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Non γνωστικός sed ⲡⲣⲉϥⲥⲟⲟⲩⲛⲉ: Positive and Self-Designations Involving Knowledge and Knowers in the Nag Hammadi Codices*

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Introduction: The Term γνωστικός as used by Philosophers, Christians, and Gnostics

Among Stephen Emmel's countless contributions to the editing, translation, publication, and interpretation of the Nag Hammadi Codices are his early recognition and longtime support of research into the relationship between this hoard of Coptic manuscripts and Greek philosophy. Prof. Emmel raised both of these questions in an important paper delivered in 1995 at the conference "*The Nag Hammadi Texts in the History of Religions*," in Copenhagen, Denmark, on "The Gnostic Tradition in Relation to Greek Philosophy." The prescience and clarity Emmel displays in this essay are striking. First, he drew attention to the importance of problems in exegesis of Plato's *Timaeus* and, more widely, Platonist-Pythagorean theories of creation for understanding Gnostic myths about the demiurge – a topic that has since enjoyed a number of fine studies, but which is far from exhaustion, particularly as executed from the standpoint of the history of philosophy rather than the history of religion.[1] Second, he raised the question of how the histories of philosophy and early modern theology may have shaped the emergence of categories like "Gnosticism" that have played such an important role in the receptions and scholarly investigations of these mysterious ancient texts.[2] While reception-history has since become fashionable,

* I thank the editors of this volume for the invitation to honor Prof. Emmel with this paper, as well as David Brakke and Hugo Lundhaug for reading a draft of it and offering generous comments and corrections. For the conclusions reached and any errors I alone am responsible.

[1] Emmel, "Gnostic Tradition," 128–129, re: Dillon, *Middle Platonists*, 6–7. See further e.g. Turner, *Sethian Gnosticism*, 305–445; Thomassen, *Spiritual Seed*, 269–314; O'Brien, *Demiurge*, 205–243.

[2] Emmel, "Gnostic Tradition," 125–26, on René Masuet's 1710 edition of Irenaeus of Lyons's *De Haereticis* and the hugely influential work of Ferdinand Christian Baur. Karen King later took up

such sensitivity to the significance of scholarship on Gnosticism prior to Harnack was not typical in the 1990s.[3] Thirdly, Emmel highlighted the importance of the philosophical background of the term γνωστικός in debate about the question of the term's use as a positive or self-designation, as alleged by Irenaeus of Lyons and Porphyry of Tyre, by individuals propagating ideas, myths, and texts recalling so many of those found in the Nag Hammadi corpus.[4]

It is to this latter question – the history of the term γνωστικός – that I turn in the present contribution, in honor of Prof. Emmel's manifold achievements as researcher and teacher of all things Coptic, Gnostic, and philosophical.[5] As is well-known, γνωστικός is an unusual word that was apparently coined by Plato in his dialogue the *Statesman*, where he divides all "science" (ἐπιστήμη) into a πρακτικὴ τέχνη and a γνωστικὴ τέχνη, the latter being any sort of theoretical or cognitively-oriented art.[6] During the ensuing centuries, the adjective γνωστικός remained in use by Greek philosophers, always with the sense of "leading to knowledge, resulting in knowledge, capable of knowing, cognizant of,"[7] and never with a human being as a referent.[8] The claim that some thing is γνωστικός had purchase specifically in "the Platonic-Pythagorean tradition."[9] Consequently, it is no surprise that the term has a

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Baur in her *What is Gnosticism?*, but with this exception, the landscape of philosophical and theological treatment of Gnosticism prior to Harnack remains relatively untilled soil for reception-historical study. See further Burns, "Receptions of Revelations," 22–35.

[3] "The history of the word 'Gnosticism' from the seventeenth century to 1996 is fundamentally irrelevant to the historical study of antiquity (though it might be an appropriate topic in modern intellectual history)" (Layton, "Prolegomena," 335 [pub. 1995], followed by Pearson, "Gnosticism as a Religion," 91 [pub. 2005]).

[4] Emmel, "Gnostic Tradition," 132–133.

[5] The occasion dictates that I thank Prof. Emmel for the particular generosity he extended to me in 2009–2010, when I was a doctoral student on a year-long fellowship in Heidelberg, Germany, working on an ill-conceived dissertation on the Platonizing Sethian literature (NHC VII,5; VIII,1; X,1; XI,3) and its relationship to the school of Plotinus. Prof. Emmel kindly invited me to read a Coptic text of my choice relating to the project with him in Münster. So once a month, I arose before dawn, took the train down the Rhein towards Münster, and met with Prof. Emmel's noonday reading group to battle a few pages of Shenoute, after which we retired to his office to drink coffee and read *Zostrianos* (NHC VIII,1) until the last train home. We were often and happily joined by Mary Farag, and, in our final and memorable sittings, Wolf-Peter Funk. I remain inspired by the example Emmel set during these readings of how one should aspire to approach an ancient source: with the best analytical acumen one can muster, humility, and a readiness to be surprised.

[6] Plat. *Pol.* 258e–267a, esp. 258e, 259e, per Smith, "History of the Term γνωστικός," 799; Layton, "Prolegomena," 336–37, both followed widely (Emmel, "Gnostic Tradition," 132; Pearson, "Gnosticism as a Religion," 90; Crégheur, "Pachôme et les gnostiques," 572–573).

[7] Smith, "History of the Term γνωστικός," 799.

[8] "In its normative philosophical usage *gnōstikos* was never applied to the human person as a whole, but only to mental endeavors, faculties, or components of personality" (Layton, "Prolegomena," 337; Layton, *Gnostic Scriptures*, 8).

[9] Smith, " History of the Term γνωστικός," 800, followed by Crégheur, "Pachôme et les gnostiques,"

rich history of use in later Neoplatonism, consistent with its earlier use by Greek philosophers for things cognitive and epistemological.[10]

The early Christian use of the term γνωστικός for human beings was thus something of an innovation. Scholars have identified three primary usages of the term in early Christian literature.[11] First, a few early Christian philosophers, such as Clement of Alexandria or Evagrius Ponticus, used the word γνωστικός in a positive sense and as a self-designation, to denote the ideal educated, contemplative Christian living a life of learned virtue.[12] Secondly, Irenaeus of Lyons used the term γνωστικός in a mocking, ironic, and/or capricious way to denote virtually any fellow Christian whom he sought to exclude through his heresiographical program, regardless of his or her doctrines or practices, a usage emulated by later heresiographers such as the author of the *Refutation of All Heresies*, much to the frustration of modern scholars.[13] A third usage that is broadly but hardly universally recognized by scholars was divined by Bentley Layton and more recently David Brakke, who have argued that the term γνωστικός is used by Celsus, Irenaeus, and Porphyry to refer to Christians who seem to have called themselves γνωστικοί – "suppliers of knowledge," or the like – and who propagated myths, ideas, and texts that, taken together, obtain heavy overlap with a body of texts extant in the Nag Hammadi, Askew, Bruce, Berlin, and Tchacos Codices. This complex of myths, ideas, and texts – also known as "Sethian" or simply "(Classic) Gnostic" among scholars – could be fruitfully denoted as a

573. As Smith points out (op. cit.), the term does not appear in Stoic texts, non-literary (including magical) texts, nor in the LXX or pseudepigrapha.

[10] A TLG search for the stem γνωστικ- produces far more hits than can be discussed in the context of this essay, but a few representative examples include Porphyry, *Sentences*, 43.12, in Brisson, *Porphyre*, 370; Proclus, *Elements of Theology*, proposition 102, in Dodds, *Proclus*, 92; (pseudo-?)Simplicius, *Commentary on Aristotle On the Soul 3.6–16*, in Heyduck, *Simplicii*, 292.17.22.23, 271.15.17.19–24, passim. On the relative oblivion the term experiences in late ancient Hellenic literature beyond Platonic philosophy, see Layton, "Prolegomena," 339–340.

[11] Cf. Lampe, *Patristic Greek Lexicon*, 320, s.v. γνωστικός, whose entry may roughly be boiled down to the three usages given here.

[12] On Clement's γνωστικός, see e.g. Völker, *Der wahre Gnostiker*; Layton, "Prolegomena," 339; Crégheur, "Pachôme et les gnostiques," 580–582. Notably, the word has nothing to do with divine origins, in Clement's usage—rather, it is concerned with the correct belief, apostolic tradition, and belonging to the church (Torm,"Das Wort γνωστικός," 71; Marjanen, "From the Pastorals," 14–15). On Evagrius's γνωστικός, see recently Ramelli, *Evagrius*, 16, 34, 195, 342; Crégheur, "Pachôme et les gnostiques,"584.

[13] Imprecise and/or inflated application of the term 'gnostic' by Irenaeus can be found at *Haer*. 2.13.8–10, 2.31.1, 2.35.2, 3.4.3, 3.10.4, 4.6.4, 4.35.1, and 5.26.2, as discussed in Williams, *Rethinking*, 36; Williams, "On Ancient 'Gnosticism'," 101; Marjanen, "From the Pastorals," 11–12; Smith, *Guilt*, 151, 155–156. "To the degree that Irenaeus does place all of these 'sects' in the same category of 'gnosis,' it is really merely the category of 'false teaching' rather than a grouping defined by a list of phenomenological traits" (Williams, *Rethinking*, 44). For Adoptionist Christologies as "gnostic" (!), see *Ref*. 7.35.1, 7.36.2, 9.4, per Williams, *Rethinking*, 38–39; Marjanen, "From the Pastorals," 20–21.

"Gnostic school of thought" (γνωστικὴ αἵρεσις) whose adherents denoted themselves γνωστικοί.[14]

Even among detractors of the term Gnosticism, there is not much disagreement over the coherent, distinctive, and interesting character of the complex of evidence at hand in the "Sethian" or "Classic Gnostic" dossier.[15] More difficult is the question of whether to follow Irenaeus and Porphyry in identifying its ancient adherents and propagators as individuals who called themselves γνωστικοί. The capriciousness in the usage of the term γνωστικός by Irenaeus et al. is undeniable and poses a genuine difficulty for those who are otherwise sympathetic to the approach of Layton and Brakke.[16] To complicate matters, Irenaeus does not precisely describe self-designations when he discusses the individuals (Simon Magus, Carpocrates, Valentinus, and the Gnostics) whom he strings together as part τῆς λεγομένης γνωστικῆς αἱρέσεως (*Haer*. 1.11.1); in fact, it is only the teacher Marcellina and her followers – unimportant for the Gnostic school of thought relating to the extant "Sethian" or "Classic Gnostic" literature – whom he explicitly says call themselves γνωστικοί.[17] Thus, many scholars have concluded that any "Gnostic school of thought" is simply the heresiological invention of Irenaeus, for the term γνωστικός was only used as a positive or self-designation by a few Christian writers: Clement, Evagrius, and their later readers.[18]

The discovery and translation of the Nag Hammadi (and later, Tchacos) manuscripts presented scholars with another datum regarding ancient use of the term γνωστικός: the word is nowhere to be found in the Coptic texts allegedly related to the Gnostics discussed by Irenaeus and Porphyry. To Michael Allen Williams and many others, this confirms that the authors of the Nag Hammadi and related texts simply did not call themselves γνωστικοί.[19] Rather, they must have identified

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[14] Orig. *Cels*. 5.61; Ir. *Haer*. 1.11.1, viz. 1.29–31; Porph. *Vit. Plot*. 16, as discussed in Layton, "Prolegomena," esp. 338; Brakke, *Gnostics*, 29–51; cf. also Smith, "History of the Term γνωστικός," 803–4. This approach remains vital today; see e.g. Marjanen, "From the Pastorals," 2; Pearson, "Gnosticism as a Religion," 94. On "classic" vs. "Sethian" Gnosticism, see Rasimus, *Paradise Reconsidered*, 9–62.

[15] Williams, *Rethinking*, 42; King, *What is Gnosticism*, 168.

[16] Both Layton ("Prolegomena," 339) and Brakke ("Review," 426) acknowledge the issue, but do not regard it as crippling (similarly Burns, "Gnosticism," 12–13).

[17] *Haer*. 1.25.6; Williams, *Rethinking*, 33; Smith, *Guilt*, 149–150.

[18] Esp. Smith, *Guilt*, 161–62, followed by Williams, "On Ancient 'Gnosticism'," 113; see also Crégheur, "Pachôme et les gnostiques," 579, 589; a similar perspective was argued already in 1936 by Torm, "Das Wort γνωστικός," 72.

[19] "We apparently do not have direct evidence of a single so-called gnostic writer using the self-designation *gnōstikos*!...With the discovery in 1945 of the Nag Hammadi texts, suddenly the absence of the self-designation *gnōstikos* or any obvious Coptic equivalent in a now much larger corpus of 'gnostic' writings became more troublesome. Numerous other self-designations do appear in these writings, including Christians, pneumatics, seed, elect, race of Seth, race of the Perfect Human, immovable race…but not *gnōstikos*…This absence of the designation in all original 'gnostic'

themselves as "Christians," and with reference to self-designations found in the Nag Hammadi texts such as "the Undominated Race," "the Immovable Race," or "the Children of Light."[20] Layton's response is that the works composed by adherents to the Gnostic school of thought are mythopoetic pseudepigrapha and deal almost exclusively with primordial matters, and so present no occasion to use terms of self-designation appropriate for use in Roman philosophical schools.[21] Almost all of them are apocalypses,[22] and their universal use of pseudepigraphy indicates low levels of corporate social identity, more typical of subcultures or 'audience-cults' rather than independent churches.[23] Even so, the absence of the term γνωστικός from the works ostensibly written by the Gnostics themselves is conspicuous, and, compounded with the heresiographers' capricious use of the term, offers a serious argument against Layton's approach. Finally, as Eric Crégheur has recently observed, the Greek loanword ⲅⲛⲱⲥⲧⲓⲕⲟⲥ is (scarcely) attested in Coptic, and only appears in monastic literature where the term is used as a positive designation for a very good, contemplative Christian – once more, in line with the usage of Clement or Evagrius discussed above.[24]

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writings discovered thus far casts serious doubt on any notion that this self-designation was very widespread" (Williams, *Rethinking*, 32, see also, 41, 42, widely followed, e.g. by King, *What is Gnosticism*, 167; Marjanen, "From the Pastorals," 2 n. 3; Marjanen, "Gnosticism," 108–9; Lundhaug, *Images*, 17; Schröter, "Gnosis," 20; Smith, *Guilt*, 132; further, Williams, "Was There a Gnostic Religion," 75; Williams, "On Ancient 'Gnosticism'," 112).

[20] On the former two designations, see Fallon, "Undominated Race"; Williams, *Immovable Race*. On the "Children of Light," see below. More generally, see Brakke, *Gnostics*, 13–14, 40, 47, 72, 87.

[21] Layton, "Prolegomena," 344, followed by Brakke, *Gnostics*, 47–48; Burns, "Gnosticism," 12. Comparisons to ancient Judaism may helpfully illuminate the argument. Pearson, for instance, has noted that the fact that the term "Essene" does not appear in the Dead Sea Scrolls has not prevented most scholars of the Qumran corpus from hypothesizing that the community which owned it identified as Essenes (Pearson, "Gnosticism as a Religion," 94, followed by Brakke, *Gnostics*, 47). An even more apposite comparison focuses on the literary features, not the owners, of the texts: most scholars would agree today that the various, ancient Enochic apocalypses compiled in *1 Enoch* were written by and for individuals whom we can meaningfully call "Jews" in some sense, even though some form of the word "Jew" does not appear once in the texts, much less as a self-designation. The *Book of the Watchers* or the *Astronomical Book* are pseudepigrapha set in a primeval time of legend: there is no occasion in them to use a self-identification like Ἰουδαῖοι.

[22] For the Sethian literature as making overwhelming use of the genre "apocalypse," see Burns, *Apocalypse*, 49–52.

[23] On the importance of the use of pseudepigraphy for understanding the social context of Gnostic literature, see Brakke, "Scriptural Practices"; further, Brakke, "Pseudonymity"; Burns, *Apocalypse*, 52. For the argument that such a social context may be usefully conceived of today as a sort of ancient subculture, see Burns, "Is the *Apocalypse of Paul*."

[24] For the ⲅⲛⲱⲥⲧⲓⲕⲟⲥ in Coptic, see the *Catechesis Against a Spiteful Monk*, in Lefort, *Œuvres de S. Pachôme*, 24.15-19: ⲛ̄ⲧ̄ⲙ̄ⲟⲟⲡ ⲁⲛ ⲛ̄ⲑⲓ ⲟⲩⲡⲣⲟⲫⲏⲧⲏⲥ ⲟⲩⲇⲉ ⲟⲩⲅⲛⲱⲥϯⲕⲟⲥ · ⲙⲛ̄ ⲗⲁⲁⲩ ϫⲡⲏⲟ ⲛ̄ⲗⲁⲁⲩ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ϫⲉ ⲁⲧⲙ̄ⲛ̄ⲧⲛⲁⲱⲧ̄ ⲣⲏⲧ ⲁⲱⲁⲓ · ⲡⲉⲧⲛⲟⲓ ⲇⲉ ⲛⲁⲕⲁⲣⲱϥ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ϫⲉ ⲟⲩⲟⲉⲓⲱ ⲙ̄ⲡⲟⲛⲩⲣⲟⲛ ⲡⲉ · ⲁⲡⲟⲩⲁ ⲡⲟⲩⲁ ⲣ̄ ⲣ̄ⲣⲟ ⲛⲁϥ ⲙⲁⲩⲁⲁϥ · ⲣⲉⲛⲕⲁⲧⲁⲫⲣⲟⲛⲏⲧⲏⲥ ⲛⲉ ⲣⲙ̄ ⲡⲉⲧⲉⲙⲉⲱⲟⲩⲉ ("there is no longer prophet nor *knower*… because hardness of heart abounds"). For background and discussion of this passage see recently Crégheur,

To be sure, it would certainly have been convenient to find the word γνωστικός attested among the ostensibly Gnostic writings of the 'Coptic Gnostic Library.' Yet its absence from the Coptic evidence relevant to Gnosticism does not divorce that evidence from what Celsus, Irenaeus, and Porphyry report about *gnōstikoi*. Γνωστικός is not just a word that you would not expect to see used in apocalypses about events that took place before the beginnings of civilization, the world, or time itself. It is not even a word you would necessarily expect to see used in Coptic: if we set aside the contested use of the word suggested by Layton and Brakke, then we are left with a technical term whose ancient usage seems to have been limited entirely to Platonism, on the one hand, and early Christian philosophers' remarks about exceptional people, on the other. Philosophical literature is poorly represented in Coptic, so it is surprising that research into the relationship of the γνωστικοί to the Coptic Gnostic corpus has laid so much weight on the word ⲅⲛⲱⲥⲧⲓⲕⲟⲥ in particular, and that the absence of this word in original Gnostic texts has been regarded by so many as decisive. Moreover, it is well-known that the translators of the Nag Hammadi texts often struggled with rendering difficult or technical Greek into the Coptic language – itself a very new development, in the fourth century CE – and often interpreted a Greek term that may be familiar to us by recourse to a variety of native Egyptian words and phrases, as well as Greek loanwords.[25] Why would the situation with the early Christian use of γνωστικός as a positive or self-designation be any different? Are there Egyptian formulations that could render the term, or at least its sense – "some person who possesses or may grant special, salvific knowledge, perhaps typical of the *gnōstikoi* mentioned by Celsus, Irenaeus, and Porphyry" – making use of words such as ⲥⲟⲟⲩⲛ, ⲉⲓⲙⲉ, or (of course) ⲅⲛⲱⲥⲓⲥ?[26]

"Pachôme et les gnostiques," esp. 566–71. Crégheur rightly observes that the term ⲅⲛⲱⲥⲧⲓⲕⲟⲥ is here used in a positive sense (ibid., 571). A second passage has, to the best of my knowledge, not yet been discussed yet in the secondary literature, but was unearthed by Anne Grons – a student of Stephen Emmel's – in her lexicographical work for the project Database and Dictionary of Greek Loanwords in Coptic (DDGLC): *Life of Zenobios*, in Till, *Koptische Heiligen- und Märtyrerlegenden*, 130.20–131.3: ⲛⲓⲙ ⲇⲉ ⲟⲛ ⲉ̄ⲛ̄ ⲛⲁⲙⲉⲗⲏⲥ ⲡⲉ ⲛⲧⲁⲩⲥⲱⲧⲙ̄ ⲉⲡⲉⲩⲃⲓⲟⲥ · ⲙ̀ⲡⲟⲩⲉ · ⲙ̀ⲡⲉⲩⲭⲡⲟ ⲛⲁⲩ ⲛⲟⲩⲥⲡⲟⲩⲇⲏ ⲉⲣⲟⲩⲛ ⲉⲧⲙ̀ⲙⲏⲧⲉⲩⲥⲉⲃⲛⲥ · ⲉ̄ⲛ̄ ⲛⲉⲧⲉⲩⲥⲱⲧⲙ̄ ⲉⲣⲟⲟⲩ · ⲏ ⲛⲓⲙ ⲙ̀ⲛⲉⲅⲛⲱⲥⲧⲓⲕⲟⲥ ⲡⲉ ⲛⲧⲁⲩⲁⲡⲁⲛⲧⲁ ⲉⲣⲟⲩ · ⲙ̀ⲡ̣ⲩⲉⲡⲁⲓⲛⲟⲩ ⲙ̀ⲡⲥⲟ[ⲟ]ⲩⲧⲙ̄ ⲙ̀ⲧⲉⲩⲡⲓⲥⲧⲓⲥ ⲙ̄ⲙ̄ ⲡⲉⲩⲥⲟⲟⲩⲛ ⲉⲧⲣ̣ⲣⲁ ⲉ̄ⲛ̄ ⲛⲉⲅⲣⲁⲫⲏ ("…and who is it of *the knowing ones* that met him and did not praise the uprightness of his faith and his firm knowledge in the Scriptures?"). For these texts I am indebted to DDGLC; the translations are those of Grons, slightly modified.

[25] A convenient example presents itself in the complex of terminology fate found in the providence doxography at the beginning of *Eugnostos* and the *Wisd. Jes. Chr.*, where a single doxography is preserved in four separate versions from three separate manuscripts (NHC III 70.2–71.13, 91.24–93.24; NHC V [1].3–2.8; BG 79.14–82.18). For a study focusing on the Coptic translation of the term εἱμαρμένη (NHC V 1.22–23: ⲉⲓⲙⲁⲣⲙⲉⲛⲏ; NHC III 70.21, 93.3: ⲡⲉⲧⲏⲡ; BG 81.10–11: ⲧⲉⲑⲟⲛⲧ) in this passage, see Funk, "*Tethont*." On the problems faced by the Coptophone translators of *Ap. John*, see Oerter, "Griechische Substantive."

[26] Thus, this essay seeks to present evidence germane to the accuracy of Williams's statement that there is an "absence of the self-designation *gnōstikos or any obvious Coptic equivalent*" (*Rethinking*, 32,

In short, the absence of the Greek loanword ⲅⲛⲱⲥⲧⲓⲕⲟⲥ from the Coptic Gnostic evidence is not coterminous with the absence of any self-identifiers of that could serve as possible translations, or at least echoes, of use of the term γνωστικός as a positive or self-designation in the Sethian/Classic Gnostic (or if one prefers, 'biblical demiurgical') dossier. The present contribution thus examines passages from the Nag Hammadi Codices in which the terminology of "knowledge" and "knowers" (in various Coptic formulations, but viz. γνῶσις, γνωστικοί) plays a significant role in designations of the elect.[27] The evidence as presented here is surveyed codex by codex. No doubt due in large part to their state of preservation, the bulk of the evidence discussed below is from NHC I, II, and VII. The primary object of this investigation is inventory rather than interpretation: the gathering of data that contribute to further study of cognitive, epistemological and revelatory terminology in these early Coptic manuscripts, regardless of what context in which one chooses to interpret their contents.[28] Nonetheless, the conclusion of this paper will argue that the data in question are also relevant for research into early Christian use of the term γνωστικός as a positive or self-designation, particularly with respect to the question raised by Emmel in 1995: the importance of the background of Greek philosophy for understanding our evidence about the ancient *gnōstikoi* and, more widely, modern discourse about "Gnosticism."

Nag Hammadi Codex I (Codex Jung)

Probably the most important text for the present investigation is the *Gospel of Truth* (NHC I,3; XII,2). While much of the evidence discussed in this article is fragmentary and obscure, *Gos. Truth* presents us a meditation on the theme of salvation by self-knowledge that is an extensive, well-preserved, and theologically rich, permitting a close reading.[29] The work describes how the unknowable deity, the Father, reveals

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italics mine) at Nag Hammadi.

[27] Brief attention will be given to Codex Tchacos. In the interests of space, I set aside the Bruce and Askew Codices, comprehensive review of which with respect to the topic of the present investigation remains a *desideratum*.

[28] Thus, despite the interpretation I suggest at the conclusion of this paper, I hope that the presentation of material will also be of service to those who wish to read the Nag Hammadi texts with respect to fourth–fifth century and especially Egyptian monastic intertexts (for a *Forschungsbericht* on this approach, see now Lundhaug, "Dating and Contextualizing," 132–35).

[29] Layton, *Gnostic Scriptures*, 308: "*The Gospel of Truth* is a Christian sermon on the theme of salvation by acquaintance with god (*gnōsis*)." As much is announced in its grand opening sentence, NHC I 16.31–17.11, and particularly explicitly at NHC I 37.37–38.4, text in Attridge and MacRae, "The *Gospel of Truth*," 1:110, tr. mine: **"**But the end is the acquisition of knowledge (ⲡⲓⲁ ⲥⲁⲩⲛⲉ) about what is hidden, and it is the Father, He from whom the beginning came, He to whom everything that

knowledge so that his parts, who are at first without comprehension of Him and thus have no sense of their origins, may come to know Him.[30] His principle agent in this endeavor is the Savior,[31] who, when crucified, became "fruit of knowledge of the Father (ⲟⲩⲧⲁϩ ⲙ̄ⲡⲥⲁⲩⲛⲉ ⲛ̄ⲧⲉ ⲡⲓⲱⲧ)."[32] A kind of identity is predicated between the Father and those who eat of him, so to speak: "And it is He who discovered them in Himself, and Him who they discovered in themselves – the uncontainable, ineffable one, the Father…."[33] After the Savior was rejected by the teachers (cf. Luke 2:46–50), the "little ones" recognize him, because they have knowledge of the Father: "To <him> came other, little ones – those to whom belongs knowledge of the Father (ⲛⲉⲉⲓ ⲉⲧⲉⲡⲱⲟⲩ ⲡⲉ ⲡⲥⲁⲩⲛⲉ ⲙ̄ⲡⲓⲱⲧ). Having become strong, they received teaching about the forms of the Father. They recognized, and were recognized; they received glory, rendering glory. In their heart appeared the book of the living."[34] These "little ones" are positively designated by their possession of salvific knowledge.

Gos. Truth also describes an elect person in terms of knowledge, in a manner very much reminiscent of a γνωστικός, in several passages. First, the text states that the names of the ones who will accept the teaching of the Savior are written in the Book of the Living.[35] The distinguishing characteristic of such a person is that they "know" (ⲉⲣⲉⲡⲟⲩⲉⲉⲓ ⲥⲁⲩⲛⲉ), and they are opposed to those without knowledge.[36] Furthermore,

> It is someone who knows (ⲟⲩⲉⲉⲓ ⲉⲫⲥⲁⲩⲛⲉ), whose name the Father uttered. Therefore, someone whose name was not uttered is without knowledge (ⲫⲟⲉⲓ ⲛ̄ⲁⲧⲥⲁⲩⲛⲉ) – for how is it that someone will hear, without their name having been called out? For someone who is without knowledge (ⲡⲉⲧⲟⲉⲓ ⲛ̄ⲁⲧⲥⲁⲩⲛⲉ) until the end is a creature of amnesia, and he shall disappear along with it."[37]

Deficiency or the absence of salvation dissipates immediately upon acquisition of knowledge [ⲥⲁⲩⲛⲉ] of the Father;[38] thus, "by knowledge shall one purify oneself

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has come forth from Him shall return!"

[30] *Gos. Truth* NHC I 18.4–16; cf. further 19.3–17, 22.27–23.2, 23.15–18, 24.13–20.

[31] *Gos. Truth* NHC I 27.11–27. The Savior's defining characteristic is his ability to supply salvific knowledge: 20.38–21.1, 30.24–26, 31.26–35. The parts of the Father are unable to recognize Him before the arrival of the Savior: 28.7–10.

[32] *Gos. Truth* NHC I 18.24–25, text in Attridge and MacRae, "The *Gospel of Truth*," 1:84, tr. mine; also noted by Mazur, *Platonizing Sethian Background*, 174 n. 109.

[33] *Gos. Truth* NHC I 18.29–34, text in Attridge and MacRae, "The *Gospel of Truth*," 1:86, tr. mine.

[34] *Gos. Truth* NHC I 19.28–36, text in Attridge and MacRae, "The *Gospel of Truth*," 1:86, tr. mine.

[35] *Gos. Truth* NHC I 21.2–5. On this theme see now Kreps, *Crucified Book*.

[36] *Gos. Truth* NHC I 21.11–18; see also Mazur, *Platonizing Sethian Background*, 174 n. 109.

[37] *Gos. Truth* NHC I 21.28–37, text in Attridge and MacRae, "The *Gospel of Truth*," 1:88, tr. mine. The passage has also been flagged in the context of the question of ancient *gnōstikoi* by Weiß, *Frühes Christentum*, 42 n. 105; Schmid, *Christen und Sethianer*, 78 n. 335.

[38] *Gos. Truth* NHC I 24.28–25; similarly, 26.23–26, 30.6–12.

from multiplicity to unity, consuming matter in oneself, like fire, and (like) darkness by light, death by life!"[39] "Therefore," the text continues,

> if someone knows (ογεει εqϣacγνε), he derives from above. When he is called, he listens, he answers, and he turns to the one who has called him and goes up to him, and he understands (ϣaqm̄ne) how it is that he was called. When he knows, he does the will (εqcaγνε ϣaqειρε n̄pογωϣε) of the one who called him; he wants to please him; he receives rest; the name of the one (above) is his. Whoever will know (πετνacγνε) in this way understands (ϣa̤qm̄ne) from where he has come, and to where he is going. He understands in the manner of someone who was drunk; he returned from his drunkenness.[40]

Finally, *Gos. Truth*'s interpretation of the parable of the lost sheep (Luke 15:3–7) is interrupted with an injunction, in the second-person plural, that addresses the audience as "children of interior knowledge (νιϣnρε n̄τε pm̄ne n̄ϩnτ):"

> Even on the Sabbath did he labor on behalf of the sheep who he found fallen into the pit. He saved the sheep, bringing him up from the pit, so that you might know deep inside – you are children of interior knowledge (n̄τωτn̄ νε νιϣnρε n̄τε pm̄ne n̄ϩnτ)![41] – what the Sabbath is, that day where it is not right for salvation to be idle, so that you may speak from the day above where there is no night, and from the light which is not eclipsed, for it is perfect. So, speak from the heart….[42]

The *Tripartite Tractate* (NHC I,5) employs so many of the same ideas, themes, and metaphors as *Gos. Truth* that some relationship between the two texts in antiquity prior to their both being copied into NHC I is likely.[43] Among these is the notion of the deity as an utterly transcendent but self-knowing first principle, the Father, whose parts are unknowing of Him.[44] Here too, a savior is eventually sent to human beings

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[39] *Gos. Truth* NHC I 25.12–19, text in Attridge and MacRae, "The *Gospel of Truth*," 1:94, tr. mine.

[40] NHC I 22.2–18, text in Attridge and MacRae, "The *Gospel of Truth*," 1:88, 90, tr. mine. See also Rudolph, *Gnosis*, 56; Sørensen, "cooγn̄," 137; and Pearson, "Gnosticism as a Religion," 100, n. 75 (recalling Clem. Alex. *Exc*. 78.2); Schmid, *Christen und Sethianer*, 78 n. 335.

[41] The scribe here uses a siglum to insert a line from the bottom of the page. The line was omitted by *homoioteleuton*. Attridge and MacRae suggest that the author of *Gos. Truth* here makes "an ironic use of the Gnostics' own terminology" (Attridge and MacRae, "The *Gospel of Truth*," 2:94, following Grobel, *Gospel*, 137, re: Ir. *Haer*. 1.13.7, text in Doutreleau and Rousseau, *Irénée de Lyon*, 205: τῶν τέκνων τῆς γνώσεως).

[42] NHC I 32.18–31, text in Attridge and MacRae, "The *Gospel of Truth*," 1:102, tr. mine.

[43] Previous research has rather focused on the possible relationship of the text to the teacher Heracleon as well as Origen of Alexandria; useful remains the discussion of Thomassen in Thomassen and Painchaud, *Traité Tripartite*, 11–19.

[44] For the first principle as self-knowing, see *Tri. Trac*. NHC I 61.34–62.5; Mazur, *Platonizing Sethian Background*, 174 n. 109; more generally, Attridge and Pagels. "*Tripartite Tractate*," 2:230–32.

to proclaim the knowledge of the Father. *Tri. Trac*. offers a taxonomy of the three kinds of reactions to the Savior, predicated on their mode of acquisition of knowledge (or lack thereof):

> On the one hand, the spiritual race is like light from light, and like spirit from spirit. When its head appeared, it ran up to him immediately. It immediately became body to its head. It acquired knowledge by revelation, instantly (ⲁⲫⲭⲓ ⲙ̄ⲡⲥⲁϒⲛ̣ⲉ ⲉⲛ̄ ⲟⲩⲟⲉⲡⲛ· ⲙ̄ⲡⲟⲱⲗ̄ⲡ ⲁⲃⲁⲗ). On the other hand, [the] animate race, as if it were a light from a fire, hesitated to accept knowledge (ϫⲓ ⲥⲁϒⲛⲉ) of the one who had appeared to it – much less to run to him with faith (ⲉⲛ̄ⲛ ⲟⲩⲛⲁϩⲧⲉ). It is by a voice that it is taught, and so it was enough; for it is not far from hope, in accordance with the promise, since it has received – so to speak – the deposit of the confirmation of what is to be. Finally, the material race is foreign in every way, as if it were something dark that will separate itself from rays of light, for its presence nullifies it, because it did not accept his advent – and moreover, it is hatred for the Lord, because he manifested himself.[45]

Tri. Trac. also gives an extensive description of the knowledge on offer from the Savior, taking the form of an array of glosses or even titles:

> That one who gave them knowledge (ⲥⲁϒⲛⲉ) of Him was His power, so that it may be grasped that knowledge (ⲥⲁϒⲛⲉ) is properly called: "knowledge of everything that will be thought (ⲡⲥⲁϒⲛⲉ ⲛ̄ⲛ̣ⲧⲟⲩⲛⲁⲙⲉⲉⲩⲉ ⲁⲣⲁⲩ ⲧⲏⲣⲟⲩ)," and "the treasure," and "the contribution to them, for the increasing knowledge (ⲡ̄ ϩⲟⲩⲉ ⲥⲁϒⲛⲉ)," "the revelation of those things which were first known (ⲡⲟⲩⲱⲛ̄ϩ ⲁ̣ⲃ̣ⲁⲗ ⲛ̄ⲛⲉⲛⲧⲁⲩⲥⲟⲩⲱⲛⲟⲩ ⲛ̄ⲱⲟⲣ̄ⲡ)," and "the path toward harmony and toward the Pre-Existent One" – namely, the growth of those who have renounced their own stature in the dispensation of the will (of the Father), so that the end may be as was the beginning.[46]

At this point, the text of *Tri. Trac*. becomes rather obscure, although it is clear that it presents an interpretation of the meaning of liturgical practices and terms, and that the language of knowledge is used repeatedly as a positive designation of the elect. It is important to note that these passages do not contrast "knowledge" and 'faith": on the contrary, *Tri. Trac*. binds "comprehension" (ⲡⲉϩⲟ) of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit to faith (ⲛⲁϩⲧⲉ);[47] similarly, the redeemed bear witness to "the Father,

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[45] *Tri. Trac*. NHC I 118.28–119.16, text Thomassen in Thomassen and Painchaud, *Traité Tripartite*, 214**,** tr. mine.

[46] *Tri. Trac*. NHC I 127.8–25, text Thomassen in Thomassen and Painchaud, *Traité Tripartite*, 234, tr. mine, with reference to that of Nagel, *Tripartite Tractate*, 80.

[47] *Tri. Trac*. NHC I 128.6–9.

the God whom they have confessed in faith (наϩтє), and who has granted union with Him in knowledge (сαγнє)."[48] *Tri. Trac*. here reminds us that many Nag Hammadi texts link or even identify saving knowledge with faith, while none of them oppose knowledge and faith.[49] An interpretation of baptism adds that "it (i.e., baptism – DMB) is also called 'bridal chamber,' because of the harmony and the indivisibility of those who have known that they have known Him (нαє[ι] є[та]γсαγнє хє αγсωογнϥ)."[50] Those who have come to know the Father in baptism may then – despite his transcendent and ineffable nature – be called "those who know, through him whom they have grasped (нєт·сαγнє αβαλ ϩїтⲛ̄ пєтαγтеϩ[о] ⲙ̄нαϥ)," namely, the Savior."[51]

Altogether, *Gos. Truth* does not use the word гнωстικос, but it does use locutions such as оγеει єϥсαγнє, оγеει єϥϣαсαγнє, пєтнαсαγнє, and нιϣнрє ⲛ̄тє пⲙ̄мє ⲛ̄ϩнт, that may be fairly reckoned as positive designations of the author for himself and/or the audience. In similar fashion, in *Tri. Trac*. we read of нαє[ι] є[та]γсαγнє, and нєтсαγнє, and extensive descriptions of saving knowledge. Significantly, this knowledge is not opposed to faith, but coupled with it.

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[48] *Tri. Trac*. 128.15–19, text Thomassen in Thomassen and Painchaud, *Traité Tripartite*, 236**,** tr. mine, with reference to that of Nagel, *Tractatus Tripartitus*, 81.

[49] A crucial point rightly emphasized by M. Williams, "Was There a Gnostic Religion," 71, re: this passage from *Tri. Trac*. as well as *Treat. Res*. (below, in this note), as well as *1 Apoc. Jas*. NHC V 29.19–27 (the parallel text in CT 16.7–16 is poorly preserved); *Apoc. Pet*. NHC VII 77.21–22 sic (typo for 78.21–22?; cf. also 76.2–4); *Ep. Pet. Phil*. 135.7, 140.18–19; *Test. Truth* NHC IX 49.7–10; Ir. *Haer*. 1.24.2 (on Satornilus); followed by Burns, "Gnosticism," 17. Additional evidence includes *Gos. Phil*. NHC II 79.22–25 and *Par. Shem* NHC VII passim, discussed below. Gnosis and faith are also coupled in two other texts from NHC I, the *Apocryphon of James* and the *Treatise on the Resurrection*. To be sure, *Ap. Jas*. does emphasize salvation through knowledge: "This is also how it is possible for you to receive for yourselves the kingdom of heaven—something you will not find, unless you receive it through knowledge" (NHC I 8.23–27, text F. Williams, "*Apocryphon of James*," 1:40, tr. mine; see further [9].18–23, 12.20–22). But cf. 14.8–10, text F. Williams, "*Apocryphon of James*," 1:48, tr. mine: "But you, through faith [and] knowledge, have received unto yourselves the kingdom!" Similarly *Treat. Res*. NHC I <46>.19–29, text Peel, "*Treatise on the Resurrection*," 1:150, 152, tr. mine, with reference to that of Schenke, "'Der Brief an Rheginus'," 1:51: "Just as that which is believed in is great, <great> are those who believe! The consciousness (нєєγє) of the saved shall not perish. The mind of those who have known him (нєтаϩсоγωωнϥ) shall not perish. Therefore, we are elected to salvation and redemption, having been slated from the beginning not to fall into the mindlessness of those who are without knowledge (нєтоєι ⲛ̄атсαγнє)…" See further Peel, "*Treatise on the Resurrection*," 2:171.

[50] *Tri. Trac*. 128.33–36, text Thomassen in Thomassen and Painchaud, *Traité Tripartite*, 238, tr. mine. Nagel (*Tractatus Tripartitus*, 81) emends the text to "…und der Ungetrenntheit derer, die erkannt [haben], daß sie erkannt<worden sind>" (αγсоγωн<оγ>), per *Gos. Tr.* NHC I 19.32–34, a move whose merits are peripheral to the present investigation.

[51] *Tri. Trac*. NHC I 129.28–34, text Thomassen in Thomassen and Painchaud, *Traité Tripartite*, 240, tr. mine: "This is what is found that belongs to Him, with an unspeakable and ineffable character, so as to come into being amongst those who know, through him whom they have grasped – namely, the one [unto] whom they have rendered [glory]."

Nag Hammadi Codex II

Read closely, three myths in NHC II that valorize Adam and Eve's eating from the Tree of Knowledge – the *Apocryphon of John* (NHC II,1), *Nature of the Rulers* (NHC II,4) and on the *Origin of the World* (NHC II,5) – could all be taken to be telling compelling stories whose primary message is that salvation is knowledge, particularly of the spiritual human being's divine nature and concomitant superiority to the demiurge, his minions, and the material cosmos.[52] However, I set aside this evidence here, as it does not include any (to me) clear self-designations of the elect and/or audience with reference to knowledge that are isolable phrases, like those discussed above in NHC I. An exception presents itself in *Nat. Rul*., which closes with a sort of 'apocalypse of Norea,' sister of Seth. Having been saved from the clutches of the archons by the great angel "Eleleth, ⲧⲙⲛⲧⲣⲙ̄ⲛ̄ⲭⲛⲧ ('wisdom, understanding'),"[53] she then engages in a revelation-dialogue with this benevolent celestial being. The dialogue culminates in his prediction of the triumph of Norea's descendants, the elect, who are saved thanks to their possession of knowledge:

> You and your offspring belong to the Father who has existed from the beginning; it is from heaven above, out of the imperishable light, that their souls have come. For this reason, the authorities will not be able to approach them, thanks to the Spirit of Truth who dwells in them. And whosever has come to know this path (ⲛ̄ⲧⲁϩⲥⲟⲩⲱⲛ ⲧⲉⲓϩⲟⲇⲟⲥ) is immortal amongst mortal human beings. But that seed shall not appear now; rather, after three generations, it shall manifest, having thrown off the bondage of the error of (the) authorities.[54]

Eleleth then closes the text with a vigorous sermon in which the "Children of Light" ascend to their heavenly abode, the authorities are overthrown, and "all the Children of Light shall truly know the truth and their root (ⲛ̄ϣⲟⲩⲣⲉ ⲧⲏⲣⲟⲩ ⲙ̄ⲡⲟⲩⲟⲉⲓⲛ ⲥⲉⲛⲁⲥⲟⲩⲱⲛ ⲧⲁⲗⲏⲑⲉⲓⲁ ⲙⲙ̄ ⲧⲟⲩⲛⲟⲩⲛⲉ ϩⲛ̄ ⲟⲩⲙⲉ) and the Father of the Entirety and the Holy Spirit."[55]

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[52] *Ap. John* NHC II 22.3–18 and par.; *Nat. Rul*. NHC II 89.31–90.18; *Orig. World* NHC II 118.34–119.19. For the reading of these texts offered here, see Burns, "Providence, Creation, and Gnosticism"; similarly, Rasimus, *Paradise Reconsidered*, 132, 141–142, 145, 154–155.

[53] NHC II 93.8–9. *σύνησις, φρόνησις, Crum, *Coptic Dictionary*, 715a.

[54] NHC II 96.19–31, text Layton, "*Hypostasis of the Archons*," 256, tr. mine. On the role that salvific knowledge plays in is passage, see Kaiser, *Hypostase*, 340–41, also recalling *Dial. Sav*. NHC III [145].14–22 (see below, n. 68).

[55] NHC II 97.13–16, text Layton, "*Hypostasis of the Archons*," 258, tr. mine.

Nonetheless, several other texts in Nag Hammadi Codex II also identify the elect and/or their audience(s) in terms of knowledge. *Gospel of Thomas* (NHC II,2) logion 3 intones, "When you come to know yourselves, then you will be known (ϩοταν ετετῆϣανcογων τηγτῆ τοτε cενacογω(ν) τηνε). And you will understand (ειμε) that it is you who are children of the living father. But if you do not come to know yourselves, then you are in poverty, and it is you who are the poverty."[56] Logion 105 focuses not on self-knowledge, but knowledge of the divine parents: "Jesus said, 'Whoever knows (cογων) the father and mother will be called the offspring of a prostitute'."[57] The *Gospel of Philip* (NHC II,3) features an exegesis of the tree of knowledge,[58] followed a few pages later by a description of "the one who possesses knowledge:

> The one who has knowledge (πετεγῆταϥ ϭmay ῆττνωcιc) of the truth is a free man, and the free man does not sin (John 8:32). For 'he who sins is a slave to sin' (John 8:34). Truth is the mother, but knowledge is the mingling (ττνωcιc πε πτωτ). Those to whom it is not given to sin are called 'free' by the world. The knowledge of the truth (ττνωcιc ῆταλθηεια) makes these to whom it is not given to sin arrogant…and it elevates them over everything, but love edifies (cf. 1 Cor 8:1, 13:1–13). And the one who has been made free through knowledge (πεταϩρ̄ ελεγθερος ⲇε ϩιτῆ ττνωcιc) is a slave because of love for those who have not yet been able to take up the [freedom] of knowledge (γνωcιc), [but] knowledge makes them capable [of] becoming free.[59]

Significantly, like *Tri. Trac*. and other Nag Hammadi texts, *Gos. Phil*. does not contrast salvific knowledge with faith, but couples the two faculties.[60] Finally, the *Book of Thomas* (NHC II,7) opens with a famous passage in which the savior tells Thomas he will become known as "the one who knows himself":

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[56] *Gos. Thom*. NHC II 32.26–33.5, text Layton in Layton and Lambdin, "Gospel According to Thomas," 54, tr. Layton, *Gnostic Scriptures*, 560, slightly modified. See also Mazur, *Platonizing Sethian Background*, 174 n. 109. Cf. also logion 5, NHC II 33.10–14.

[57] *Gos. Thom.* NHC II 50.16–18, text Layton in Layton and Lambdin, "Gospel According to Thomas," 90, tr. Layton, *Gnostic Scriptures*, 586, modified. There are also a number of logia that, somewhat less directly, describe the elect or ideal audience of the text in terms of their acquisition of knowledge—logia 18, 19, and 69. Relevant as well is the recurring theme of 'seeking and finding,' on which see Attridge, "'Seeking' and 'Asking'."

[58] *Gos. Phil*. NHC II 74.1–12.

[59] *Gos. Phil*. NHC II 77.15–19, text and tr. Lundhaug, *Images*, 520–21, slightly modified. See also Rudolph, *Gnosis*, 56; Layton, *Gnostic Scriptures*, 493 (despite his statement that "it is striking that the term 'acquaintance' (*gnōsis*) plays only a very minor role in the excerpts," Layton, *Gnostic Scriptures*, 460). Cf. also NHC II 76.17–22 (on self-knowledge—per Mazur, *Platonizing Sethian Background*, 174 n. 109), 84.10–11.

[60] For the four virtues γνωcιc, πιcτιc, ϩελπιc, and ⲁγaπη, see *Gos. Phil*. NHC II 79.22–25.

> Now since it has been said that you are my twin and true companion, examine yourself and learn who you are, in what way you exist, and how you will come to be. Since you are called my brother, it is not fitting that you be without knowledge of yourself (ⲉⲕⲟ ⲛ̄ⲁⲧⲥⲟⲟⲩⲛⲉ ⲉⲣⲟⲕ ⲙ̄ⲙⲓⲛ ⲙ̄ⲙⲟⲕ). And I know that you have understood (ⲁⲕⲙ̄ⲙⲉ), because you had already understood that I am the knowledge of the truth (ⲁⲛⲟⲕ ⲡⲉ ⲡⲥⲟⲟⲩⲛ ⲛ̄ⲧⲙⲛⲉ). So, while you accompany me, although you are without knowledge (ⲕⲁⲛ ⲛ̄ⲧⲁⲕ ⲟⲩⲁⲧⲥⲟⲟⲩⲛ), you have (in fact) already come to know (ⲁⲕⲟⲩⲱ ⲉⲕⲥⲟⲟⲩⲛⲉ), and you will be called 'the one who knows himself' (ⲡⲣⲉϥⲥⲟⲟⲩⲛⲉ ⲉⲣⲟϥ ⲙ̄ⲙⲓⲛ ⲙ̄ⲙⲟϥ). For he who has not known himself has known nothing, but he who has known himself (ⲡⲉⲛⲧⲁϥⲥⲟⲩⲱⲛϥ ⲇⲉ ⲟⲩⲁⲁⲧϥ) has at the same time already come to possess knowledge (ϫⲓ ⲥⲟⲟⲩⲛⲉ) about the depth of the universe. So, then you my brother Thomas have beheld what is obscure to men, that is, what they stumble against because they do not have knowledge (ⲉⲛⲥⲉⲥⲟⲟⲩⲛ ⲁⲛ).[61]

The knowledge that Thomas possesses, and that those who stumble do not possess, is knowledge of the ascetic life: avoidance of intercourse, mastery over the flames of the passions, and perseverance in the battle with demons.[62]

In sum, as with NHC I, the term ⲅⲛⲱⲥⲧⲓⲕⲟⲥ is nowhere to be found in NHC II. Rather, one reads of ⲛ̄ⲧⲁϩⲥⲟⲩⲱⲛ ⲧⲉⲓϩⲟⲇⲟⲥ (i.e., ⲛ̄ⲱϩⲣⲉ ⲧⲏⲣⲟⲩ ⲙ̄ⲡⲟⲩⲟⲉⲓⲛ), ⲡⲉⲧⲉⲩⲛ̄ⲧⲁϥ ⲙ̄ⲙⲁⲩ ⲛ̄ⲧⲧⲛⲱⲥⲓⲥ, ⲡⲣⲉϥⲥⲟⲟⲩⲛⲉ ⲉⲣⲟϥ ⲙ̄ⲙⲓⲛ ⲙ̄ⲙⲟϥ, and ⲡⲉⲛⲧⲁϥⲥⲟⲩⲱⲛϥ ⲟⲩⲁⲁⲧϥ.

Nag Hammadi Codices III, IV, and V

Codices III, IV, and V are comprised practically entirely of apocalypses, the majority of which are concerned with events prior to or immediately following the creation of the world and humanity. Only the *Apocalypse of Paul* (NHC V,2), *First Apocalypse of James* (NHC V,3), *Second Apocalypse of James* (NHC V,4) mainly describe events taking place in the 'present' of the Roman Empire, where use of contemporary Christian designations for exceptional people would fit the narrative.[63]

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[61] *Bk. Thom*. NHC II 138.7–20, text Layton, tr. Turner, in Layton and Turner, "Book of Thomas," 180–81, slightly modified. The example is noted widely with respect to the question of ancient *gnōstikoi*: see Holzhausen, "Gnostizismus," 66; Marjanen, "From the Pastorals," 2 n. 3; Schmid, *Christen und Sethianer*, 78 n. 335; Mazur, *Platonizing Sethian Background*, 174 n. 109; cf. also Layton, *Gnostic Scriptures*, 592.

[62] See now Lundhaug, "'This is the Teaching'." As Lundhaug observes, these themes all obtain parallels in Egyptian monastic literature (and, in most cases, Platonist philosophy). I thank Prof. Lundhaug for sharing a copy of his paper with me in advance of its publication.

[63] I thus set these texts against *Holy Book* (NHC III,2; IV,2), *Eug*. (NHC III,3; V,1), and *Apoc*. *Adam*

The sprawling work known as the *Holy Book of the Great Invisible Spirit* (NHC III,2; IV,2) describes the elect as individuals characterized by their possession of saving knowledge: "This is the race which came forth through Edokla, for she gave birth to the Word of Truth and Justice, the source of the seed of eternal life which is with those who shall endure because of the knowledge of their emanation (ⲛⲉⲧⲛⲁϩγⲡⲟⲙⲓⲛⲉ ⲉⲧⲃⲉ ⲡⲥⲟⲟγⲛ ⲛ̄ⲧⲉγⲁⲡⲟϩⲣⲟⲓⲁ)."[64] The text eventually shifts to liturgical discussion, where it is said of baptizants that "they shall know (ⲥⲟγⲛ) their receivers" (presumably, angelic baptizers present at the baptism).[65] *Eugnostos the Blessed* (NHC III,3; V,1) and the *Wisdom of Jesus Christ* (NHC III,4; BG,2), on the other hand, have much to say about divine cognition, but for the most part not in positive or self-designations. Rather, *Eugnostos*, true to its name, closes by promising that its contents are "knowledge that is pure (ⲥⲟⲟγⲛ ⲉϥⲧⲟγⲃⲛⲟγ)" – the implication being that the knowledge is superior by its revealed nature, unlike the opinions of the philosophers denigrated at the beginning of the text.[66] *Wisd. Jes. Chr*., on the other hand, does describe two tiers of salvation articulated with respect to saving knowledge: between "whoever knows the Father in pure knowledge (ⲡⲉⲧⲥⲟⲟγⲛ ⲙ̄ⲡⲓⲱⲧ ϩⲛ ⲟγⲥⲟⲟγⲛ ⲉϥⲟγⲁⲁⲃ)" and "whoever knows the Son of Man (ⲡⲉⲧⲥⲟⲟγⲛ ⲙ̄ⲡⲱϩⲣⲉ ⲙ̄ⲡⲣⲱⲙⲉ)" as individuals who will dwell in the "Repose" (superior) and the "ogdoad" (inferior), respectively.[67] Meanwhile, the unfortunately fragmentary *Dialogue of the Savior* (NHC III,5), impeccably edited and translated by the honorand of this volume, makes brief but tantalizing mention of one who knows himself, and seems to state that those who pursue the path of knowledge will be protected from the archons, but neither passage is well-preserved.[68]

(NHC V,5). Meanwhile, while *Ap. Jo*. (NHC III,1; IV,1), *Soph. Jes. Chr*. (NHC III,4), and *Dial. Sav*. (NHC III,5) are, formally speaking, apocalypses without heavenly journey in which Jesus Christ gives revelation to one or more of his disciples, the bulk of the content related in these texts concern primordial events. On defining apocalypses and inventory of the apocalypses contained in the greater Coptic Gnostic corpus, see Burns, "From the 'Gnostic Dialogues'," 345–350.

[64] *Holy Book* NHC III 60.19–25 (similarly NHC IV 71.30–72.7), text Böhlig and Wisse, *Nag Hammadi Codices III,2 and IV,2*, 132, 134.

[65] NHC III.66.4–5, text Böhlig and Wisse, *Nag Hammadi Codices III,2 and IV,2*, 154.

[66] *Eug*. NHC III 90.9–12, text Parrott, *Nag Hammadi Codices III,3–4*, 166 (cf. NHC V 17.13–15); see also Sørensen, "cooγⲛ̄," 138.

[67] *Wisd. Jes. Chr.* BG 123.2–124.9, text Parrott, *Nag Hammadi Codices III,3–4*, 174–175; cf. also NHC III 117.9–118.2. On this passage see further Rasimus, *Paradise Reconsidered*, 147.

[68] *Dial. Sav*. NHC III 132.14–17. Mazur takes the passage to be emblematic of Gnostic interpretation of the Delphic maxim (*Platonizing Sethian Background*, 174 n. 109). More clear is [145].14–22, text and tr. Emmel, *Nag Hammadi Codex III,5*, 90–91 (also noted by Kaiser, *Hypostase*, 141): "But you are even more aware of (ⲛ̄ϩⲟγⲟ [ⲱⲁⲧⲉ]ⲧⲛ̄ⲥⲟγⲱⲛ) [the path], this one, [before] either [angel or authority has . . . . Rather it belongs to the Father] and the [Son because they] are both a single [. . . . And] you [will] go via [the path] which you have [known] (ⲉⲧⲁⲧⲉⲧⲛ̄ⲥⲟγ[ⲱⲛ̄ⲥ̌]). Even [if] the governors become huge [they will] not be able to reach it."

Despite many deeply lacunose passages, salvific knowledge does seem to play an important role in positive designations of human beings in NHC V,3, V,4, and V,5. (I omit discussion here of *1 Apoc. Jas.* [NHC V,2]) in lieu of the better-preserved version in Codex Tchacos; see below.) *2 Apoc. Jas.*, poorly-preserved, does refer to salvation through knowledge on several occasions, but without obvious reference to a particular group of knowers.[69] The same cannot be said of the *Apocalypse of Adam* (NHC V,5), where ⲅⲛⲱⲥⲓⲥ looms large indeed and plays a key role in the soteriology of the text, beginning with its status as the primary characteristic of the prelapsarian Adam and Eve. *Apoc. Adam* opens with Adam reporting that, back in Eden, Eve taught him about "a word of knowledge (ⲟⲩⲱϫⲁϫⲉ ⲛ̄ⲧⲉ ⲟⲩⲅⲛⲱⲥⲓⲥ)" and they became like the angels, for they were superior to the god who had created them.[70] The archons grow angry and separate the primordial couple, "and the glory which was in our hearts left us – me, and your mother, Eve – and the primordial knowledge (ϯⲅⲛⲱⲥⲓⲥ ⲛ̄ⲑⲟⲣ̄ⲡ) which had breathed inside of us."[71] Consequently, Adam tells Seth, "after those days, the eternal knowledge of the God of Truth (ϯⲅⲛⲱⲥⲓⲥ ⲛ̄ϫⲁ ⲉⲛⲉϩ ⲛ̄ⲧⲉ ⲡⲛⲟⲩⲧⲉ ⲛ̄ⲧⲉ ⲧⲙⲉ) became distant from me and your mother, Eve."[72]

Accordingly, *Apoc. Adam* repeatedly denotes the elect as those who possess the "knowledge" that Adam and Eve once possessed, and of which they were divested when the creator and his powers enslaved them. They are "those [from] the seed [of] the people into whom [the] life of knowledge ([ⲡⲓ]ⲱⲛϩ̄ ⲛ̄ⲧⲉ ϯⲅⲛⲱⲥⲓⲥ), which had come from me [and] Eve, your mother, had passed. For they were strangers to him (i.e., the ⲡⲁⲛⲧⲟⲕⲣⲁⲧⲱⲣ)."[73] As the text exclaims,

> Blessed is the soul (ⲯⲩⲭⲏ) of those men, for they have known God through knowledge of the truth (ⲁⲩⲥⲟⲩⲱⲛ ⲡⲛⲟⲩⲧⲉ ϩ̄ⲛ̄ ⲟⲩⲅⲛⲱⲥⲓⲥ ⲛ̄[ⲧ]ⲉ̣ ⲧⲙⲉ)! They shall live forever and ever, for they have not been destroyed by their desire along with the angels, nor did they complete the works of the powers, but they have stood in the presence of knowledge of God (ⲟⲩⲅⲛⲱⲥⲓⲥ ⲛ̄ⲧⲉ ⲡⲛⲟⲩⲧⲉ), like light that has come forth from fire and blood![74]

The text closes by denoting the entire revelation a saving secret knowledge (ϯⲅⲛⲱⲥⲓⲥ ⲛ̄ⲁⲡⲟⲕⲣⲩⲫⲟⲛ), identified with a (non-water) baptism: "this is the secret knowledge of Adam, who taught it to Seth, which is the holy baptism for those who understand the eternal knowledge, through those begotten by the Word [and] the indestructible

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[69] *2 Apoc. Jas*. NHC V [47].7–11, [48].5–10.
[70] *Apoc. Adam* NHC V 64.12–19, text MacRae, "*Apocalypse of Adam*," 154, tr. mine.
[71] *Apoc. Adam* NHC V 64.24–28, text MacRae, "*Apocalypse of Adam*," 154, 156, tr. mine.
[72] *Apoc. Adam* NHC V 65.9–13, text MacRae, "*Apocalypse of Adam*," 156, tr. mine.
[73] *Apoc. Adam* NHC V [69].11–18, text MacRae, "*Apocalypse of Adam*," 162, tr. mine.
[74] *Apoc. Adam* NHC V [83].11–23, text MacRae, "*Apocalypse of Adam*," 188, 190, tr. mine. More passages are easily adduced: [71].10–15, [72]. 10–15, [76].8–15.21–27, [82].23–25, [85].12–18).

illuminators, [who] came from the Holy Seed: Iesseus Mazareus [Yesse]-Dekeus, [the living] water."[75]

While the works in NHC III, IV, and V do not contain any titles that recall the term γνωστικός, they are deeply concerned with revelatory, salvific knowledge, which is a pronounced characteristic of the saved in *Holy Book* and especially *Apoc. Adam*.

Nag Hammadi Codex VI

Positive and self-designations involving knowledge and salvific knowledge play important roles in two texts from Nag Hammadi Codex VI: the *Authoritative Teaching* (NHC VI,3) and the Hermetic *Prayer of Thanksgiving* (NHC VI,7).

Auth. Teach. offers particularly interesting data for the present investigation because the text is very much concerned with the divine origin of the soul and its opposition to the world of flesh, but in no way denigrates the creator, thus offering one of several important examples of Nag Hammadi texts that are very much removed from any reconstruction of the *gnōstikē hairesis*; rather, it is a Christian treatise very much at home in the world of fourth-century Egyptian asceticism.[76] In this work, it is the Word that gives knowledge of divine origins that liberates the soul from the flesh and the bestial, ignorant state that characterizes it during embodiment.[77] This ignorance is opposed to the saving knowledge of divine origins:

> And for all those who struggle to renounce the things which have come into being and to despise them, with a superior, incomprehensible knowledge (cooγn ecχocε ⲛ̄aⲧⲧeⲯoq), and to flee to He Who Is. And as for those who wrestle with us, as they are adversaries who contend against us, we are to be victorious over their ignorance through our knowledge (cooγn), since we have already had knowledge (enⲏ ωpⲡ ⲛ̄cooγn) of the Inscrutable One from whom we came. We have nothing in this world…."[78]

Yet the means by which one attains such knowledge is not a sort of knowledge of belonging to the Father (as in *Gos*. *Truth* or *Tri*. *Trac*.), nor an assimilation through contemplation to the self-knowing Invisible Spirit (as in *Zostrianos* and *Allogenes*,

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[75] NHC V [85],22–31, text MacRae, "*Apocalypse of Adam*," 194, tr. mine.

[76] See recently Tervahauta, "Story of the Soul's Journey," esp. 25–28, 256–62.

[77] *Auth. Teach*. NHC VI [22].23–34, [24].22–26. Cf. also the extended description of the soul's ascent from ignorance (in the body and flesh) to knowledge (transcending the flesh) at [30].28–[32].16; see also *Auth. Teach*. NHC VI, [32].35–[33].4.

[78] *Auth. Teach*. [26].14–27, text MacRae, "*Authoritative Teaching*," 268, 270, tr. mine.

discussed below); rather, the way to gain saving knowledge in *Auth. Teach.* is to flee the body and study the evangelists.[79]

The dominant cognitive faculties at work the *Hermetic Discourse on the Eighth and Ninth* (NHC VI,6) are not concerned with knowing as much as seeing, hearing, and thinking.[80] However, once the ecstatic séance led by Hermes has come to a close, he enjoins Tat to write down the revelation upon turquoise tablets and to deposit them at his temple at Diospolis;[81] Tat should also write an oath in the text, commanding its readers not to misuse its contents or oppose fate; rather, they "shall purely petition God for wisdom and knowledge (ογсофια м̄н̄ ογгнωсις)."[82] Such a prayer for knowledge is rendered in most vivid terms in the famous *Pr. Thanks.* (NHC VI,7), versions of which are also found at the conclusion of the Latin *Asclepius* as well as Papyrus Mimaut (P.Louvre 2391):

> And should there be teaching, sweet and simple, it is to us that it gives intellect, reason, knowledge: intellect, on the one hand, that we might conceive of you; reason, on the other, so that we might interpret you; and finally, knowledge, so that we might know you (ттнωсις дε хєкаас єннасоγωн̄к̄). We rejoice, having been illuminated by your knowledge! We rejoice, for you have taught us about you! We rejoice, for, while we are in bodies, you have made us gods through your knowledge (акаан н̄ноγтє ϩн̄ тєкгнωсις)![83]

As Mahé notes here, "c'est la gnose, l'éveil spirituel, qui joue le rôle principal dans l'élévation vers dieu."[84] The following text, a Coptic excerpt from the Greek *Perfect Discourse*, describes knowledge as a divine gift to humanity (despite the ignorance displayed by so many human beings), but the passages do not focus on knowledge as used in formalized positive or self-designations.[85]

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[79] *Auth. Teach*. [34].32–[35].8.

[80] See the indices in Mahé, *Hermès en Haute-Égypte*, 2:484, 494, 500, s.v. γνῶσις, єιнє, сооγн, respectively. р̄ноєι ("to think, conceive, understand") plays an important role in the ascent (NHC VI [54].23.30, [55].19–20), whose ultimate goal is "the understanding of the eighth that reveals the ninth (ттноησις н̄θογдоас єтоγωн̄ϩ євол н̄θєннас)" (text Mahé, *Hermès Trismégiste*. *Paralipomènes*, 109, tr. mine).

[81] *Disc. 8–9* NHC VI 61.18–63.14; on this scene, see recently Bull, *Tradition*, 369–371.

[82] *Disc. 8–9* NHC VI 62.28–33, text Mahé, *Hermès Trismégiste*. *Paralipomènes*, 109, tr. mine.

[83] *Pr. Thanks*. NHC VI 64.6–19, text Mahé, *Hermès Trismégiste*. *Paralipomènes*, 125, tr. mine. Cf. also 64.30–65.2.

[84] Mahé, *Hermès Trismégiste*. *Paralipomènes*, 124; cf. also 117.

[85] *Perf. Disc*. NHC VI 66.9–13, 66.22–25.30–34; [67].12–24, [68].12–20.

Nag Hammadi Codex VII

One of the strangest and most difficult of the Nag Hammadi texts, the *Paraphrase of Shem* (NHC VII,1) typically confounds scholars, and with respect to salvific knowledge it is no exception. The text does not use the words its modern exegetes want it to use. To be sure, salvific knowledge is one of its primary anchors: in the opening theogony, the primordial entities distant from divinity are characterized by their lack of knowledge about their origin ("their root") and its character.[86] Following the creation of humanity, however, two grades of elect come into being, and some of their titles are phrased with reference to salvific knowledge.[87] The elect are "those who know whence the root of the soul (ⲛⲉⲧⲥⲟⲟⲩⲛ ϫⲉ ⲛ̄ⲧⲁⲧⲛⲟⲩⲛⲉ ⲛ̄ⲧⲯⲩⲭⲏ ⲉⲓ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ⲧⲱⲛ)."[88] Later, Shem preaches to "those who possess understanding" (ⲛ̄ⲛⲉⲧⲉⲟⲩⲛ̄ⲧⲟⲩ ⲉⲛⲧ` ⲙ̄ⲙⲁⲩ), who shall quit baptism.[89] A mysterious passage on a figure named Rebouel mentions a woman who possesses the knowledge revealed by Shem (ⲧⲥⲉ̀ⲙⲉ ⲧⲁⲓ̈ ⲉⲧⲉⲩⲛ̄ⲧⲁⲥ ⲙ̄ⲙⲁⲩ ⲛ̄ⲧⲉⲥⲑⲏⲥⲓⲥ; *γνωστική?) who shall be martyred by decapitation.[90] One of the curious features of *Par. Shem* is its consistent use of the Graeco-Coptic loanword ⲁⲓⲥⲑⲏⲥⲓⲥ to denote the epistemological faculty possessed by the elect.[91] Conversely, the work makes wide use of the term ⲡⲓⲥⲧⲓⲥ to refer to the group or collective of the elect, and often it seems better translated as "elect" than "faith."[92] While *Par. Shem*'s usage of both of these terms is in keeping with standard Greek,[93] it has frustrated scholars because it does not fit into the tidy, modern theological paradigm in which 'Gnostic' texts oppose ⲅⲛⲱⲥⲓⲥ to ⲡⲓⲥⲧⲓⲥ.[94] We will return to this issue below.

Par. Shem is followed in NHC VII by two texts equal in obscurity, but not equally well-preserved: the *Second Discourse of the Great Seth* (NHC VII,2) and the

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[86] *Par. Shem*. NHC VII 13.19–23, 16.18–23.33–34.

[87] See Roberge, *Paraphrase*, 63–65, 71–76; with more detail, Roberge, "Anthropogonie."

[88] NHC VII 24.22–24, text Wisse, "*Paraphrase of Shem*," 74 tr. mine. Cf. also 47.16 –20 ("blessed are those who have understood (ⲛⲉⲛⲧⲁⲩⲥⲓⲙⲉ)…").

[89] NHC VII 38.3–11, text Wisse, "*Paraphrase of Shem*," 104 tr. mine.

[90] NHC VII 40.15–19, text Wisse, "*Paraphrase of Shem*," 104 tr. mine. See now Reaves, "John the Baptist," 73–74.

[91] *Par. Shem*. NHC VII 29.2–3.7–12, 36.7–11; cf. also NHC VII [3]6.1–2.

[92] *Par. Shem*. NHC VII 25.35–26.6, 26.11–15, 28.26–30, 30.27–31 passim. Roberge argues that faith characterizes the second, lower grade of the elect (Roberge, *Paraphrase*, 64–65, 72, 75).

[93] For αἴσθησις as "perception, knowledge," see LSJ 42b; for πίστις as the collective of Christians, see PGL 1086b–1087a, s.v. πίστις, II.

[94] Van den Broek writes of the text, "it is doubtless a Gnostic work, although the word 'gnosis' does not appear in it, being more or less replaced by the term 'faith' (*pistis*)" (*Gnostic Religion*, 120). Pearson asks if the use of the term ⲡⲓⲥⲧⲓⲥ in the text marks "Christian influence" (*Ancient Gnosticism*, 206). Williams, "On Ancient 'Gnosticism'," 107 rightly points out that the typological opposition of γνῶσις and πίστις Pearson brings to the material is the problem, not the solution.

Apocalypse of Peter (NHC VII,3). *Disc. Seth* is a deeply polemical work that offers a strong sense of corporate, elect identity that hails from a celestial sphere – the "Children of Light" or "Children of Truth"[95] – which is repeatedly contrasted with bitter opponents, characterized by their total lack of self-knowledge: "…When we descended into this world, coming to inhabit the world in bodies, we were hated, and we were persecuted – not only by the ignorant (ⲛⲓⲙ ⲉⲧⲉⲙⲁⲧⲥⲟⲟⲩⲛ), but by those who now think that they advance the name of Christ, vain in their ignorance (ⲙ̅ⲛ̅ⲧⲁⲧⲥⲟⲟⲩⲛ) – they do not know who they are (ⲉⲛⲥⲉⲥⲟⲟⲩⲛ ⲙ̄ⲙⲟⲟⲩ ⲁⲛ ⲭⲉ ⲛⲓⲙ ⲛⲉ), like unreasoning beasts."[96] The pre-incarnate Logos, on the other hand, describes the elect as "united by my knowledge (ⲉⲩⲣⲟⲧ̅ⲡ ⲇⲉ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ⲉ̀ⲓⲧⲟⲟⲧ̅ⲥ ⲛ̄ⲧⲁⲅⲛⲱⲥⲓⲥ), in word and peace."[97] At the conclusion of the treatise, he switches to the plural: the voice becomes that of the audience-congregation, and offers a powerful self-identification in terms of knowledge that offers departure from the present cosmos: "when we come from the places belonging to the world, we should present symbols of immortality from the spiritual union according to knowledge (ⲡⲓⲣⲱⲧ̅ⲡ ⲙ̄ⲡ̅ⲛⲓⲕⲟⲛ ⲡⲣⲟⲥ ⲟⲩⲥⲟⲟⲩⲛ)."[98] Meanwhile, in *Apoc. Pet*., the apostle is told that, thanks to his revelation, he shall be glorified in knowledge.[99] He is told that the elect ("the little ones," ⲛⲓⲕⲟⲩⲓ) will be dominated by their worldly enemies for an age, but then "the unaging of the immortal understanding shall be renewed" (ⲉⲩⲉ̄ⲣ̄ ⲃ̄ⲣⲣⲉ ⲛ̄ⲑⲟⲓ ⲡⲓⲁⲧ̄ⲣ̄ ⲉ̀ⲗⲗⲟ ⲛ̄ⲧⲉ ϯⲇⲓⲁⲛⲟⲓⲁ ⲛ̄ⲁⲧⲙⲟⲩ), and the little ones will come to rule over their former rulers.[100]

The *Teaching of Silvanus* (NHC VII,4), like *Auth. Teach*., offers an important specimen of an Egyptian ascetic text that is deeply interested in salvific knowledge but has no discernable relationship to the *gnōstikoi* of Celsus, Irenaeus, and Porphyry. *Teach. Silv*. Defines death as ignorance,[101] and exhorts its reader to put on "knowledge (ⲉⲡⲓⲥⲧⲏⲙⲏ)" rather than finery and jewels.[102] It encourages one to care

[95] For these titles, see *Disc. Seth* NHC VII 60.19, 70.7.

[96] *Disc. Seth* NHC VII 59.20–30, text Riley, "*Second Treatise of the Great Seth*," 172, 174, tr. mine; see further Painchaud, *Le deuxième traité*, 118. Similarly, NHC VII 65.2–9, 69.11–20. The ignorance of the author's opponents is mirrored by that of the archons (60.36–61.7, 64.1–14). For a useful, up-to-date discussion of how this difficult text describes the elect and its opponents, see Jiménez, "A Few and Uninstructed Souls."

[97] *Disc. Seth* NHC VII 67.34–68.5, text Riley, "*Second Treatise of the Great Seth*," 192, 194, tr. mine. See also NHC VII 68.7–13.

[98] *Disc. Seth* NHC VII 69.30–70.1, text Riley, "*Second Treatise of the Great Seth*," 198, tr. mine.

[99] *Apoc. Pet*. NHC VII 70.14–25; cf. 82.18–26)

[100] *Apoc. Pet*. NHC VII 80.8–18, text Brashler, "*Apocalypse of Peter*," 239, tr. mine. Brashler interprets the Coptic text as an "unaging, undying (age) of understanding" that will "be renewed," but Havelaar (*Coptic Apocalypse*, 46) reasonably suggests emending the text to ⲡⲓⲁⲧ̄ⲣ̄ ⲉ̀ⲗⲗⲟ <ⲛ̄ⲅⲉⲛⲟⲥ> ⲛ̄ⲧⲉ ϯⲇⲓⲁⲛⲟⲓⲁ ⲛ̄ⲁⲧ̀ⲙⲟⲩ, so that it is an "unaging, undying <race> of understanding" that will be renewed.

[101] *Teach. Silv*. NHC VII 89 12–14.

[102] *Teach. Silv*. NHC VII 89.17–23.

for the divinity within and assume one's place in God's household.[103] Self-knowledge in particular is emphasized: "But before saying anything, know your birth (cογωn πεκ̀πο)! Know yourself! – Namely, from what substance you come, and from what race you come, and from what family. Know yourself…."[104] Yet God is impossible to know as He is,[105] thus *Teach. Silv*. asks again, "what is it, to know God?"[106] The answer is to know Christ.[107] The text ultimately concludes that it is impossible to know God, Christ, or any of the other heavenly beings as they actually are, but knowledge comes through self-knowledge.[108]

The *Three Steles of Seth* (NHC VII,5), on the other hand, makes deep use of the combination of Sethian mythologoumena and Neoplatonic metaphysics emblematic of the 'Platonizing' Sethian literature, Greek versions of two of which – *Zostrianos* and *Allogenes* – Porphyry attests were circulated by Christian *gnōstikoi*, were critiqued by Plotinus's students, and against which Plotinus himself wrote in a treatise Porphyry titled *Against the Gnostics*.[109] In its first lines, the text announces itself as "The revelation of Dositheos (πογωn̄ϱ̄ εβολ) of the three steles of Seth, the father of the living and immovable race – things which he saw and understood (nαϊ n̄τaqnaγ εpooγ aγω aqcoγωnoγ)."[110] The emanation of the One, the Barbelo, is a "hidden one" who belongs to "a world of knowledge" (oγκocmoc n̄τεcooγn).[111] Barbelo knows the One, and "it is your knowledge that is the salvation of us all (τεκгnωcic n̄toc πε πenoγ̀αϊ τηp̄n̄)!"[112]

Salvific knowledge is key to all five texts of Nag Hammadi Codex VII, and comprises part of positive designations of individuals in *Par. Shem* (nετ`cooγn ̀αε n̄taτnoγne n̄tψγxh, n̄neτeoγn̄toγ ϱnt n̄maγ, taϊ eτeγn̄tac n̄maγ n̄τecθhcic), and perhaps in *Treat. Seth* (eγϱoτ n̄ ̀αε εβολ ϱîτooτc̄ n̄taгnωcic), and, *Apoc. Pet*. (πiaτ̄p ϱ̄λλo <n̄гenoc> n̄τe †ⲇiaⲛoiⲁ).

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[103] *Teach. Silv*. NHC VII 91.34–92.8, text Peel, "*Teachings of Silvanus*," 298, tr. mine.
[104] *Teach. Silv*. NHC VII 92.10–15, text Peel, "*Teachings of Silvanus*," 298, 300, tr. mine.
[105] *Teach. Silv*. NHC VII 100.21–31.
[106] *Teach. Silv*. NHC VII 101.11, text Peel, "*Teachings of Silvanus*," 322, tr. mine
[107] *Teach. Silv*. NHC VII 101.17–102.7; further, 110.14–15.
[108] *Teach. Silv*. NHC VII 116.27–117.9. Mazur takes the passage to be emblematic of Gnostic interpretation of the Delphic maxim (*Platonizing Sethian Background*, 174 n. 109).
[109] Porph. *Vit. Plot*. 16; Plot. *Enn*. 2.9 [33]. For several different approaches to this complex of evidence, see Turner, *Sethian Gnosticism*, 292–301, 709–724; Burns, *Apocalypse*; Mazur, *Platonizing Sethian Background*, esp. 231–273.
[110] *Steles Seth* NHC VII 118.10–15, text in Robinson and Goehring, "*Three Steles of Seth*," 386, tr. mine
[111] *Steles Seth* NHC VII 122.13–15, text in Robinson and Goehring, "*Three Steles of Seth*," 400, tr. mine; further, 123.16-18)
[112] *Steles Seth* NHC VII 125.13–14, text in Robinson and Goehring, "*Three Steles of Seth*," 400, tr. mine.

Nag Hammadi Codices VIII, IX, X, and XI

Codices VIII–XI are poorly-preserved, and contain no clear-cut positive or self-designations involving knowledge and knowing, excepting a sole attestation in a fragmentary passage from NHC XI,1. However, they contain so much language about salvific knowledge, ways to get it, and the people who have it, that some passages noted here may nonetheless be of interest.

The apocalypse *Zostrianos* (NHC VIII,1) describes the celestial journey and subsequent revelations about philosophy of deeply Neoplatonic content enjoyed by its eponymous seer, the grandfather of Zoroaster, who in the text's frame-narrative seems to have grown up, unhappily, among the Heracleidae.[113] Like the *Ap. John*, *Nat. Rul*., or the *Steles Seth*, it is a pseudonymous text that describes events taking place in a very distant past and whose narratival pose admits no possibility for use of self-identifications relevant to Roman scholastic contexts. While the manuscript of NHC VIII is damaged, *Zost*. does offer a number of descriptions of celestial beings and the elect with reference to ⲅⲛⲱⲥⲓⲥ. Heavenly glories are "those who have received true baptism, [in] knowledge (ⲛⲏ ⲉⲧⲁϫⲓ ⲱⲙ̄ⲥ ⲛ̄ⲧⲁⲡⲙⲉ [ϩ̄]ⲛ ⲟⲩⲅⲛⲱⲥⲓⲥ)."[114] A later taxonomy of the three kinds of immortal souls is obscure, describes two of these kinds in terms of knowledge: for repenters knowledge is enough, and they do not sin,[115] while ⲅⲛⲱⲥⲓⲥ figures particularly strongly in descriptions of the Self-Begotten (ⲁⲩⲧⲟⲅⲉⲛⲏⲥ) aeon, the souls who belong to it, and especially the celestial Adam and Seth, who dwell there.[116]

Later in Zostrianos's ascent, he ascends to the aeon of Barbelo – characterized by "the immeasurable gnosis (ϯⲅⲛⲱ[ⲥⲓⲥ] ⲛ̄ⲁⲧϯ ϣⲓ ⲉⲣⲟⲥ)" available there[117] – and learns of the transcendent first principle, the Invisible Spirit. Another key theme in *Zost*. is the Invisible Spirit's knowledge of His own self;[118] this self-knowledge of the supreme deity is likely identifiable with the "vastly superior revelation (ⲟⲩⲱⲛ̄ϩ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ⲉⲩⲥⲟⲧⲡ̄ ⲛ̄ϩⲟⲩⲟ) of the Invisible Spirit…through insight that is now in silence,

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[113] On the frame-narrative of *Zost*., see Turner in Barry, Funk, Poirier, and Turner, *Zostrien*, 483–495; Burns, "*Apocalypse of Zostrianos.*"

[114] *Zost*. NHC VIII 24.19–20, text in Barry, Funk, Poirier, and Turner, *Zostrien*, 282, tr. mine.

[115] *Zost*. NHC VIII 24.30–25.9; cf. also 27.21–24.

[116] *Zost*. NHC VIII 25.10–16 (the path to the Autogenes aeon is knowledge of the universe; cf. also 28.10–17, on the souls of the self-begotten, and 30.6–9.20–22), 28.27–30 and 29.13–15 (knowledge in the Autogenes), 30.9–12 (Seth gives ⲅⲛⲱⲥⲓⲥ to the immortal souls).

[117] *Zost*. NHC VIII [62].21–22, text in Barry, Funk, Poirier, and Turner, *Zostrien*, 356, tr. mine.

[118] *Zost*. NHC VIII [76].21–25: ⲁ[ⲩ]ϣ ⲟⲩⲅⲛⲱⲥⲓⲥ ⲛ̄ⲧⲁⲩ ⲉ[ⲩ]ϣⲟⲟⲡ ⲛ̄ⲥⲁⲃⲟⲗ ⲙ̄ⲙⲟⲩ· ⲙ̣ⲛ̣ ⲡⲛ ⲉⲧⲙⲟⲩϣ̄ⲧ ⲙ̄ⲙ[ⲟ]ⲩ ⲉⲩϣⲟⲟⲡ` ⲛ̄ϩⲏⲧ̄ⲩ· ⲟ̣[ⲩ]ⲉⲓⲇⲱⲗⲟⲛ ⲙ̄ⲛ̄ ⲟⲩϩ̄[ⲕⲱⲙ], text in Barry, Funk, Poirier, and Turner, *Zostrien*, 376. The syntax here is unclear due to the abundance of (self?-)referential pronominal suffixes, but the sense is clear: the Invisible Spirit's self-knowledge actualizes apart from Him as His "reflection and image." See further Turner in Barry, Funk, Poirier, and Turner, *Zostrien*, 610–615.

and through the first thought (ϯϣορϖ̄ ⲛ̄ⲉⲛⲛⲟⲓⲁ)," and "a first [thought] (ⲟⲩϣορϖ̄ ⲛⲉ̣[ⲛⲛⲟⲓⲁ])" mentioned elsewhere in the treatise, i.e., hypernoetic cognitive states apparently attainable by the seer himself.[119] Thus, Zeke Mazur has argued, "this passage thus appears to identify the self-knowledge of the transcendent deity with that of the human aspirant."[120] This language, as is well-known, is also key to *Zost*.'s sister Platonizing apocalypse *Allogenes* (NHC XI,3). Notably, while *Zost*. makes wide use of the Greek loanword ⲅⲛⲱⲥⲓⲥ to characterize the salvific knowledge possessed by saved souls, the 'mystical' knowledge of the transcendent first principle is not called ⲅⲛⲱⲥⲓⲥ at all, but is referred to by alternative locutions such as "revelation of the Invisible Spirit" and "first thought."

One of the most poorly-preserved codices from the Nag Hammadi hoard, NHC IX contains the *Testimony of Truth* (NHC IX,3), a polemical homily. The fragmentary state of the manuscript is particularly frustrating for the present investigation, since *Test. Truth* is not an apocalypse written "from" or even about primaeval events; rather, it mentions contemporary, rival sects and teachers by name, such as the followers of Basilides and Valentinus.[121] Like many other Nag Hammadi texts, *Test. Truth* contrasts right knowledge with the ignorant,[122] and, naturally enough, the elect are characterized by knowledge:

> And [it is] themselves [that they know] – namely, [who they are] where they are at [this time], and what is the [place in which] they shall find rest from their foolishness (ⲙ̄ⲛ̄ⲧⲁⲧϩⲏⲧ), [having reached] knowledge ([ⲉⲩⲡⲱϩ] ⲉϩⲣⲁⲓ ⲉⲭ̄ⲛ̄ ⲧⲧⲛⲱⲥⲓⲥ). [Now, as for these people], Christ shall relocate them up [to those] high [places], since they have [renounced foolishness], seeking knowledge ([ⲉ]ⲩⲧ [ⲙ̄ⲡⲉⲩ]ⲟⲩⲟⲉⲓ ⲉϩ[ⲣⲁⲉ]ⲓ ⲉⲧⲧⲛⲟ̣[ⲥⲓⲥ]). And those who [possess knowledge…].[123]

As Pamela Reaves has noted, "for the author [of *Test. Truth* – DMB], individualized, ritualized practices effectively replace group-oriented baptism and martyrdom."[124]

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[119] *Zost*. NHC VIII 24.8–12, [65].7–8, respectively, text in Barry, Funk, Poirier, and Turner, *Zostrien*, 362.

[120] Mazur, *Platonizing Sethian Background*, 192; also, 224. See further Turner in Barry, Funk, Poirier, and Turner, *Zostrien*, 533–534, 588. On the language of forethought viz. πρόνοια and divine omniscience in *Zost*. and *Allogenes*, see Mazur, *Platonizing Sethian Background*, 213–217; Burns, *Did God Care*, 299–306.

[121] *Test. Truth* NHC IX 55.1–5[6].9 (on Valentinus's disciples), 5[7].1–15 (Isidore and the disciples of Basilides), 58.1–13 (the Simonians).

[122] *Test. Truth* NHC IX 31.10–15, 31.22–32.8

[123] *Test. Truth* NHC IX 35.25–36.9, text Giverson and Pearson, "*Testimony of Truth*," 134, 136, tr. mine. See also 4[1].15, on which Mazur, *Platonizing Sethian Background*, 174 n. 109.

[124] Reaves, "John the Baptist," 78.

Thus, the text proclaims, "this then is the true martyrdom: when a person knows his own self, and the God who is above truth!"[125]

The sorry state of preservation of Nag Hammadi Codex X is lamentable. Page 17 of the codex includes a very fragmentary passage about the ignorant (contrasted with knowers?).[126] Even more tantalizing is the final word of the tractate: "those who shall know" (ⲛⲉⲧⲁⲥⲁⲩ[ⲛⲉ]), presumably the future recipients of the revelation granted to the seer Marsanes.[127] The preceding text is lost.

The first treatise of Codex XI, *The Interpretation of Knowledge (*ⲑⲉⲣⲙⲏⲛⲓⲁ ⲛ̄ⲧⲧⲛⲱⲥⲓⲥ) is also poorly-preserved, unfortunately. One passage seems to offer a glimpse of the aeon Sophia in the pleroma prior to her descent, bringing forth the (pre-existent) elect as "knowers," as the product of her union with the Word: "It is [the] Word whom [she received] as a groom. [(…) and] it is [of such a manner,] so that [(…)] also, it [(…)] and this one, [she brings] us [as] knowers (ⲧⲏ ⲛ̄[ⲧⲁⲥ ⲉⲓⲛⲉ ⲙ̄]ⲙⲁⲛ ⲁⲃ[ⲁⲗ .]ⲛ̣ⲣⲉⲕⲣⲙ̄ⲙⲉ)."[128]

The third treatise of Codex XI, *Allogenes*, on the other hand, is in a somewhat better state of preservation. Like *Zost*., Allogenes is an ascent apocalypse whose eponymous seer engages with angelic beings in discourses deeply informed by Neoplatonic metaphysics. In NHC XI,3, the discourses culminate in a vision of the transcendent first principle, the Great Invisible Spirit. Also, like *Zost*., *Allogenes* does not refer to "knowers" as such, but, as befits a Platonizing apocalypse, "knowledge" plays an enormous role in the ascent it describes. Allogenes is told by the angel Youel, "Should you [seek by a] perfect enquiry, [then] shall you know (ⲉⲓⲙⲉ) the [good that is] in you – then [shall you know your] own self (ⲉ[ⲕⲉⲉⲓⲙⲉ ⲉⲣⲟⲕ] ⲉⲱⲱⲕ), that one [who derives from] the God that truly [pre-exists]!"[129] Allogenes is on a quest to know the unknowable deity, who, paradoxically, knows itself.[130] Consequently, at the climax of the work, it is explained to the seer that not knowing, but being "un-knowing" is necessary in approaching the first principle; this is "a primordial revelation of the Unknowable One (ⲟⲩⲱⲣⲣ̄ⲡ ⲛ̄ⲟⲩⲱⲛ̄ⲉ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ⲛ̄ⲧⲉ ⲡⲓⲁⲧⲥⲟⲩⲱⲛ̄ⲭ)."[131] As in *Zost*., the faculty by which the seer – and the reader –

[125] *Test. Truth* NHC IX 44.30–45.4, text Giverson and Pearson, "*Testimony of Truth*," 156, tr. mine; cf. also 36,3–9; Mazur, *Platonizing Sethian Background*, 174 n. 109.

[126] *Mars*. NHC X 17*.2–5, text Funk in Funk, Poirier, and Turner, *Marsanès*, 278: ⲉⲧⲃⲉ ⲉⲩ [ⲙ]ⲛ ⲅⲛⲱⲥ̣ⲓ[ⲥ ⲉⲛ̄ ⲛ]ⲁⲧⲥ̣ⲁⲩⲛⲉ̣ ⲁⲩⲱ [. . .] [. . . . .]ⲭⲣ̄ⲕⲓⲛⲇⲩⲛⲉ̣[ⲩⲉ] [. . . . . ⲁ]ⲧⲣⲉⲫⲫⲟⲡⲉ.

[127] *Mars*. NHC X 68*.17, text Funk in Funk, Poirier, and Turner, *Marsanès*, 356. See also Poirier, in Funk, Poirier, and Turner, *Marsanès*, 468.

[128] *Interp. Know*. NHC XI [3].28–31, text Funk in Funk and Painchaud, *L'interpretation de la gnose*, 64.

[129] *Allogenes* NHC XI [56].15–21, text Funk in Funk and Scopello, "Texte," 212, tr. mine. See further [59].10–16. The acquisition and stabilization of knowledge is the primary means of Allogenes's ascent ([58].35–[59].6).

[130] *Allogenes* NHC XI [45].12–19.25–33; see further [51].8–11, [64].10–18.

[131] *Allogenes* NHC XI [59].26–32. See also NHC XI [60].8–12 on 'learned ignorance,' achieved by

approach knowledge of the transcendent deity is not termed gnosis, but a form of "revelation (ογωνϩ̄ εβολ)."[132]

Nag Hammadi Codex XIII

The first preserved treatise in NHC XIII, *Three Forms of First Thought*, also appears to make use of the language of Neoplatonism and, perhaps, the long recension of *Ap. John* itself.[133] It describes the triple descent of a female savior-figure, "First Thought" (πρωτεννοια). Coterminous with knowledge of the universe and even ineffable and infinite things, Protennoia manifests in history as progressively more sophisticated forms of oral communication, ultimately yielding transformative, divine knowledge – again, a subject on which the honorand of this volume wrote a pioneering essay, early in research on this text.[134] Through her 'linguistic manifestations,' intervenes in history on behalf of the elect, whose chief distinguishing characteristic is that they recognize her in her earthly incarnations (cf. John 8:40–47).[135] She calls those who know her the "Children of Light":

> It is in me that knowledge (ϥooγn) dwells, the knowledge of <the> infinites (cooγn n̄<ne>τemn̄τeγ ϩan)! [It is] I [who] speak in every creature, and I was recognized (ⲁγcoγωnτ) by the universe. It is I who give the voice of sound

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Allogenes at [60].38–[61].23. On the deity's unknowable self-knowledge, see [63].9–16. For close analysis of these passages and contextualization in late Platonic negative theology, see Burns, "Apophatic Strategies."

[132] *Pace* Layton, glossing Allogenes's "vision" of the unknowable deity as "*gnōsis*" (*Gnostic Scriptures*, 260).

[133] On *Three Forms*' relationship to the long recension of *Ap. John*, see Poirier, "*Three Forms*." On the relationship of the text to third-century Platonism – particularly regarding the curious hapax πρωτεννοια (*προτέννοια) – see Mazur, *Platonizing Sethian Background*, 211; Burns, *Did God Care*, 169–70, 298; on the work's relationship to Stoic philosophy more generally, see Bak Halvgaard, *Linguistic Manifestations*, 54–97.

[134] Emmel, "Sound, Voice, and Word." For discussion of Emmel's article, its impact on the early research of *Three Forms*, and the problem of interpreting NHC XIII,1*'s use of the terms ϩpooγ, cmn, and λογος/ϣⲁⲭⲉ, see Bak Halvgaard, *Linguistic Manifestations*, 54–61, 70–73, 96.

[135] *Three Forms* NHC XIII 36*.9–23, text Poirier, *Pensée première*, 134, tr. mine: "It is I who is laden with sound. It is through me that knowledge (gnwcic) comes forth, for [I] dwell in the ineffables and unknowables! It is I, understanding (ⲁicθncic) and knowledge (cooγn), uttering a sound through a thought. It is I, the sound that exists, giving sound to everyone; and they recognize it, since a seed dwells in their midst. I am the thought of the Father [and] through me did [the] sound first proceed, namely, the knowledge of the infinite things (cooγn n̄ⲛetmn̄τeγ ϩan); for [I] am the thought of the universal, united to the ineffable and incomprehensible thought. I revealed myself—yes, I—among all those who recognized me (ⲛeⲛtⲁγcoγωnτ thpoγ)." See further Bak Halvgaard, *Linguistic Manifestations*, 66–68, esp. 66: "Protennoia reveals how as the real, hearable Sound she functions as a promoter of Gnosis."

> unto the ears of those who have recognized me, namely, the Children of Light (ⲛⲉⲛⲧⲁⲩⲥⲟⲩⲱⲛⲧ ⲉⲧⲉⲛⲁⲉⲓ ⲛⲉ ⲛ̄ⲱⲟⲣⲉ ⲙ̄ⲡⲟⲩⲟⲉⲓⲛⲉ)![136]

The Children of Light are opposed on the terrestrial plane by the demiurge and his archons. The intervention of Protennoia breaks the archons' cosmic dominion, exercised through astral fate ([ϩⲓⲛⲁ]ⲣⲙⲉⲛⲏ), an event whose very significance they are unable to comprehend due to their ignorance (ⲙⲛ̄ⲧⲁⲧⲥⲟⲟⲩⲛⲉ).[137] The text climaxes with a description of a celestial liturgy, where angelic baptizers receive the baptizant as one of their own, for the mortal has shed ignorance and donned 'robes' of light.[138]

Codex Tchacos

Knowledge does not play a role in positive or self-designations in the Codex Tchacos, although there are many references to salvific knowledge in the *First Apocalypse of James*, and to a lesser extent the *Gospel of Judas*.[139] Significantly, the badly damaged text provisionally known as the *Book of Allogenes* (CT,4) opens with the protagonist reciting a prayer for knowledge of divine origins, deeply reminiscent of the famous definition of salvific gnosis given by the Valentinian Theodotus.[140]

Conclusions

Coptic locutions that could be translations, renderings, or reminiscences of the Greek term γνωστικός used as a positive or self-designation seem to be in short supply in the Nag Hammadi and Tchacos Codices, but they are not as absent as one might have been led to believe. They include:

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[136] *Three Forms* NHC XIII 42*.11–17, text Poirier, *Pensée première*, 148, tr. mine. See further NHC XIII 36*.19–23, 46*.33–36; Bak Halvgaard, *Linguistic Manifestations*, 83–84.

[137] *Three Forms* NHC XIII 40*.21–29; similarly, 44*.2–19, 44*.20–24. For evil angels unable to recognize Protennoia on her third descent, see 47*.19–28; cf. also 50*.15–16.

[138] *Three Forms* NHC XIII 49*.28–35; cf. also 48*.12–14.

[139] *1 Apoc. Jas*. CT 10.3–7, 11.20–12.8, 14.21–25, 16.12–15, 18.16–25, 27.16–24; *Gos. Jud*. CT [5]4.8–12 and esp. 34.13–18 (a reference for which I thank David Brakke).

[140] *Bk. Allogenes* CT <59>.3–12.17–25; Clem. Alex. *Exc*. 78.2.

NHC I: оγεει єϥсаγнє (*Gos. Truth*), оγεει єϥѡасаγнє (*Gos. Truth*), пєтнасаγнє (*Gos. Truth*), нιѡнрє ⲛ̄тє пⲙ̄нє ⲛ̄ϩнт (*Gos. Truth*), нає[ι] є[та]γсаγнє (*Tri. Trac.*), and нєтсаγнє (*Tri. Trac.*)

NHC II: ⲛ̄таϩсоγѡн тєїϩодос (i.e., ⲛ̄ѡнрє тнроγ ⲙ̄поγоєιн – *Nat. Rulers*), пєтєγⲛ̄таϥ ⲙ̄наγ ⲛ̄ттнѡсιс (*Gos. Phil.*), прεϥсоογнє єроϥ ⲙ̄нιн ⲙ̄моϥ (*Bk. Thom.*), and пентаϥсоγѡнϥ оγаатϥ (*Bk. Thom.*)

NHC VII: нєт`соογн ⳇє ⲛ̄таτноγнє ⲛ̄тѰγхн (*Par. Shem*), нєтєоγⲛ̄тоγ ϩнт ⲙ̄наγ (*Par. Shem*), таї єтєγⲛ̄тас ⲙ̄наγ ⲛ̄тєсѳнсιс (*Par. Shem*), perhaps єγϩотⲡ̄ ⳇє євол ϩⲓ̂тоотⲥ̄ ⲛ̄таγнѡсιс (*Disc. Seth*), and пιатⲣ̄ ϩⲗⲗо <ⲛ̄гєнос> ⲛ̄тє †ⳇιаноια (*Apoc. Pet.*)

NHC XI: ⲛ̄прεϥⲙ̄нє (*Interp. Know.*)

NHC XIII: нєнтаγсоγѡнт єтєнаєι нє ⲛ̄ѡнрє ⲙ̄поγоєιнє (*Three Forms*)

Moreover, the Nag Hammadi corpus is replete with discourses and narratives in which the elect are designated as individuals in possession of a special knowledge, often articulated in terms of knowledge of one's self and/or divine origins. Often, these are aetiological myths. These are not isolated instances, as is evidenced by the breadth of the material surveyed above.

At the same time, the theological opposition of 'gnosis' to 'faith' has been shown to be entirely spurious and without basis in the Nag Hammadi texts. To wit, while it is not obvious that the term γνωστικός was first used with reference to human beings in a heresiological context to mock and denigrate one's opponents, it *does* appear that the opposition of γνῶσις and πίστις does have such a pedigree, traceable back from Irenaeus to 1 Tim 6:20,[141] and that it is a misleading framework to use for interpreting cognitive and epistemological terminology in the Nag Hammadi Codices. To be sure, if the above discussion has demonstrated anything, it is that these Coptic manuscripts are absolutely replete with discussions of salvific knowledge; but in none of these texts is knowledge opposed to faith. Secondly, the terms гнѡсιс or even соογн are hardly used universally for salvific knowledge; other terms, such as єιнє, ⲁιсѳнсιс, and even ѡρⲡ̄ ⲛ̄оγѡⲛ̄ϩ євол are employed for the primary cognitive faculties at work in soteriological and/or mystical contexts; are these terms to be translated as 'Gnosis' in modern languages? At the risk of oversimplification, Gnostic 'in-group' language seems to have enjoyed more diversity than focus on the word "Gnosis" permits. All this speaks against use, still common in scholarship today, of the second-order term 'Gnosis' in the study of religion to denote salvific knowledge and movements oriented towards it.[142] Thirdly,

[141] See Williams, "Was There a Gnostic Religion," 71–72 n. 45. See further above, n. 49.

[142] For "Gnosis" as a term denoting religious discourse primarily concerned with knowledge, see e.g.,

the above survey does show that if one goes searching for "knowers," it is helpful to look at language about "knowledge." While the claim to possess knowledge was banal in the ancient Mediterranean world, it is unhelpful to divorce the γνωστικός from γνῶσις.[143] While the Nag Hammadi and Tchacos Codices do not contain the word ⲅⲛⲱⲥⲧⲓⲕⲟⲥ, in them speak a variety of voices that offer fascinating and compelling answers to the question: "so if you claim to be a γνωστικός, what does that mean?"

Auth. Teach. and *Teach. Silv*., two texts that place significant emphasis on possession and/or acquisition of saving knowledge, but which scholars generally agree are distant from the complex of ideas usually adduced as characteristic of the 'Gnostic school of thought,' are instructive. These two works remind us that the Nag Hammadi texts *in general* are deeply interested in claims to offer a special, salvific knowledge, and that some of them offer useful supplementary data to study of the term γνωστικός as used by Clement or Evagrius, rather than by the γνωστικοί mentioned by Celsus, Irenaeus, and Porphyry. These Coptic manuscripts' discussions of salvific knowledge and designations of exceptional people in pursuit or possession of exceptional knowledge, particularly of the divine origins of the self, certainly could have been of interest to some fourth–fifth century Egyptian readers with ascetic or monastic inclinations, as Lance Jenott and Elaine Pagels have argued with respect to NHC I and readers of Antony's letters.[144]

They would have been of interest to Christian Platonists of other stripes, including those of the *gnōstikē hairesis* as well. Here it is helpful to return to the studies of the history of the term γνωστικός with which this essay began. As Smith observed, Celsus is probably the oldest attestation of Christians calling themselves

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Filoramo, "Gnosis/Gnostizismus, I"; Markschies, "Gnosis/Gnostizismus, II;" and esp. van den Broek, *Gnostic Religion*, 1–12; Hanegraaff, "Gnosis." For criticism of the second-order term "Gnosis," see further Burns, "Gnosticism," 17–20.

[143] Cf. Layton's argument that "any implied claim to supply or have gnōsis ("knowledge") was not at all a distinctive claim. The only innovative element in the proper name *Gnōstikoi* was a matter of word usage: its application for the first time in the history of the word to a school of thought…" (Layton, "Prolegomena," 338–39; also, 344: "the claim to supply (or have) *gnōsis* was absolutely banal, but the use of *Gnōstikos* as a proper name was distinctive"). Yet elsewhere, Layton glosses the meaning of the term *gnōstikos* in 'Gnostic usage' as "people fit to have acquaintance (*gnōsis*) with god" (Layton, *Gnostic Scriptures*, xv; also, 9, 19). Cf. also Jonas's classic discussion of 'Gnosis' as revelatory, transformative knowledge (*Gnostic Religion*, 35, widely followed, e.g., by Sørensen, "ⲥⲟⲟⲩϩ," 137; Pearson, "Gnosticism as a Religion," 90). On the other hand, the present investigation has demonstrated that Rudolph and Weiß go too far in arguing that the term γνῶσις marked a particular, ancient self-designation (Rudolph, *Gnosis*, 57; Weiß, *Frühes Christentum*, 54, 56). Rather, as Pearson states, "it is essential for historians to know what kind of 'knowledge' it was to which the 'gnostics' laid claim" (Pearson, "Gnosticism as a Religion," 90; similarly, King, *What is Gnosticism*, 26).

[144] Jenott and Pagels, "Antony's Letters," esp. 571–575; for a similar trajectory of investigation, see Lundhaug, "'This is the Teaching'."

gnōstikoi, and the sense that he gives is that some Christians were starting to do philosophy, and to claim "to be the *gnostikoi* – the group of those able to know the things that mattered."[145] Given the exclusively Platonic-Pythagorean background of the term prior to its instrumentalization by Christians to describe special people, it seems that the term γνωστικός must have had purchase not just among Christians in general, but among Platonizing Christians interested in doing (or at least appearing to do) philosophy.[146] In this way, Williams and others are quite right to see in some early Christian usage of the term γνωστικός must have been "a claim to a quality," much as a modern Christian might describe oneself as a "Christian intellectual."[147] I would simply add that these intellectuals all seem to have been engaging Platonic-Pythagorean literature in particular, and as much is confirmed by our prime examples of early Christian usage of the term as a positive or self-designation, Clement of Alexandria and Evagrius Ponticus, in third and fourth-century Egypt.[148] Yet none of this is mutually exclusive with the possibility that some of these Platonizing Christians whose ideas, myths, and texts recall the "Classic Gnostic" or Sethian" corpus began to use the term as a self-designation already in the second century in the context of discussion with other ancient philosophizing *haireseis*, as Layton and Brakke infer from the evidence of Celsus, Irenaeus, and Porphyry.[149]

Indeed, with the exception of *Gos. Phil*., all of the Coptic positive or self-designations involving knowledge surveyed in the above are found in texts making some use of the Greek philosophy of the first centuries CE: *Gos. Truth* (ⲟⲩⲉⲉⲓ ⲉϥⲥⲁⲩⲛⲉ, ⲟⲩⲉⲉⲓ ⲉϥϣⲁⲥⲁⲩⲛⲉ, ⲡⲉⲧⲛⲁⲥⲁⲩⲛⲉ, and ⲛⲓϣⲛⲣⲉ ⲛ̄ⲧⲉ ⲡⲛ̄ⲙⲉ ⲛ̄ϩⲏⲧ), *Tri. Trac*. (ⲛⲁⲉ[ⲓ] ⲉ[ⲧⲁ]ⲩⲥⲁⲩⲛⲉ, ⲛⲉⲧⲥⲁⲩⲛⲉ), *Nat. Rulers* (ⲛ̄ⲧⲁϩⲥⲟⲩⲱⲛ ⲧⲉⲓϩⲟⲗⲟⲥ), *Bk. Thom*. (ⲡⲣⲉϥⲥⲟⲟⲩⲛⲉ ⲉⲣⲟϥ ⲛ̄ⲙⲓⲛ ⲛ̄ⲙⲟϥ, ⲡⲉⲛⲧⲁϥⲥⲟⲩⲱⲛϥ ⲟⲩⲁⲁⲧϥ), *Par. Shem* (ⲛⲉⲧ̀ⲥⲟⲟⲩⲛ ϫⲉ ⲛ̄ⲧⲁⲧⲛⲟⲩⲛⲉ ⲛ̄ⲧⲯⲩⲭⲏ, ⲛⲉⲧⲉⲟⲩⲛ̄ⲧⲟⲩ ϩⲛⲧ ⲛ̄ⲙⲁⲩ, ⲧⲁⲓ ⲉⲧⲉⲩⲛ̄ⲧⲁⲥ ⲛ̄ⲙⲁⲩ ⲛ̄ⲧⲉⲥⲑⲏⲥⲓⲥ),

[145] M. Smith, "History of the Term γνωστικός," 801–802, re: Orig. *Cels*. 5.61. See further Crégheur, "Pachôme et les gnostiques," 575–577. Thus, it seems that the positive self-designation seems to be older than the pejorative usage of the term (Crégheur, "Pachôme et les gnostiques," 587, *pace* G. Smith, *Guilt*, 161–162).

[146] "We may conclude that the *gnostikoi* probably got their claim to be *gnostikoi* from the Platonic-Pythagorean tradition" (M. Smith, "History of the Term γνωστικός," 800); "its adoption in Platonizing Christian circles as a proper name belongs precisely to this philosophical history" (Layton, "Prolegomena," 337; and, 348; *pace* G. Smith, *Guilt*, 132).

[147] Williams, *Rethinking*, 41–42; Williams, "Was There a Gnostic Religion," 76; already in 1936, Torm, "Das Wort γνωστικός," 70–71; similarly, Schröter, "Gnosis," 21.

[148] Cf. also Crégheur, "Pachôme et les gnostiques," 586.

[149] Crégheur, "Pachôme et les gnostiques," 586. On this reading, "Irenaeus uses the term *both* as a general designation for heretics *and* as the name of a specific, sociologically distinct sect of self-identifying Gnostics" (G. Smith, *Guilt*, 157–158, italics author's), a scenario which I do not find problematic. Rather, as M. Smith writes of the Gnostics known to Porphyry, "it is possible and not unlikely that these groups may have called themselves 'gnostics.' As we have seen, the term comes from the Platonic tradition and some small schools claiming it had been active in Alexandria for half a century" (M. Smith, "History of the Term γνωστικός," 805).

Interp. Know. (ⲛ̄ⲣⲉϥⲙ̄ⲙⲉ), and *First Thought* (ⲛⲉⲛⲧⲁⲩⲥⲟⲩⲱⲛⲧ ⲉⲧⲉⲛⲁⲉⲓ ⲛⲉ ⲛ̄ϣϩⲣⲉ ⲙ̄ⲡⲟⲩⲟⲉⲓⲛⲉ).[150]

And indeed, the core of what most scholars of Gnosticism – including the term's detractors – have taken to be the most distinctive characteristic of the Gnostic dossier is its innovative (and transgressive) approach to exegesis of problems in Plato's *Timaeus*, particularly concerning the character and activity of the demiurge, as Emmel recognized long ago.[151] Irenaeus claimed that Valentinus and his followers made use of the teachings of philosophers.[152] Porphyry's report on the Christian *gnōstikoi* describes a disagreement among philosophers regarding the authority of Plato and his works versus the Platonizing apocalypses like *Zostrianos* and *Allogenes*.[153] A witness usually forgotten in debates about the Gnostics, Iamblichus of Chalcis, simply lists the γνωστικοί (with zero invective) alongside Plotinus, Empedocles, Heraclitus, and Albinus in a brief catalog of philosophers' views on which of the soul's activities induce its decent into the body.[154]

Altogether, then, the term *gnōstikos* seems to have been used as a positive or self-designation by early Christian *Platonists* in particular, including those whose transgressive speculations about the *Timaeus* and the authority of Plato raised the ire of Irenaeus, Plotinus, and Porphyry. Phrases in the Nag Hammadi Codices like ⲛⲓϣϩⲣⲉ ⲛ̄ⲧⲉ ⲡⲙ̄ⲙⲉ ⲛ̄ϩⲏⲧ or ⲡⲣⲉϥⲥⲟⲟⲩⲛⲉ ⲉⲣⲟϥ ⲙ̄ⲙⲓⲛ ⲙ̄ⲙⲟϥ appear to be echoes of such usage. Meanwhile, over the course of the fourth and fifth centuries CE, Christian Platonisms beyond those found in Gnostic literature developed in number, sophistication, and increasingly conscious independence from the Hellenic (or 'heathen') Platonic tradition thanks to writers with close relationships to emergent monasticism like Evagrius, the Cappadocian Fathers, and other readers of Origen. Related to this

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[150] The broadly Platonic background Valentinian teaching is so well-established that I do not need to elaborate it here. For *Nat. Rulers*, see Kaiser, *Hypostase*, 169, 221, 230–231 (on the text's use of language about forms and images, and the world of forms more generally). For *Bk. Thom*., see Turner in Layton and Turner, "*Book of Thomas*," 176 (on imagery drawn from Plato's descriptions of the post-mortem fates of the soul). *Par. Shem* is an obscure text whose philosophical underpinnings are less well-understood, but for two differing discussions both engaging the Greek philosophical tradition, see Roberge, *Paraphrase*, 32–47; Burns, "Gnosis Undomesticated," 134–135, esp. 136 n. 20. On *Three Forms* and philosophy, see above, n. 133.

[151] Emmel, "Gnostic Tradition," 133; cf. Williams's discussion of 'biblical demiurgicalisms' (Williams, *Rethinking*, 51–52).

[152] Ir. *Haer*. 2.14.2, per Emmel, "Gnostic Tradition," 125.

[153] In connection with Iamblichus's evidence (see following note) it seems extremely unlikely to me that Porphyry's use of the term γνωστικός in *Vit. Plot*. 16 is blindly reliant upon Irenaeus's capricious usage and has no fidelity to how the individuals to whom he refers presented themselves to other philosophers (*pace* G. Smith, *Guilt*, 150 n. 51).

[154] Iamblichus, *De anima* 23. Notably, the context for the catalog is the disagreement "within the Platonic School itself" (ἐν αὐτοῖς τοῖς Πλατωνικοῖς) concerning the soul's activities (text and tr. Finamore and Dillon, *Iamblichus*, 48–49). Iamblichus simply understands the Gnostics to be one group of Platonists. See further Burns, *Apocalypse*, 150–152.

development, it appears, positive use of the term γνωστικός among Christians became unmoored from its earlier, Platonic context and come to signify Christian contemplatives leading lives of outstanding virtue in monastic contexts – and this, perhaps, is what we see in our few attestations of the term ⲅⲛⲱⲥⲧⲓⲕⲟⲥ found in Coptic monastic literature.

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