙⲁⲣⲥⲁⲛⲓⲟⲥ), as raptured seers party to knowledge of the transcendent.[75] This difficult and understudied work belongs to the "Platonizing" Sethian school of thought, blending Neoplatonism with the world of Jewish apocalypses, that also appears to have produced *Zostrianos*, *Allogenes*, and the *Three Steles of Seth*.[76] While doxologies using *voces magicae* are a marked feature of the other three "Platonizing" Sethian texts, as discussed above, *Marsanes* is a veritable compendium of lore about the "occult sciences": it theorizes the mechanics underlying the efficacy of *voces magicae*, states that its concern is with names and invoking angels, describes objects used in private ritual, and gives a lengthy discourse on astrology. These passages have enjoyed scarce treatment by scholars due to the fragmentary state of the manuscript, but the contents of the work are clear enough that the text's first editor, Birger Pearson, stated that its contents "include items properly classified as 'magic'."[77] It may, however,

(Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1960), esp. 52–56, 64–68; see also Michèle Mertens, "Notes complémentaires," in Zosimus of Panopolis, *Mémoires Authentiques* (ed. and trans. Michèle Mertens; Les Alchemistes Grecs 4; Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1995), 96–99; Dufault, *Early Greek Alchemy*, 105.

[75] *Unt. Treatise* 255.5–23. On the complex of evidence regarding Nicotheus and Marsanes, see Jackson, "Seer Nikotheos," followed by Burns, *Apocalypse*, 29, 126–27; Piwowarczyk and Wipszycka, "A Monastic Origin," 446; cf. Bull, *Tradition of Hermes*, 335–36 (rejecting the Jewish pedigree of the seer, as suggested by Jackson); see now also Eric Crégheur, "Marsanès et Nicothée dans la Littérature Gnostique, Philosophique, Alchemique et Manichéenne," in *Colloque international. Nag Hammadi à 70 ans. Qu'avons-nous appris? (Québec, Université Laval, du 29- 31 mai 2015)* (BCNH.É 10; Leuven: Peeters, 2019), 297–320.

[76] On *Marsanes*, see esp. John D. Turner, "Introduction: *Marsanes*," in *Marsanès* (ed. and trans. Wolf-Peter Funk, Paul-Hubert Poirier, and John D. Turner; BCNH.T 27; Québec: Les Presses de l'université Laval, 2000), 1–248; Birger Pearson, "*Marsanes* Revisited," in *Coptica - Gnostica - Manichaica: Mélanges offerts à Wolf-Peter Funk* (ed. Louis Painchaud and Paul-Hubert Poirier; BCNH.É 7; Québec: Les Presses de l'université Laval, 2006), 685–96. On apocalyptic elements in the text, see Burns, *Apocalypse*, 53.

[77] "Introduction: *Marsanes*," in *Nag Hammadi Codices IX and X* (ed. Birger Pearson; NHS 15; Leiden: Brill, 1981), 249; further, Turner, "Introduction: *Marsanes*," 231–34 (re: "Sethian theurgy"). The characterization of Sethian ritual as "theurgic," at least in the sense of the term given by Iamblichus, is rejected by Burns, *Apocalypse*, 138–39, although the issue is peripheral to the present study.

be more helpful to rephrase Pearson's statement as follows: *Marsanes* includes items properly classified as "occult science," namely the techniques of magic (particularly with reference to the sympathetic relationships between material objects) and astrology.[78]

Most important for us among *Marsanes*'s discussion of "occult" topics is its theorization of the properties of various combinations of consonants and vowels with respect to invoking, and, it seems, binding angels. On the very fragmentary page 19* of the codex, we read "name (ⲉⲣⲓⲟⲛⲟⲙⲁⲍⲉ) [them according to] their [(appropriate) invocation (ⲟⲛⲟⲙ[ⲁⲥⲓⲁ]), so that] one [knows them.]."[79] The following pages are hardly extant, but appear to discuss the zodiac and its relationship to the soul (NHC X 22*), before settling on correspondences between the configurations of the soul and the letters of the alphabet (NHC X 25–27*). In a remark on consonants, the narrator (presumably "Marsanes" himself) states for what purpose this knowledge could be useful: "and <the> consonants exist with the vowels, and individually; they are prefixed by them, and are suffixed. They serve as invocation [of] the angels" (ⲟⲛⲟⲙⲁⲥⲓⲁ [ⲛ̄]ⲛ̣ⲁⲅⲅⲉⲗⲟⲥ).[80] The discussion is opaque, but as Pearson, as well as more recent commentators such as Paul-Hubert Poirier and John D. Turner have surmised, it appears that the author offers a theorization of the mechanics undergirding the function of *voces magicae*.[81] The reading of Pearson et al. has never been challenged, so it is worth suggesting an alternative reading, for the sake of argument: Pachomius, inventor of coenobitic monasticism, was famed for his use of a kind of angelic language, and this language even appears in some of his letters.[82] *Marsanes* is here explicit that the ⲟⲛⲟⲙⲁⲥⲓⲁ is directed towards angels or belongs to angels;

[78] On the "occult sciences" as astrology, alchemy, and magic, see above, n. 10.

[79] *Marsanes* NHC X 19*.18–21. I translate the text in Funk, Poirier, and Turner, *Marsanès*.

[80] *Marsanes* NHC X 30*.3–9. I translate the text in Funk, Poirier, and Turner, *Marsanès*. See also 27*.12–19, 32*.1–7 (discussed below).

[81] Thus Paul-Hubert Poirier, "Commentaire: *Marsanès*," in Funk, Poirier, and Turner, *Marsanès*, 437: "en faisant servir les lettres à l'appellation des êtres angéliques et divins, notre traité recourt aux mêmes procédés que les papyrus magiques." More generally, see Birger Pearson, "Notes: *Marsanes*," in *Nag Hammadi Codices IX and X*, 252–347 (ed. Birger Pearson; NHS 15; Leiden: Brill, 1981), 286, followed by Burns, *Apocalypse*, 113–14; Turner, "Introduction: *Marsanes*," 64–65. The following reference to PGM XIII is noted by Poirier, "Commentaire: *Marsanès*," 427, albeit without analysis.

[82] See, e.g., Palladius, *Hist. Laus.* 32.4–5; Jerome's preface to the rules of Pachomius (*Jer. Pref.*); G[1] 99; and Pachomius, *Letters* 1, 2, 3, 6, 9a, 9b, 11a, and 11b. I thank Prof. Lundhaug for these references, to the former of which I shall return below. For a helpful, recent discussion of Pachomius's angelic language in the context of late ancient Aegypto-Palestinian monastic treatments of alphabet mysticism, see Joel Kalvesmaki, "Pachomius and the Mystery of the Letters," in *Ascetic Culture: Essays in Honor of Philip Rousseau* (ed. Blake Leyerle and Robin Darling Young; South Bend: University of Notre Dame Press, 2013), 11–28.

and in fact, LSJ 1233a offers the rendering if ὀνομασία as simply "expression, language." Might one render ⲟⲛⲟⲙⲁⲥⲓⲁ [ⲛ̄]ⲛ̣ⲁⲅⲅⲉⲗⲟⲥ as "language of the angels," and draw a comparison with Pachomius's angelic tongue, removing Marsanes's discussion of the efficacy of different combinations of syllables from an "occult" to a monastic context?

However, there are several reasons to suppose that ⲟⲛⲟⲙⲁⲥⲓⲁ [ⲛ̄]ⲛ̣ⲁⲅⲅⲉⲗⲟⲥ has the sense of "name, invocation of the angels," as suggested by Pearson, Poirier, and Turner. Such usage of the term to refer to the name(s) of God or the angels is consonant with that found in other Coptic texts, such as *Eugnostos* (NHC III,3), the Hermetic *Discourse on the Eighth and Ninth* and *Prayer of Thanksgiving* (NHC VI,6; VI,7) and the *Investiture of the Archangel Michael* (PM M593, 614).[83] Nonetheless, I would venture further and propose that the purpose of the ⲟⲛⲟⲙⲁⲥⲓⲁ in *Marsanes* is to bind angelic beings. As much may be indicated by use of the term ὀνομασία to refer to the invocation, or binding name, employed in the *Eighth Book of Moses* recorded in Leiden Papyrus J 395 (PGM XIII).[84] Leiden Papyrus J 395 is a single-quire papyrus codex which has been dated by palaeographic analysis to the mid-fourth century; it "is thus close to the Nag Hammadi Codices both chronologically and geographically."[85] It contains multiple versions of a spell for obtaining knowledge from a deity, whose title in the manuscript is *Eighth Book of Moses*.[86] In the first version of

[83] *Eugnostos* NHC III [77].9–13; *Disc. 8–9* NHC VI 62.22–28; *Pr. Thanks.* NHC VI 63.34–64.6; Pierpont Morgan M593 in *Die Bücher der Einsetzung der Erzengel Michael und Gabriel* (ed. C. Detlef Müller; CSCO 225, Scriptores Coptici 31; Leuven: Peeters, 1962), 40.29–30 (the Sahidic version of the text; usage in the Fayyumic parallel in PM M614 is identical, see ibid., 41.29–31). For ϯ-ⲟⲛⲟⲙⲁⲥⲓⲁ as referring to the bestowal of a name, see *Ex. Soul* NHC II 127.19–21.

[84] PGM XIII is part of the ancient archive sometimes referred to as the "Theban Magical Library" (Dieleman, "Greco-Egyptian Magical Papyri," 293). For the most recent treatment of the text, with new translation: Todd E. Klutz, "The Eighth Book of Moses: A New Translation and Introduction," *in Old Testament Pseudepigrapha: More Noncanonical Scriptures. Volume One* (ed. Richard Bauckham, James R. Davila, and Alexander Panayotov; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2013), 189–235.

[85] Bull, "Monkey Business," 82; also in idem, *Tradition of Hermes*, 339. On the codex's many Hermetic affinities, see ibid., 143, 206, 350–51, 425.

[86] The passage in question here (PGM XIII.210–12, paralleled at 565–56 and 704–6, the latter without reference to the "name" [ὀνομασία]) happens to be central to the question of how many versions of the *Eighth Book* are contained in the codex and what kind of redaction-history one may divine for the text. The fact that this redaction-critical issue has no bearing on the present discussion of the semantics of PGM XIII's use of ὀνομασία permits me the luxury of maintaining agnosticism in the present discussion on the question of whether PGM XIII contains three or two versions of the *Eighth Book*. Three is the conclusion of the classical treatment of Morton Smith, "The Eighth Book of Moses and How it Grew (PLeid. J 395)," in *Atti del XVII Congresso Internationale di Papirologia* (ed. M. Gigante et al.; Naples: Centro internazionale per lo studio dei papiri ercolanesi, 1984), 683–93, esp. 684–85; to the best of my knowledge, Smith's division of PGM XIII into three textual units remains

this extensive spell, the user is enjoined to ritual speech, sleep, and drink, undertakes invocations using praise and *nomina barbara*, is greeted from angelic beings speaking Egyptian, Hebrew, and animal languages,[87] and imitates the laughter of the demiurgic god by again pronouncing the seven vowels and *nomina barbara*.[88] Finally, the revelatory event arrives: "When the god enters, look down and write what is said and whatever name they might give you for him (γραφε τα λεγομενα κ ην διδωcιν coι αυτου ονομαcιαν); and do not go out of your tent until he has also told you accurately the things concerning you."[89] The ὀνομασία is the "magic name" that gives the user the right to demand information from the god,[90] and this is likely the "invocation" mentioned by Marsanes.

Marsanes appears to also specify that the "invocation" gives the user power over the divine being, as in the *Eighth Book of Moses*. The text concludes the section on the power of the syllables involving the consonants of the *begadkefat* by stating, "but the rest are different: αβεβηβιβοβ, in order that you might [gather] them, and be distinguished from the angels (ⲛⲕⲡⲱⲣ̄ⲭ ⲁⲛ̄[ⲁ]ⲅⲅⲉⲗⲟⲥ); and effects shall be produced."[91] Rather than inviting the reader to cohabitate with the angels, *Marsanes* appears to describe the human seer's elevation above the angels, in keeping with the supra-angelic status obtained by humans in a variety of ancient Jewish, Christian, and Sethian Gnostic texts.[92] Moreover, as Joel Kalvesmaki has argued, Pachomius's exploration of an "angelic alphabet" is probably best understood in light of his use of the Greek alphabet

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the majority view (see, e.g., Bull, "Monkey Business," 82; Dieleman, "Greco-Egyptian Magical Papyri," 299). However, for a strong argument that lines 343–734 of PGM XIII belong to a single version of the *Eighth Book* rather than two versions, see Klutz, "The Eighth Book of Moses," 192–93.

[87] The language of animals (particularly the baboon) is important in a number of Graeco-Egyptian magical texts, particularly PGM XIII. For a thorough discussion, see Bull, "Monkey Business," 87–91.

[88] PGM XIII.114–209.

[89] PGM XIII.210–12, trans. Klutz, "The Eighth Book of Moses," 220, text in *Two Greek Magical Papyri in the National Museum of Antiquities in Leiden: A Photographic Edition of J 384 and J 385 (= PGM XII and XIII)* (ed. Robert W. Daniel; PapyCol 19; Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1991), 40. The parallel passage at 565–66 is almost identical; absence of the term ὀνομασία is among the many differences in 704–6 that initially led Smith to his hypothesis that PGM XIII shows us three, not two, versions of the *Eighth Book*.

[90] The term appears with a similar sense in the much more brief incantation, also following *nomina barbara*, at PGM LXXXI.10.

[91] *Marsanes* NHC X 32*.1–7. See also ibid., 27*.12–19, where the reader is warned not to abuse the power of the invocation: "In accordance with (the) [template] of the naming (ⲟⲛⲟⲙⲁⲥⲓⲁ) of the [gods] and the angels, [it is not that] they (i.e., the consonants) are combined [with one another] in just any order, [but] only if they possess a good effect. It was not the case that their intention was clear. Do not persist in [sin], and do not engage in sinful practices!" Both translations are my own, of the text in Funk, Poirier, and Turner, *Marsanès.*

[92] For more extensive discussion, see Burns, *Apocalypse*, 113–32.

to encourage literacy and organize his monastic confederation;[93] *Marsanes*'s discussion of the efficacy of syllables as directed towards angelic names, on the other hand, is cached in discussions of very different topics. Post-Plotinian Neoplatonic teaching on the soul has been mentioned above; another topic is some kind of "doctrine of correspondences" regarding the relationship between material objects and names used in ritual, mentioned a few pages following our discussion of invocations in NHC X, as we come out of a lacuna: "…[and the] waters, and the [images of the] wax shapes [and] emerald images. As for the rest, I will teach you about them – this (treatise) is (about) [the] production [of] names (ⲡⲉⲉⲓ ⲡⲉ [ⲡ]ϫⲡⲟ [ⲛ̄ⲛ̄]ⲣⲉⲛ)."[94] Still other passages reflect on the astrological sympathies between stellar and terrestrial bodies.[95] confirming that the ⲟⲛⲟⲙⲁⲥⲓⲁ [ⲛ̄]ⲛ̣ⲁⲅⲅⲉⲗⲟⲥ are discussed in the context of what came in modernity to be designated "occult sciences."

To be sure, NHC X is not a formulary. Like all the other Nag Hammadi Codices, it contains none of what Tonio Sebastian Richter calls the "marked" features of Coptic magical manuscripts, particularly the sloping uncial hand, the common phraseology embedded in the "language of urgency" (i.e., phrases such as "I invoke (ϯⲟⲣ̄ⲕ̄, ϯⲕⲉⲗⲉⲩⲉ)," etc.), or recipe-lists of ingredients.[96] (Notably, we do find such features in a Coptic Gnostic work outside of the Nag Hammadi corpus: the instructions for baptisms in the *Second Book of Jeu.*)[97]

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[93] Kalvesmaki, "Pachomius," 23, with reference to G[1] 99; Palladius, *Hist. Laus.* 32.4–5: "Pachomius's secret language should be seen as an integral component of his emphasis on education and literacy ... It placed over the requirement for mastery of conventional literacy a new, divine level ... He wrote to the leaders of his monastery in the secret spiritual language so that they could govern and so that these leaders, being holy, could reply in the same language. When he organized his monasteries, Pachomius associated the letters of the alphabet with spiritual qualities, then assigned letters to companies of monks. He would ask about his monks' welfare through their assigned letter."

[94] *Marsanes* 35*.1-6. For the phrase "doctrine of correspondence" (von Stuckrad), see above, n. 7.

[95] *Marsanes* 42*.1–23: "[…] or rather he observes the two, or observes the seven planets, or the twelve signs of the zodiac, or the [thirty-six] decans […] which are [the twelve] parts, [those which] come to [three hundred and sixty [lots, …] in the places of the […] and [these] numbers, whether [those which are in heaven] or those which are upon earth, and those which are below the [earth], in accordance with the sympathies and the divisions (ⲕⲁⲧⲁ ⲛ̄ⲕⲟⲓⲛⲱⲛⲓⲁ ⲙ̄ⲡⲓ ⲛ̄ⲙⲉⲣⲓⲥⲙⲟ[ⲥ]), those which derive from these, and the rest." More fragmentary are the references to the zodiac at ibid., 21*.14 and 39*.28.

[96] Richter, "Markedness and Unmarkedness," 90–92, 93–98. Notably, the language of invocation appears (albeit in less "urgent" contexts) in *Marsanes* (see above, n. 48) as well as *Disc. 8–9* 55.24, 59.7 – see Michela Zago, "Le pneuma éloquent: Un parallèle entre le *Papyrus Mimaut* et NHC VI,6," in *Pensée grecque et sagesse d'orient. Hommage à Michel Tardieu* (ed. Mohammad Ali Amir-Moezzi et al.; BEHE.R 142; Turnhout: Brepols, 2009), 730.

[97] On indebtedness of some of the rituals described in *2 Jeu* to contemporary Egyptian magical practice, see Smith's discussion in Meyer and Smith, eds., *Ancient Christian Magic*,

Rather, the content and posturing of *Marsanes* recall fourth-century theorizations of private rituals as well as post-Plotinian Neoplatonism. Pearson's comparison to Iamblichus' *De mysteriis* is, from this perspective, certainly apposite, but given the focus of *Marsanes* on the mechanics of rituals, it seems to me that an even closer parallel could be drawn to Zosimus, particularly in his *Treatise on the Letter Omega*. Both *Marsanes* and *Omega* are, like *De mysteriis*, concerned with practical operations, but from a theoretical perspective at home in the scribal conventions of literary manuscripts; these operations are diverse, but the discovery and use of the occult properties of letters and sounds, efficacious names, and astrological correspondences are key; both works are couched in a distinctive combination of cultural touchstones, namely Platonism, apocalypse, and the figure of Nicotheus. The existence of such a text in Coptic – albeit in a lone manuscript that is very early in the greater history of Coptic literature – should give us pause. It shows us, at least in the fourth or fifth centuries CE, there was *some* audience for such literature in Coptic, and given the overlap between *Marsanes*'s content with esoteric program of Zosimus, we have to admit that some individuals with Zosimus's interests did want to read such works in Coptic after all.

6. Conclusions

Here we may return to Khosroyev's hypothesis (elaborated upon by Emmel) regarding the provenance of the Nag Hammadi Codices, and Lundhaug and Jenott's response to it. Khosroyev maintained that those responsible for the codices were Christians in a vague sense – "Halbintellektuellen, die ihre eigene Auffassung vom Christentum hatten (wobei sie sich nicht unbedingt zu einer konkreten christlichen Schule zählten)."[98] Lundhaug and Jenott lampoon this perspective, stating that we have a "dearth of evidence for ... city-dwelling, middle class, syncretistic, bilingual, untraditionally Christian, semi-intellectual Coptophones familiar with Greek philosophy."[99] Surely Lundhaug and Jenott are correct that we must regard the Nag Hammadi Codices as Christian artifacts, and that their contents could have enjoyed a substantial audience amongst some of the less orthodox monks who, we know, were discouraged from reading apocryphal and Origenist (i.e., Christian Platonist) works.[100]

At the same time, Khosroyev's unfortunate choice of terms (e.g., "semi-intellectual") notwithstanding, our Egyptian magical sources reveal to us that at

63–68; Erin Evans, *The 'Books of Jeu' and the 'Pistis Sophia' as Handbooks to Eternity: Exploring the Gnostic Mysteries of the Ineffable* (NHMS 89; Leiden: Brill, 2015), 73–94.

[98] Khosroyev, *Bibliothek*, 101.

[99] Lundhaug and Jenott, *Monastic Origins*, 95.

[100] Lundhaug and Jenott, *Monastic Origins*, 263–68.

least somewhat educated, bilingual, Coptophone scribes existed and were interested in obtaining and appropriating incantations and *voces magicae*, angelological teaching, and, yes, mythologoumena known from Gnostic texts. The existence of Coptophone "independent literati" who also engaged in scribal activity and traded texts one could use for magical practices is not a hypothetical, as the case of the Manichaean scribes Vales and Pshai (whose scribal network dealt with literary as well as magical texts). Similarly, despite its literary artifice, *Zostrianos* absolutely shares with the authors of so many ancient Graeco-Egyptian magical texts the presumption of "the efficacy of a large body of theological knowledge reserved to a literate priestly group to cause specific changes in the world, the power of secret, unintelligible words and names to communicate directly with the divine world, knowledge of a range of divine iconographic forms, and mastery of numerous ritual practices" – what Richard Gordon calls "high" magical practice.[101] Nor is the notion of a Coptophone collector of occult knowledge purely hypothetical, for it is difficult to characterize the author-/readership of *Marsanes* otherwise. The same could perhaps be said for the scribe copying the Hermetic treatises which close NHC VI, even if we accept recent arguments that this scribe was a monk.[102]

Even more importantly, however, this survey of our magical intertexts with the Nag Hammadi evidence does not mitigate the monastic hypothesis, either, for we also know there to have been significant overlap between the worlds of magical and monastic literary and scribal production. David Frankfurter has highlighted the continuity between native Egyptian and early monastic ritual experts,[103] and indeed this is borne out in the evidence reviewed here, as in the

[101] Richard Gordon "Religious Anthropology of High Magical Practice in the Empire," in *The Individual in the Religions of the Ancient Mediterranean* (ed. Jörg Rüpke; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 168. Cf. also Otto's phrase "Western learned magic" ("Historicizing," esp. 179–82). Cf. also see van der Vliet's suggestion that "the whole phenomenon of these performative liturgies that evoke complex celestial landscapes and hierarchies is best connected to a common ancestor, to a ritually-based cosmological system that underlies both Gnostic descriptions of the divine world, with their complicated unfolding of a celestial hierarchy, and the liturgies transmitted by the Coptic magical spells and handbooks. It may be speculated that such a system derives from ancient Jewish celestial topographies" ("Christian Spells," 342).

[102] Lundhaug and Jenott, *Monastic Origins*, 90–92 passim; see now Bull, "Hermes," 243–52.

[103] "This literary or, more precisely, ritual continuity must reflect a demographic continuity as well: the entry of people into the monastic environment who were originally trained in priestly traditions, who would have carried the ritual idiom and traditions with them, perhaps even already in Coptic form. The only real evidence for this idea is first, the fact that Coptic itself had taken shape before Christianity as a medium for ritual texts, and second, a number of saint-narratives that actually speak of the conversion of Egyptian priests. But given the Egyptian legacy in the spells and the sparse literacy of Egyptian culture except among those professionally given to writing and collecting, a continuity between the very

case of the cryptographical system at work in *Zostrianos*, which we have also found at a monastery. In other words, we ought not consider these magical and monastic contexts as mutually exclusive or even competing. Even as we investigate the production of the Nag Hammadi Codices in monastic scribal environments, we also ought to explore the transmission of the Nag Hammadi texts via the late ancient Egyptian "occult" *milieux* of Zosimus or the Hermetica. All this speaks in support of Lundhaug and Jenott's observation that some monks were interested in, produced, and traded unorthodox and extracanonical materials.

In other words, even if we are dealing with monks rather than "urban" occultists, these must be some fairly occult-minded monks.[104] Recognizing this might help us out of the quandary of whether to regard the prospective readership of the Nag Hammadi texts to be "semi-intellectual" (Khosroyev), or simply not "elite" or "intellectual" (Lundhaug and Jenott). Again, Zosimus provides a useful reference point here, of a fourth-century Egyptian interested in philosophical matters and conversant in philosophical terminology, but oriented towards religious and magico-alchemical ends. For example, perhaps the "Platonizing" Sethian treatises were translated into Coptic and copied by Coptophone scribes not out of any great scholarly interest in Plotinian metaphysics and *Parmenides* commentaries, but because *Zostrianos*, *Allogenes*, and the

scribal institutions of native and Christian Egypt is the best context" (David Frankfurter, "Dynamics of Ritual Expertise in Antiquity and Beyond: Towards a New Taxonomy of 'Magicians'," in *Magic and Ritual and the Ancient World* [ed. Paul Mirecki and Marvin Meyer; RGRW 141; Leiden: Brill, 2002], 129–30). See further Frankfurter, "Ritual Expertise," 159–78; Nicole B. Hansen, "Ancient Execration Magic in Coptic and Islamic Egypt," in *Magic and Ritual and the Ancient World* (ed. Paul Mirecki and Marvin Meyer; RGRW 141; Leiden: Brill, 2002), 427–45; David Brakke, *Demons and the Making of the Monk: Spiritual Combat in Early Christianity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), 227–39, followed by Boustan and Sanzo, "Christian Magicians," 220 n. 8; Jacques van der Vliet, "Literature, Liturgy, Magic: A Dynamic Continuum," in *Christianity in Egypt: Literary Production and Intellectual Trends: Studies in Honor of Tito Orlandi* (ed. Paola Buzi and Alberto Camplani; Studia Ephemeridis Augustinianum 125; Rome: Institutum Patristicum Augustinianum, 2011), 555–74. I thank Hugo Lundhaug for many of these references.

[104] Cf. Rowan Greer's remark that "it does not seem impossible to me that at Nag Hammadi we are dealing with a community of theosophical monks influenced by Origen, concerned with the ascetical and celibate life, and interested in whatever theosophical literature could be found" (Rowan Greer, "The Dog and the Mushrooms: Irenaeus's View of the Valentinians Reassessed," in *The Rediscovery of Gnosticism: Proceedings of the International Conference on Gnosticism* [ed. Bentley Layton; 2 vols; SHR 41; Leiden: Brill, 1980], 147). Lundhaug and Jenott embrace Greer's suggestion that the Nag Hammadi texts were produced by Origenist monks (*Monastic Origins*, 240–41). My point here is that Prof. Greer's casual designation of the producers of the Nag Hammadi Codices as well as the literature contained in these codices as "theosophical" is at least as helpful, if not more helpful, than the hypothesis of their relationship to the Origenist Controversy.

Three Steles of Seth came to incorporate powerful-sounding doxologies familiar from Graeco-Egyptian magical practice and early Christian liturgy into their angelological speculations, which *Marsanes* theorized in a compelling way.[105] Such speculations and concomitant doxologies would have been of great interest to monks pursuing the "angelic life."[106]

All this raises the question of how and why some of this esoteric literature could have entered monastic circles in the first place – of the stages of the transmission of the works preserved at Nag Hammadi *preceding* their collection and burial.[107] Bull has offered the attractive hypothesis that some Zosimus-like characters entered the monasteries and brought their books with them,[108] but one way to move beyond speculation may be to re-examine the "monastic hypothesis" on a piecemeal level, codex by codex. For instance, even if one regards, say, Codices II and III as the work of monastic scribes based upon their colophons,[109] Codex VI presents a more ambiguous case,[110] while Codex X has no particularly monastic features at all and does not belong to any identifiable scribal sub-group.[111] In any case, even if we accept that the Nag Hammadi manuscripts as a group were owned and buried by Pachomian monks, the stages of the production and trading of the texts they contain may take us – indeed, at some level must take us – into the worlds of bilingual scribes of magical texts, worlds like those of Besa, Vales, and Pshai, and, perhaps, that is not at all far from Zosimus.

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[105] On the doxologies of the "Platonizing" Sethian treatises as angelic language uttered by angelified seers – to be emulated, most likely, by the readers of the treatises – see Burns, *Apocalypse*, 127–30.

[106] For survey, see Karl Suso Frank, *ΑΓΓΕΛΙΚΟΣ ΒΙΟΣ: Begriffsanalytische und Begriffsgeschichtliche Untersuchung zum "engelgleichen Leben" im frühen Mönchtum* (BGAM 26; Münster: Aschendorff, 1964).

[107] For discussion of the distinct phases of the composition of the Nag Hammadi texts, their redaction, their translation into Coptic, and the subsequent creation of the exemplars from which the Nag Hammadi manuscripts were copied, see Emmel, "The Coptic Gnostic Texts," 34–41.

[108] Bull, "Hermes," 251.

[109] A fine case is made by Lundhaug and Jenott, *Monastic Origins*, 183–93.

[110] For arguments in favor of a monastic provenance for NHC VI, see the references given above.

[111] Lundhaug and Jenott, *Monastic Origins*, 211.

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