The journey of the Valentinian hero -
Outlining the imaginative world of early Christian apocalyptic narratives
A comparative study of the Apocalypse of Paul (NHC V, 2) and the First Apocalypse of James (NHC V, 3 & TC 2)

Eirini Bergström
Mid Sweden University
Department of humanities and social sciences (HSV)
Master Thesis in Religious Studies, 30 Credits
Supervisor: Jörgen Magnusson
Examiner: Maths Bertell
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Abstract

**Background:** This thesis aims to show that the narratives of the Nag Hammadi *Apocalypse of Paul* and *First Apocalypse of James* are written for a Valentinian audience. The purpose is to broaden the field of research on Valentinianism by showing how the authors and their implied readers composed and perceived the texts in question.

**Method:** Comparing the mythological language of the two narratives and their description of a hero’s journey in a transcendent reality it is possible to disentangle the Valentinian material from the imaginative world of the reader, a world consisted of ancient Egyptian and Greek mythology as well as Jewish apocalypticism and early Christian legends and traditions. The texts are also compared with new research in the field, other related Valentinian scriptures, the New Testament, and Christian Apocrypha.

**Results:** The texts are pseudepigraphic and written within a Jewish apocalyptic genre sometime during the late second or early third century. The symbolism and the diverse metaphors of the narratives indicate that the texts incorporate a specific soteriological message through embedded Valentinian mythology. The implied reader is to understand that the material world is an illusion and that the purpose of the initiate is to awaken the mind and acquire knowledge about the truth. By doing so the redemption of the believer’s spirit from its human body and soul leads to the spirits reunion with God.

**Conclusion:** The analysis of the texts points toward the fact that the narratives could very well have been used for catechetical or other educational purposes within a Valentinian community. The language and form of the two narratives fit to serve this purpose. In many ways, the reader has to be initiated within a Valentinian context in order to grasp the intended message.

**Keywords:** Gnostic literature, Nag Hammadi scriptures, Valentinians, Early Christianity, Comparative mythology, Apocalyptic literature, The hero’s journey.
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1 Introduction

Legend tells us one thing; history, another. But, every now and then, we find something that belongs to both.

Nick Fury (From the Marvel motion Picture “Thor”)

Found in the Nag Hammadi Codices in Codex V (NH V), two apocalyptic narratives using the pseudepigrapha\(^1\) of Paul and James evoke some intriguing questions about the use of their names and persona. The second text in Codex V is the *Apocalypse of Paul*\(^2\), hereafter *ApocPaul*. It is a short but quite eventful story about Paul’s vision through the heavens. The story begins with Paul being snatched up to the third heaven after meeting a child who promises to show him the way to Jerusalem. The child who is, in fact, the Holy Spirit in disguise, wants to reveal to Paul "the things hidden in those that are visible" (NH V, 2 19.13-14). Urging Paul to "open his mind" (NH V, 2 19.10) the Spirit takes him on a journey through the realms up to the tenth heaven where Paul finally meets his fellow spirits (NH V, 2 24.7-8).

The *First Apocalypse of James*, hereafter *1ApocJas*, is a revelatory journey not yet experienced. In dialogue form, Jesus describes James journey as a forthcoming event (NH V, 3 32.28-36.12). James, who is distressed about Jesus’ and his upcoming death asks his brother how to deal with these facts. Jesus tells him to calm down and not to fear physical death. What James really should be concerned about is what happens afterward. The soul’s journey through the realms is one full of traps and powers who will try to stop him at any cause. Jesus promises his brother to help him when he comes back from his own post mortem- journey. When he does, he gives James secret formulas and advice on how to handle the obstacles lying ahead. He tells his brother “not to be timid or afraid” (NH V, 3 32.22). The story ends with James martyrdom, vividly described in the Tchacos Codex (TC) version.\(^3\)

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1 Pseudonymus, falsely titled or attributed writings. The subject is discussed on page 35 in the present thesis.

2 The *ApocPaul* from NH V should not be confused with the Greek *Apocalypse of Paul*, a third century text of the New Testament apocrypha. That text, even called *Visio Pauli*, was well known during the Middle Ages and was probably the inspiration for Dante Alighieris *Divine Comedy*. That text was translated into Coptic somewhere in the 10\(^{th}\) century and is currently displayed at the British Museum. In addition to the *Visio Pauli* there was also another text called the *Ascension of Paul* which is still not found but mentioned by Epiphanius of Salamis in his *Panarion*.

3 Until 2001, with the discovery and restoration of the Codex Tchacos (TC), the only copy of the *1ApocJas* available was that of Nag Hammadi Codex V. In comparison, the two versions are quite similar in their stories but as some scholars suggest, they show no signs of dependency. (Johanna Brankaer and Hans-Gebhard Bethge, Codex Tchacos: Texte und Analysen (TU 161; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2007), 83–84). None of these exemplars are actually entitled “The first Apocalypse of James”. The version in the TC is titled “James” (\(\text{Tat} \text{TOX}\text{P}[\text{oc}] \text{NI} \text{K}2\text{P} \text{LOC}\)); 44.9–10). The title “The First Apocalypse of James” was given by Alexander Bühhlig and Pahor Labib in their discussion of the text. (Alexander Bühhlig and Pahor Labib, Koptisch-
Both of the texts were written sometime between the late second or early third century and as many other texts from Nag Hammadi they are considered to be “gnostic.”\(^4\) What did Paul and James represent to the early Christian readers\(^5\) of these texts? Why did the authors choose these historical figures in particular?

Reading the texts, we understand that both Paul and James stand in a close relationship to Christ. Paul as Christ’s dedicated convert apostle, and James as his righteous “brother.” They are both portrayed as characters with a privileged position, as bearers of Christ’s secret knowledge (gnosis). During their journeys through a complex mythical world, their personas seem to transform from

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\(^4\) The terms “gnostic” and “gnosticism” have been vividly discussed the last twenty years. The term “gnosticism” does not appear in ancient sources. It was coined by the philosopher Henry More (1614-1687) and used as a description of religions and beliefs that did not fit into the image of conventional Christianity. As Karen King correctly puts it, the term “gnosticism” became a finer word for “heresy.” I, therefore, understand the need of abandoning the terms. As modern constructions with negative connotations they can be misleading to scholars. See Michael Williams, *Rethinking “Gnosticism”: An Argument for Dismantling a Dubious Category* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996); Karen King, *What is Gnosticism?* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003). However, creating a more satisfactory definition of the phenomenon in the study of early Christianity has proved problematic. As with the term “religion,” it is difficult to completely abandon something so deeply anchored in scholarship. Personally, I try to use the terms “gnostic” and “gnosticism” as carefully as possible. When I do use them, I think of them in terms of Wittgenstein’s “family resemblance” theory. Like the term “religion,” also “gnosticism” does not designate one essential common feature of things that seem to be connected. The idea is that the term or definition should be seen as a family, a whole, that is connected by a series of overlapping similarities, where no single feature is common to all of the things. Some of these similarities concerning gnosticism, could for example be the eight defining characteristics of ancient gnosис according to Christoph Markschies: 1) The experience of a completely other-worldly, distant, supreme God; 2) The introduction, which among other things is conditioned by this, of further divine figures, or the splitting up of existing figures into figures that are closer to human beings than the remote supreme God; 3) The estimation of the world and matter as evil creation, and an experience, conditioned by this, of the alienation of the gnostic in the world; 4) The introduction of a distinct creator God or assistant: within the Platonic tradition he is called “craftsman”-Greek *demiurgos* -and is sometimes described as merely ignorant, but sometimes also as evil; 5) The explanation of this state of affairs by a mythological drama in which a divine element, one that falls from its sphere into an evil world, slumbers in human beings of one class as a divine spark and can be freed from this state; 6) Knowledge (gnosis) about this state, which , however, can be gained only through a redeemer figure from the other world who descends from a higher sphere and ascends to it again; 7) The redemption of human beings through the knowledge of “that God (or the spark) in them, and finally; 8) A tendency towards dualism in different types, which can can express itself in the concept of God, in the opposition of spirit and matter, and in the concept of the human being as constituted of body plus soul. (Christoph Markschies, *Gnosis: an introduction* (London: T&T Clark, 2003), 16-17).

\(^5\) With the term “reader” I also consider the listener of these narratives. Oral tradition was still frequently used in the first centuries and given the fact that literacy was not so widely spread, the majority of the audience must have been listeners. See: William Harris, *Ancient literacy* (Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1989). Harris gives compelling reasons for thinking that at the best of times in antiquity only 10% or so of the population was able to read.
Christian legends into Valentinian,\(^6\) mythical heroes. On their way to redemption (apolytrosis)\(^7\), Paul and James both receive and use the secret knowledge, at the same time revealing its mysteries to the reader. The knowledge is the ugly truth about the material world as an illusion and a creation of a lower deity. Moreover, the knowledge also consists of formulas, signs, and sayings that will keep the spirit safe on its way through the heavens. Above all though, gnosis is a comfort given the inescapable reality of death.

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\(^6\) Valentinianism was a form of Christianity that existed from the second to the seventh century and was based on the teachings of Valentinus. In many ways Valentinianism resembled proto-orthodox Christianity but it differed in its understanding of the nature of human beings, God, and the knowledge (gnosis) concerning these matters. The term “Valentinianism,” as a description of an early Christian movement and philosophical “school,” is as contested today as the term “gnosticism.” However, in contrast to gnostics, who as far as we know did not exist as an exclusive religious group, the Valentinians did exist as one, and they were known by their founder’s name. The big issue among scholars is therefore not if the Valentinians existed or not but rather on how they should be better understood. As a philosophical school? As a religious movement? Both? It all comes down to how members of the Valentinian movements interpreted their theology/mythology, that is if it was literally or metaphorically understood. This thesis hypothesizes that the ApocPaul and the 1ApocJas are Valentinian. Scholars argue about this subject and there is still no consensus regarding the issue. Given the fact that several scholars have classified the two apocalypses as Valentinian or possibly Valentinian, and that with good reasons, the hypothesis itself allows for a prolific comparison of the apocalyptic micromyth with the Valentinian macromyth. For scholars who agree that the ApocPaul is Valentinian or possibly Valentinian see Michael Kaler, Flora Tells a Story: The Apocalypse of Paul and Its Contexts (SCJ 19. Waterloo (Ont.): Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2008); Matthew Twigg, Becoming Paul, Becoming Christ: The Nag Hammadi Apocalypse of Paul (NHC V, 2) in Its Valentinian Context (PhD diss., Regent’s Park College, 2015); Trevijano Itcheverría, "El Apocalipsis de Pablo NHC V2: 17.19–24.9. Traducción y comentario”, Salm 39 (1981), 217–36. For scholars who agree that the 1ApocJas is Valentinian or possibly Valentinian see Nicola Denzey Lewis, Introduction to Gnosticism: Ancient Voices, Christian Worlds (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 83 and 185-187; April DeConick, “Apostles as Archons. The Fight for Authority and the Emergence of Gnosticism in the Tchacos Codex and Other Early Christian literature,” in The Codex Judas Papers: Proceedings of the International Congress on the Tchacos Codex Held at Rice University, Houston, Texas, March 13-16, 2008 (ed. A.D. Deconick; NHMS 71; Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2009), 243-288.

\(^7\) Apolytrosis is the process when the spirit becomes free from the material. I would like to describe this process taking place in two steps. First, the soul releases itself from the body, together with the spirit. Then the spirit releases itself from the soul. The spirit then goes up into the Fullness (the Pleroma), and becomes one with it. Apolytrosis is also considered to be one of the Valentinian sacraments together with Baptism, Anointing, the Eucharist, and the Bridal chamber.
2 Research Goals and Questions

By analyzing two early Christian apocalyptic narratives and in particular, their “gnostic” elements, I hope to shed some light on who their ideal reader could have been, and how he/she understood and decoded the imaginatively worlds of the stories. My hypothesis is that the apocalyptic texts in question were aimed at early Christian Valentinians. One way that the texts could have been used was within an educational, catechetical or exegetical context where the narratives were read and discussed within a given mythological and theological framework. This framework enabled the readers of the texts to discuss ways of salvation/redemption in a Valentinian way.

However, myth does more than so, both for the individual and for the community that believes in it. It inspires, helps to shape moral values, brings members of a religious community closer together and elevates the individual, thus motivating pro-social and affiliative behavior. The narratives in question depict two pseudepigraphic heroes with qualities that meant something for the interpreters of their stories. The journeys of these two heroes must have affected the audience in some ways, and the symbolic vocabularies found in them must, therefore, have been discussed.

To put this hypothesis to the test, the three questions that this thesis will try to answer are as follows:

- What constitutes the imaginatively world of the ideal reader of these texts in the late second and early third century? What mythological material are the texts built upon?

- How could a reader, one placed within a Christian educational/catechetical context, understand and appreciate these narratives of apocalyptic journeys?

- What in the narratives suggests that the ApocPaul and the 1ApocJas represent Valentinian thought? Could the hero’s journey in these two texts be compatible with Valentinian mythology?
3 Theoretical background and Method

3.1 Monomyth, micromyth and macromyth

In order to answer what kind of myth the apocalypses represent and what they could have meant to some of their readers, two theories of myth will be used. The first one is Joseph Campbell’s idea of the monomyth (the hero’s journey), and the second is the more contemporary work of Wendy Doniger, about micromyths and macromyths.

The monomyth was introduced to a wider audience in 1948 with Campbell’s book *The hero with a thousand faces*. The idea of a universal hero figure still provides us with enlightening insights about the power of myth and its significance for human psychology. According to Campbell, the phases of the monomyth reveal deep, unconscious, psychological patterns. The separation, initiation and return of the hero, represent the three liminal stages, or rites of passage, that are found throughout many cultures around the world.

The basic idea of the monomyth is that a hero is called to adventure into a world that he/she did not know exist. There, the hero encounters different kinds of obstacles, that he/she needs to overcome, but receives help along the way too. The most important part of the monomyth is when the hero faces a supreme male god. That god is often intimidating. To the hero’s aid comes then a goddess, who is maternal, caring and loving. The hero often marries the goddess and kills the male god. However, this does not seem to be the hero's intention at all. On the contrary, the hero seeks the approval of the male god, reconciliation, that is to be atoned by him. And the hero does so in a way, uniting with both the god and the goddess, thus becoming divine. This is to be understood as the psychological effect of parenthood upon one’s personality.

For Campbell, parents symbolize gods, who in their turn symbolize father and mother archetypes, which are components of the hero’s personality. For the individual who follows the hero’s journey then, those two components are his/her own ego and unconsciousness. According to Campbell the myth-maker lives out an adventure that takes place in the mind. Thus, it is parts of the mind that the hero is really encountering. The mythical world that the hero passes through in his adventure is life itself. The two worlds are thus one and the same.

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Although questioned by postmodern and post-colonial critics of religious studies, Campbell’s theories about a universal hero-myth still provide a prolific starting point for the intertextuality of the two narratives in question. The monomyth is highlighting the fact that certain features found in the revelations of Paul and James, derive from a diversity of mythologies in the Greco-Roman world. The narratives of Jewish apocalypticism, Christian legends, Greek, Egyptian, and Valentinian mythology, all share some important similarities in their way of describing what happens after death. The hero figure acts as an example of how to understand and face human mortality.

The cultures of the Mediterranean and Mesopotamian world, in that the Nag Hammadi material was composed and read, came together and shared their ideas, probably as much as they fought over them, creating new hybrids of religious thought and mythologies. When one looks at the interrogation scene of Paul in the *ApocPaul* for example, he must among other things provide the guards of the realms with the right answers in order to proceed his journey. This Question-Answer motif is traceable in several texts of the Nag Hammadi Corpus, like in the *1ApocJas*, *The Gospel of Thomas*, and *The Sophia of Jesus Christ*. But it can also be found in the Egyptian *Book of the Dead*, and on Greek Orphic gold tablets dating from 400 BC. These similarities and structures that specific myths are built upon, Doniger calls micromyths. They can be used as a starting point of explaining the mythical metaphors, and they can be counter-culturally understood as well. That means that the religious scholars of today and the ancient readers share a common ground of understanding, even though they come from entirely different cultures and are separated by several macromyths. So, as much as it is intriguing to look at the similarities searching for answers about origins, the disparities comparing the micro- and macromyth of the texts tell us a lot more. For instance, the redemption of the soul and spirit is a particular subject in both of the apocalypses in question. It is not about getting to the Elysian fields like a Greek hero, or “Going out into the day” in a second life like the Egyptians believed. It is not about being the highest priest of the heavenly temple of Jerusalem,


12 With the term intertextuality I mean a literary device that creates an ‘interrelationship between texts’ and generates related understanding in separate works.

13 For a summary on what the author of this thesis regards as “Valentinian mythology” see page 20 in the present thesis.

14 The Egyptian Books of the Dead describe the aim of the journey to be a second life, a lot like the one the deceased had on earth. Egyptians themselves called the papyri “Books of Going out into the Day”. See Jon Davies, *Death, burial, and rebirth in the religions of antiquity* (London: Routledge, 1999), 28.
like in Jewish revelatory discourse. For Valentinians it is about the “soul-spirit’s” uniting with the “Pre-existed Father” and its release from the material worlds captivity.

3.2 The implied readers

In order to answer who the implied readers of these narratives could have been, and in what ways they could have understood and appreciated this form of apocalyptic hero journeys, I have three theorists of literature in mind: Wolfgang Iser, Walter Ong and Stanley Fish.

3.2.1 Wolfgang Iser

Iser’s reader response theory, stresses the interaction of reader and text. In this theory the act of reading is an exchange, or a convergence, between the reader and the text, in which the reader constructs meaning as he/she progress through the story. The intentions of the author are more or less irrelevant since the text can have diverse meanings that change over time. Because readers bring their own ideologies and bias to the text, their responses will differ. The reader gives personal meaning into the verbal symbols on a page and the text channels meaning through its structure. To create meaning in this framework, the reader must be active, constantly creating and synthesizing meaning, paying attention not only to the words of a page, but also to the images and emotions he/she is experiencing. The reader becomes in this way a part of the world of the text and through this he/she is affected, and sometimes transformed, through the reading process.

Iser depicts the framework of reader and text as a virtual space, one that is impossible to pinpoint. It is impossible because the “exchange” can either be identified with the reality of the text or with the individual disposition of the reader. However, it is this “virtuality” of the work that gives rise to its dynamic nature. The dynamic virtual process of reading requires thinking and reflecting, activity and creativity. According to Iser, reading a literary work is only pleasurable when it is an act involving the imagination. The unwritten parts of the story, which Iser calls “gaps”, serve as triggers of the readers imagination. The gaps are to be perfectly balanced, not too narrow and not too wide. If they are not in balance, the risk is that the reader, in working too hard, or not at all, with filling the gaps, gets bored and leaves “the game” of reading. Each individual reader will fill these gaps in his/her own ways. For this reason, one text is potentially capable of several different realizations.

However fruitful for this thesis, Iser’s reader response theory focuses too much on the “gaps” and not at all on the relation between the author, the readers and the text. The text does not constitute meaning, Iser claims, but rather guides the active creation of meaning. This thesis focuses primarily on the readers, but the texts and their authors are a reality too. From a philological and historical point of view it is crucial that we count them in, in order to get the bigger picture.

3.2.2 Walter Ong and Stanley Fish

“The writer’s audience is always a fiction.” That is the title of Walter Ong’s most cited article, in which he writes about the “audience” that fires the writer’s imagination. A collectivity made up by his/her ideal readers so to speak. A writer could be more or less successful, Ong states. “If the writer succeeds in writing, it is generally because he can fictionalize in his imagination an audience he has learned to know not from daily life but from earlier writers who were fictionalizing in their imagination audiences they had learn to know in still earlier writers, and so on back to the dawn of the written narrative. If and when he becomes truly adept, an “original writer,” he can do more than project the earlier audience, he can alter it.”

According to Ong, the idea that the audience is fiction, can at least be explained in two ways. The author of a text must imagine an audience cast in some sort of role (entertainment seekers, reflective sharers of experience, inhabitants of a lost and remembered world and so on). The audience must in its turn fictionalize itself. A reader has to play the role that the author has cast him/her, something that seldom coincides with his/her role in everyday life. Each new role that the readers are made to assume is related to previous roles.

It is, therefore, important to understand that reader response is not the same thing as personal response. Rather, the individual’s responses are situated in a larger community of readers through active discussion. The fictional audience that the author has in mind is a general one too. Readings and understandings of a text are, therefore, culturally constructed. Stanley Fish’s theory of interpretive communities stresses the fact that a reader’s response to a text is not totally subjective. The common language, culture and even imaginatively world of the reader is a shared experience of many. As a reader is born and raised into a specific culture, he/she develops an internalized understanding of language with normative boundaries.

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17 About the power of the reading group and interpretative communities see Stanley Fish, Is there a text in this class? The authority of interpretive communities (Cambridge Mass; Harvard University Press, 1980).
The narratives of the apocalypses in question follow a pattern that was quite familiar to the readers of that time. Within the genre of apocalyptic literature e.g., the reader knew what to expect. There would be a well-known protagonist called by God who would travel through different realms and experience obstacles and wanders. In the end the protagonist would meet God and get his approval. However, both of the texts contain several aspects that would be rather surprising to the uninitiated reader. Even to the initiated reader, the complicated stories of Paul and James, filled with symbolic language, metaphors and allusions, would require hard work, and thus a need to interpret the story within a community of other implied readers.

In this thesis the task is to highlight the reading of the texts from a certain point of view and time. That is within an educational/catechetical Valentinian context in the mid second-early third century. That does not imply however that the reading of the texts, enacted by others is to be considered false or invalid. On the contrary, the reading and the polemic writings of the Church fathers for example, gives the historian invaluable comparative material. The interpretative communities of these texts varied a lot both over time and place and the implied readers were many. The ApocPaul and the 1ApocJas could have been read out loud by priests in liturgies or at death rituals. They could have been kept in safety and been read secretly by monks fearing the heresiologists. They could have been buried together with their owners, and they could have been read by monks who just wanted to read some interesting Christian hero narratives. With that in mind, I am not searching for the absolute origins of the texts, but for the function of their myths on one plausible community of implied readers among many. Because the implied reader does not exist, he/she is virtual, existing within a virtual space, the goal is to examine that dynamic space in particular, contributing to the answer of what myth could do and look like when it transforms from one form to another.

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18 The hypothesis is based on Crum’s statement (prior to the discovery in Nag Hammadi) that every single Coptic manuscript known in his time came from a monastic library. The issue is now reopened resulting in a heated debate. See Hugo Lundhaug and Lance Jenott, The Monastic Origins of the Nag Hammadi Codices (STAC 97; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015); Lance Jenott and Elaine H. Pagels, “Antony’s Letters and Nag Hammadi Codex I: Sources of Religious Conflict in Fourth-Century Egypt,” JECS 18 (2010): 557-589.


20 In his Ph. D. thesis from 2018 Julio César Dias Chaves compares the codex to another group of late antique Coptic texts, the hagiographies. His focus is on the reader of the Codex V during the 4th and 5th century CE. Dias Chaves points to the fact that Codex V was very well placed in the literary environment of late antique Egypt and that a plausible reader could be one that was interested in hagiographies as well. This Coptic reader of that time would, according to Dias Chaves, primarily not be interested in philosophical and theological speculations about the Demiurge or Sophia, but rather on what the story provided in form of what was already familiar to the reader: heavenly journeys, revelations and stories about Jesus and the apostles. (Julio César Dias Chaves, Nag Hammadi Codex V and Late Antique Coptic Hagiographies: A Comparative Approach, PhD diss. (Université Laval, 2018).
3.3 Method: The telescope, the naked eye and the microscope

Myth is a tool in human hands, Doniger states, used and defined differently by different communities over time and space. The important question therefore is not what the myth means but rather what the myth does. How then do we go from the meaning of a mythological narrative to its significance for the reader to its function within a given community? As Wendy Doniger puts it, we have to look at the myth through different lenses in order to analyze it and understand its functions.21 This is a threefold method of deconstructing and analyzing the myth, thus explaining its forms and functions. The universalistic monomyth of Campbell is the big view. Like a telescope, the Monomyth enables us to see the broader picture. The path of the hero can tell us a lot about human psychology in general, and about the imaginative world of the ancient reader in particular. The lens of the naked eye, the second view, goes deeper into context. The early Christian myths that Paul’s and James’ revelations build upon could also be understood political22, social and ethical23, as a counter-cultural critique24, or as a new form of soteriology, that of divination25 and in that retrospect, also anthropological and theological.

The third view, that of the microscope, is probably the most intriguing one, the focus on the individual insight. We may have different theories about who the readers of these revelations were, an almost impossible task. However, given some historical evidence, we can try to reconstruct the past and listen to different ancient minds of early Christianity. Those of the monks in Egypt for example, or the heresiologists during the formative period of faith and canon (probably the loudest ones), those of the Christian martyrs, or those of students/catechumens in the schools of Valentinus.

While using the tools of the telescope, the naked eye and the microscope, “the individual text should be seen as the microscope that lets us see the trees; the comparison is the telescope that lets us see the forest.”26 Doniger has, among many other, a very good example of the function of the telescope and microscope-perspectives. In Schindler’s List,27 Schindler is standing on a hill,
mounted on a horse, and looks down with a telescopic view on the devastated ghetto of Krakow. This is the big picture of the horrific second World War. Among the ruins, the protagonist sees a little girl with a red coat and he follows her. She represents the microscopic view, the impact of the war’s devastation on the individual. When Schindler sees the little girl he knows what he has to do. “Here, switching from a telescope to a microscope is the move from indifference to compassion. Myth is a narrative that employs, and demands, radical shifts in perspective.”

Going then from a broader perspective of the two apocalyptic narratives in question to their individual aspects, is a method that allows for profitable shifts in perspective, may they be radical. Comparing the ApocPaul with the 1ApocJas within an interdisciplinary field of history, religion, philology and hermeneutics my hope is to shed some light on the complex message and plausible function of these two intriguing texts. What does that mean in practice? While first of all, an attempt will be made to disentangle the macromyths (the diverse imaginative worlds that the texts contain) from the micromyths. When one begins to see the structure* and meaning behind the narratives, a Valentinian readers perspective will be applied on it, in order to see in which ways these narratives could have been important to such an audience. However, we start examining the subject with the naked eye of context.

*For the one interested in a schematic overview, of the author’s and reader’s imaginatively worlds, a timeline, and lists of sources mentioned in this thesis, there is a scheme table available in the discussion part on pages 67-69.

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4 Contextualizing

4.1 Paul

4.1.1 The historical Paul in legend and tradition

Both venerated and loathed back in his days of mission, Paul is the second most prominent figure in the New Testament next to Jesus. After a vision of Christ on his way to Damascus, Paul stopped his persecution of believers in Christ and started converting people instead. Within some decades he successfully started congregations all over the Mediterranean and then kept in touch with them by letters. These letters would come to be the base for the development of the Christian faith. Paul himself was not aware of that of course. He was born as a Jew in Tarsus about 5 CE and died as a Jew in Rome about 64-68 CE.\(^{29}\) He thus kept his Jewish identity and devotion to YHWH his whole life, even though he was critical of how different people should act upon Jewish law. Paul believed that Christ was the Messiah who would lead the people of Israel, and eventually all “nations” (θηνη), to redemption.

The Jesus movement, as well as that of his disciples and followers after his death, many agree, was an apocalyptic one.\(^{30}\) Jesus and his apostles were sure that the end of times was very close. The same applied to Paul, who due to his vision of Christ (and other people’s visions of Christ), believed that Jesus was the first to resurrect from the dead, thus showing that this would soon happen to all of humanity.

Partly because of his Jewish schooling within an already established apocalyptic tradition,\(^{31}\) Paul’s vision of the resurrected Christ convinced him. This was a conviction so firm that Paul maintained it his whole life, and strangely enough, succeeded in preserving it among his congregations as well.

As Paula Fredriksen puts it: “The claim that Jesus had been raised from the dead, provides a strong


\(^{31}\) Before his vision of Christ, Paul was a devoted Pharisee. In contrast to the Sadducees, the Pharisees strongly believed in a future resurrection of the dead. Together with the Essenes they anticipated Gods intervention in the world when he would destroy all evil forces. They also anticipated a deliverer, sent by God, who would restore his Kingdom on earth. (Ehrman, The New Testament, 267-268.)
index of the degree to which Jesus’ followers lived, thought and worked within a framework of apocalyptic expectations – or, rather, within two apocalyptic frameworks. The first was old and traditional, the second recent and particular.”

By old and traditional Fredriksen means the Jewish apocalyptic framework, which was gradually outlined by the Prophets after the Babylonian exile and then further developed during the Second Temple period. The new and particular apocalyptic framework was the teaching of Jesus himself: that the kingdom of God was coming very soon. The circumstances, time and place for an apocalyptic movement to grow and develop within a Jewish community, could not have been better: “These two apocalyptic frameworks, ancient and proximate, combined powerfully, mutually reinforcing each other, as the disciples sought the significance of their own experience of a raised Jesus.”

The world was coming to an end, and many people in the Greco-Roman world certainly felt that way, Jews and Pagans alike. Paul managed to spread his apocalyptic conviction successfully and with a great rhetorical skill he managed to maintain it until his death. However, the End of Times never came and as years passed by, the believers of Christ either left the movement or came up with various explanations to the why, when and how this would happen (or not happen). Paul’s apocalyptic message was picked up by various theologians and philosophers and then reinterpreted. Some of them moved away from the notion of the Jewish God as the greatest God and preached instead for a transcendent, incomprehensible God who was above all. For second-century theologians like Marcion, Valentinus and Justin Martyr, the Jewish God came to be explained within a middle platonic discourse.

Plato’s original idea about a creator God, a demiurge (δημιουργός), primarily found in his works about Timeaus, was that this God made the world out of pre-existing elements. In other words, the

34 It is impossible to explain how pagans came to follow the apostles and their apocalyptic claims with one single answer. Answering that complex question is beyond the scope of the present thesis. However, it is an interesting question that if properly examined could reveal a great deal about the spreading of Christ’s apocalyptic message among Pagans. There are some explanations given as to how and why Pagans were drawn to the movement. The fact that polytheistic religious inclusiveness allowed people in the Greco-Roman world to worship different gods, created an openness to participate in new religious activity. (Ehrman, *The New testament*, 22-29). It could also be due to the fact that the movement resembled popular mystic cults, like the one of Mithras. Christ’s message was something new and exciting. (Ehrman, *The New testament*, 31.) Also, like many Jews, as well as the majority of the population in the Roman Empire, pagans too saw life as harsh and difficult, many dreaming of a just and better future. During lifetime though, these early Christian communities offered a well needed social network for people who were marginalized from society. (Ehrman, *The New testament*, 398.) Moreover, if one sees the question out of a cognitive science standpoint, joining an apocalyptic religious movement two thousand years ago could share some of the behavioral characteristics as joining one today. (Ehrman, *The New testament*, 398.) See Chris Bader & A. Demarish "A test of the Stark-Bainbridge theory of affiliation with religious cults and sects." in *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 35 (1996), 285–303; Eileen Barker, *New religious movements: a practical introduction*, (London: HMSO 1989), 25-26.
demiurge created the cosmos out of chaos.\textsuperscript{35} For some early Christian philosophers, this idea was understood as that the Jewish God of the scripture was the creator of the material world. The Demiurge was, in fact, YHWH, and he was inferior to the incomprehensible “Pre Existed One”.

From Genesis to the Prophets and after that from the Gospels and in the writings of Paul, this Demiurge had shown himself both punishing and pampering humanity. Moreover, in contrast to what Plato held about the demiurge as a good God, the Demiurge of theologists like Marcion was an evil God, self-centered and ignorant. For the Valentinians, the Demiurge was not evil at first hand, even if such depictions occurred, rather he was portrayed as pure ignorant.\textsuperscript{36}

Thus, new theologies and mythologies came to be created, a mixture of Jewish, Greco-Roman and philosophical ideas about what was “really going on” in the world. Within these streams of cultural change, new apocalyptic literature was also written, or put more correctly, rewritten. The apocalyptic framework was kept within the horizon of expectations of the reader. The micromyth was there, and the structures were recognized such as a heavenly ascent by a hero, angels, and daemons involved with the fate of souls, and a meeting between the hero and the enthroned God. However, some things were different, thus creating the macromythos of early Christian apocalyptic writings. Jewish pseudepigrapha that were common in the titles of the older apocalypses (e.g., Daniel, Isaiah and Enoch) were replaced with those of the apostles: James, Peter, John and especially for the Valentinians, Paul.

4.1.2 Paul as a gnostic ideal

A text from Nag Hammadi Codex II, called \textit{The Hypostasis of the Archons}, starts off with a reference to the spiritual war against the wicked powers of the universe, described by Paul in Ephesians 6. “On account of the reality of the authorities, (inspired) by the spirit of the father of truth, the great apostle – referring to the authorities of the darkness – told us that our contest is not against flesh and blood; rather, the authorities of the universe and the spirits of wickedness.” (NHC II, 486.22-23) Thus, to some gnostic Christians who read the treatise, Paul was considered “a great apostle.” His writings were often quoted in gnostic material, to such extent that the church father Tertullian called him “the Apostle whom our heretics adopt.”\textsuperscript{37} Tertullian (155-240 CE) was particularly fractious against the Valentinian movements because of their, in his opinion, misuse of


\textsuperscript{36} Denzey Lewis, \textit{Introduction to Gnosticism}, 16.

\textsuperscript{37} Tertullian, \textit{Against Marcion} 3.5.
the Pauline letters. Valentinus teacher Theudas had reputedly been a student of Paul himself\textsuperscript{38} and thus the legacy of Paul’s “true” teachings was believed to have ended up within the Valentinian communities.

Paul is also used as a pseudonym in the very first text of the NHC, \textit{The Prayer of the Apostle Paul}. This treatise is not written in narrative form but, as the title suggests, like a prayer. Paul is praying to “The One who exist and preexisted” to redeem his enlightened soul and spirit forever (NHC I, 1 A1.22-23). It is a beautiful opening of the codex, and the language brings to mind hermetic texts, like \textit{The Discourse on the Eighth and Ninth} in Codex VI. Paul is also prominent as an important apostle in \textit{The Treatise on the Resurrection} in Codex I, where several Paulinisms\textsuperscript{39} are to be found. The author talks, e.g. about “the spiritual resurrection which swallows up the psychic in the same way as the fleshly.” (NHC I, 4 46.1-2)

But why Paul? The question raised, if Paul’s message was gnostic per se, is a theme of considerable debate. April DeConick puts it that way in her book \textit{The Gnostic New Age}, stating that Paul’s swing in spirituality, from a persecutor to a believer of Christ, had a remarkable gnostic flair. And that “there are both Catholic and Gnostic seeds in Paul’s writings.”\textsuperscript{40} In order to understand Paul and his revolutionary gnostic spirit that he instilled in his churches, DeConick says, one has to understand that Paul was reacting to James, and his faithfulness to the Jewish way of life.\textsuperscript{41}

Other scholars believe that early Christian groups with a gnostic form of theology used Paul in order to give their texts Christian authority and legitimacy. In her book \textit{The Gnostic Paul}, Elaine Pagels states that gnostics like Valentinus used Paul’s letters as the primary source for anthropology, Christology, and theology and interpreted it for their own purposes. But so did also the church fathers. In their controversy against gnostic groups, they gave their versions of Paul’s teachings. Therefore, both the gnostic and the anti-gnostic side interpreted Paul’s letters according to their own interests and thus incorrectly.\textsuperscript{42}

Following the work of Klaus Koschorke\textsuperscript{43} in 2004, Michael Kaler highlighted the fact that the view on understanding Paul had changed radically since the 1980s. Calling for an application of a more modern Pauline context, Kaler argued that the Nag Hammadi texts could be put into a broader, not

\textsuperscript{38} Clement of Alexandria, \textit{Stromata} 7.17.106.4.

\textsuperscript{39} The theological principles taught by or ascribed to the apostle Paul. Examples: Paul’s teaching of emancipation from the Jewish law, the indwelling spirit of Christ, and justification by faith.


\textsuperscript{41} DeConick, \textit{The Gnostic New Age}, 88.


\textsuperscript{43} Klaus Koschorke, “Paulus in den Nag-Hammadi-Texten,” \textit{ZTK} 78 (1980): 177-205. The article is about references to Paul in some of the Nag Hammadi, as being evidence of a Christian gnostic use of Paul.
specifically gnostic Pauline context, thus moving them out of the “gnostic ghetto”: “Gnostics (I use the term loosely), like other early Christians, created and used legendary images of Paul, and these legendary images may not have been so very different from those created and used by the proto-orthodox.”

Regarding the ApocPaul then, Kaler states, the author validates his or her understanding of Paul as an apocalyptic hero.

How come that Paul seems to be the most important apostle in early Christian apocalyptic literature? Richard Pervo puts it this way: “Although apocalypses were attributed to other apostles, Paul was a natural, since he reported that he had received a heavenly vision (See 2 Cor 12:2-49)”

Michael Kaler states that it was Paul that the reader was most likely to identify with in comparison to other apostolic front figures in the Nag Hammadi Corpus. Paul did by far share the qualifications of Thomas, James, and Peter. He did not know Jesus personally like them. He lacked a strong connection to the earliest Jewish form of Christianity like James, and he was surely no spokesman of the mainstream church like Peter. He was the apostle of the converts and the pagans. A converted sinner himself, he was easy to identify with. Kaler writes, “Like the hypothetical reader, Paul is vitally engaged in esoteric, salvific knowledge which he gains with no direct link to Jesus himself.”

Finally, Paul is the Christian ideal that for many, is possible to achieve. In contrast to James martyrdom that is a big of a sacrifice, Paul’s Christian ideal is accessible to everyone.

Nicholas Perrin proposes that the second-century Valentinian movement, in particular, came to elevate Paul as “the ideal believer.” That for several reasons. Foremost, the Valentinians needed Paul, as an example of a visionary, in order to justify themselves against the broader church. Their hermeneutical understanding of Paul’s letters was also in line with their own beliefs.

Perrin looks at the ApocPaul and The Prayer of the Apostle Paul and compares them with Pauline letters. The ApocPaul is according to Perrin a clear allusion to Paul’s conversion, mentioned in Galatians 1:15-17, and presented as “the untold story” of what “really” happened at Paul’s conversion. In the The Prayer of the Apostle Paul, Perrin says that Paul is being depicted “as the porter to the door of true knowledge, the mystagogue, the ideal mystic, and the source of the most fundamental terms of

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45 Kaler, “Towards an expanded understanding,” 310.
46 Pervo, Richard, The making of Paul: constructions of the Apostle in early Christianity (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010), 175.
47 Fredriksen, Paul: the pagans’ apostle, 61-93.
Valentinian discourse and thought." One could argue that the depiction being quoted could apply to Paul in the *ApocPaul* as well, given its Valentinian significance. Perrin suggests that Paul was considered more significant of a front figure than the twelve apostles for the Valentinians. This due to the fact that, in the *ApocPaul*, Paul greets the twelve in the eighth heaven (the Ogdoad) but then goes further up to the ninth and tenth realm without them.

To summarize, Paul’s teaching about the resurrected Christ as the savior of humanity and his rhetoric’s about anthropology and soteriology, inspired Valentinus and his followers in their writings. That is hymns, psalms, mythological narratives, theological doctrines, and apocalypses. In order to understand the Valentinians rewriting of already established Jewish apocalypses, we first have to look closer on the topic of Valentinianism and its myths. After that, we will turn our attention to the historical James.

4.2 Valentinus and Valentinian texts

4.2.1 A Christian movement or a school of gnosis?

The term “Valentinianism,” as a description of an early Christian movement and philosophical “school,” is as contested today as the term “Gnosticism.” However, in contrast to gnostics, who as far as we know did not exist as an exclusive religious group, the Valentinians did exist as one, and they were known by their founder’s name. The big issue among scholars is therefore not if the Valentinians existed or not but rather on how they should be better understood. As a philosophical school? As a religious movement? Both? It all comes down to how members of the Valentinian movements interpreted their theology/mythology, that is if it was literally or metaphorically understood.

Einar Thomassen believes that Valentinian theology goes beyond philosophy and that for two main reasons. First of all, he states, Valentinians put great emphasis on a divine agent, a Savior or “redeemer”(Soter), who came down to the distorted material world in order to restore the primordial Unity. Second, the Valentinians had rituals. Baptism and anointing e.g., were enacted in order for

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51 Perrin, “Paul and Valentinian Interpretation,” 138-139.
52 Was there an actual “Valentinian school”? Geoffrey S. Smith says no. The term is a reconstruction of modern scholars reading Irenaeus in search for evidence, he claims: “we are left with no historical evidence for a self-identifying Gnostic school and little basis for regarding the Valentinians themselves as members of a “school.” Until we find labels to replace the polemically charged designations of the “Gnostic school” and the “school of Valentinus,” let us be content to refer to Irenaeus’s opponents as members of the church.” Geoffrey Smith, *Guilt by Association: Heresy Catalogues in Early Christianity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 172.
humans to help realize the restoration of this Unity. According to Thomassen, these are evidence enough for regarding Valentinianism as a religion and not merely as a philosophical theory. Other scholars seem to put more emphasis on the latter, however. According to Ismo Dunderberg, the “school of Valentinus” had a solid philosophical orientation. He proposes that the Valentinians were mostly interested in moral progress and that their mythology was also used politically, thus explaining social structures of their day.

Who were the Valentinians? Established by Valentinus (100-165 CE) during the mid-second century in Alexandria, and then in Rome, the movement came to include many known thinkers and writers after his death, both contemporary to him and not: Heracleon, Ptolemy, Marcus Magus, and Theodotus, to name but a few. According to Tertullian, an opponent of Valentinianism, Valentinus almost became the bishop of Rome, but when another man got elected, Valentinus became outraged and left the “legitimate Church.” Valentinus himself disappears from history around 160 CE, but Valentinian communities continued to expand into the fourth century, mainly in the Eastern parts of the Roman Empire. There, they were heavily persecuted by the Christians in power, who saw them as heretics. After a century of continuous persecution, Valentinianism reduced to a small underground movement, and the last evidence of them is in 692 CE at the Council of Trullo, where the Orthodox Church established legal rulings against the Valentinians and other “heretics.”

The pursuit of the Valentinians had already started at the end of the second century. The most significant part of Irenaeus polemical work Against Heresies (180 CE), is concerned with the disciples of Valentinus, and with refuting their “heretical absurd ideas.” Until the discovery at Nag Hammadi in 1945, the most important source of information about Valentinian mythology and belief system came from the heresiologists. These men were, of course, very polemical in their

55 According to heresiologists like Tertullian and Epiphanius of Salamis, Valentinus was Egyptian by birth. He was born in Phrebonis and received a classical Greek education in nearby Alexandria. He started to teach himself sometime during the reign of the emperor Hadrian (117-138 CE). It was also during that time that Valentinus converted to Christianity. Some of his teachers are said to have been the Christian Gnostic philosophers Basilides and Theudas. Sometime during 140 CE, Valentinus moved to Rome, where he became a known and successful public speaker and teacher.
56 http://www.gnosis.org/library/valentinus/Valentinian_Writings.htm (Last retrieved 2019/06/04)
57 Tertullian, Against Valentins, 4.1-2.
58 Even called the Quinisext Council, the council of Trullo stipulated in Canon 95: “And the Manicheans, and Valentinians, and Marcionites, and all of similar heresies must give certificates and anathematize each his own heresy, and also Nestorius, Eutyches, Dioscorus, Severus, and the other chiefs of such heresies, and those who think with them, and all the aforesaid heresies; and so they become partakers of the holy Communion.” (Translation from Calvin College, Christian Classics Ethereal Library: http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf214.xiv.iii.xcvii.html (Last retrieved 2019/06/04)
59 Irenaeus, Against Heresies, 1.1.1-3.
approach to the movement, even though some of them respected Valentinus, sometimes even showing a form of an effort to understand him. The information one gets from the heresiologists is therefore biased and not a hundred percent trustworthy. However, many texts from Nag Hammadi, that have been identified as Valentinian, are in some parts in agreement with the heresiologists accounts, thus making them a vital source of information. A good example is the 1ApocJas, which in many ways is consistent with Irenaeus account.

One question of interest for this thesis is if the ApocPaul and the 1ApocJas could be classified as Valentinian writings. Much suggests that they are, or have been at some point. However, scholarly opinions are divided on this particular problem, and theories are changing over time. Michael Kaler labeled the ApocPaul as “possibly written by a Valentinian author” while Matthew Twigg concluded that it is Valentinian. Einar Thomassen first concluded that the 1ApocJas was Valentinian, but after the finding of the text in the Codex Tchacos he changed his mind.

What then constitutes Valentinian writings? One example, mentioned above, is that the text in question match Irenaeus’s account of Valentinian cosmology. That it, e.g. mentions a primary Unity (a Monad) or Dyad, a system of 30 aeons, a balance within male/female pairs (syzygies), or a demiurge. Further evidence for a text being Valentinian is that it makes use of New Testament writings, especially those of Paul. Moreover, the text could be Valentinian if it should bear evidence of Christian ritual activity connected to it, and especially that of the mystery of the “Bridal Chamber” which is unique for Valentinians. Finally, another typical attribute is if the text seems to have a community, a church behind it, that renders itself as Christian.

If we use Thomassen’s taxonomy to as why the 1ApocJas is not a pure Valentinian text he mentions the lack of certain characteristics: “The incorporation of this material (the passage similar to Irenaeus account) in James does not, however, make James Valentinian. There is nothing else in the tractate that is distinctively Valentinian, and especially none of the soteriological ideas typical of

61 For a detailed list of very probable and probable Valentinian texts see Denzey Lewis, Introduction to Gnosticism, 83.
62 Irenaeus, Against Heresies, 1.21.3–5.
63 Kaler, Flora Tells a Story, 64-69.
64 Matthew Twigg, Becoming Paul, Becoming Christ, 250.
66 An aeon is an emanation from the Monad. An aeon can be spatial, as in a realm; it can be personified, as in Truth and Wisdom; and finally (but more rarely in second-century CE usage) it can designate a period of time. (Definition in Denzey Lewis, Introduction to Gnosticism, 279.)
67 Denzey Lewis, Introduction to Gnosticism, 81-84.
Valentinianism: there is no bridal chamber, no angels to be united to, no Name that is received by the redeemed, no deficiency that will be filled, no hint of an apokatastasis, and even no Soter to be received. We also look in vain for common Valentinian vocabulary such as Pleroma, Entirety/ies, and even aeons and spirit. There does not therefore seem to be any useful sense in which James can be labeled as “Valentinian.”

I would though argue that both the ApocPaul and the 1ApocJas are Valentinian and that their protagonists were consciously chosen in order to show two ways of Valentinian redemption. Even if the texts do not explicitly use Valentinian vocabularies, the Valentinian macromyth is still there, ready to be understood and explained by the reader, maybe a student or a catechumen. This question will be further discussed in the analysis of the thesis. However, I would here like to give a short version of the “Valentinian Macromyth” in order for the reader to understand a part of the background for my hypothesis. It is, of course, impossible to give an exact version of a Valentinian myth, while myths are as “plastic” and changeable as the communities that share them. However, we need some framework here, and therefore, I have chosen to retell the myth described by Einar Thomassen in what he calls “The essential features of the system.”

4.2.2 The Valentinian myth and Sophias creative emotions

Once upon a time, everything was One. That One was the Father and he was also named the Depth (Bythos or Bathos). The Father was inconceivable, but he knew himself and wished to be known. So he produced the Son, even called Mind. This Dyad of Father and Son was Two and One at the same time. This state of being created a divine essence by its self-reflection. The essence was called the Fullness (Pleroma), and it was one and many at the same time. The many personalities of the Fullness were called aeons. The youngest of the aeons, Sophia (Wisdom), decided to rebel against the Father, and as a result, she was punished and split in two. Her perfect part, the Spirit, returned to the Fullness, but her faulty part, sometimes called Achamoth, was stuck in the middle behind a boundary called horos.

Outside the Fullness the emotions of Sophia/Achamoth were about to create the cosmos. It started with her irrational passion, which created matter. Her first creation was the inferior Creator God-

68 Greek for “fullness” or the “entirety.” Sometimes it signifies the upper celestial realms where the aeons live and sometimes it signifies the aeons themselves.
70 Thomassen “The Valentinian school of Gnostic Thought,” 791-792.
71 Sometimes Achamoth is identical with Sophia and sometimes not. In the 1ApocJas, Achamoth is portrayed as the offspring of Sophia. For this reason it is also difficult to place Achamoth in a specific realm. Sometimes she is in the eighth heaven (the Ogdoad) and sometimes she is in the boundary called the Middle or the Intermediate place. Sometimes she is also identified with that same place where she dwells.
The Demiurge. However, Sophia felt unfulfilled and alone, and in deep despair, she begged for mercy from her fellow aeons. Her repentance created the soul. The Fullness of aeons felt petty for her and sent a Savior to heal Sophia from her passions. At the sight of the Savior, Sophia felt joy, and that joy gave birth to spiritual beings.

So, matter, soul, and spirit became the building blocks of the cosmos. Earth became the material world, and the seven planetary realms became the psychic’s world. Sophia and her spirit children took their place in the eighth heaven, the Ogdoad, or in a place between the cosmos and the Fullness, the Middle. From the Ogdoad then, or from somewhere even above that realm, Sophia controlled what was happening in the worlds beneath her. The world of the psychics was the world of the Demiurge and his powers, but also to some of the humans with a living Spirit.

The Demiurge thought that he was above everything and that he was the true God and creator of the cosmos. Because he was ignorant of Sophia’s power over him though, he got tricked by her, several times. When the Demiurge decided to make the first human, Adam, he created him out of matter and soul, but Sophia gave Adam a spirit in secrecy. She took spirit from those she created during her emotion of joy and implanted that in Adams body and soul.

Since genesis then, (some) humans carry around a spiritual component which strives to liberate itself and unite with the One. However, humans do not know this. Therefore Christ came down as a Savior in order to explain this secret to humanity and help them awaken their spirits and understand the truth. When he died on the cross, the Savior returned to the Fullness. Now, some people got his message, and some did not. Those who got it swore to spread the good news of truth, and liberate the spirits of those who did not, at least for those with spiritual potential. When all of the spirits have been redeemed, by knowledge or by ritual (or by both) and made their way back to Sophia/Achamoth, she will also be restored within the One. That is the day of the final restoration when the One will be a pure single Unity again.

4.3 James

4.3.1 The historical James in legend and tradition

There is not much recorded about James in the New Testament. According to the gospels though, and tradition, James was the first bishop of Jerusalem, as well as “the Lord’s brother” (Δελφὸς τοῦ

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72 Related material on James, the brother of Jesus, is found in: Matthew 13:55 and 27:56, Mark 6:3, 15:40 and 16:1, Acts 12:17, 15:13 and 21:18, 1 Corinthians 15:7, Galatians 1:19, 2:9 and 2:12 and James 1.
κυρίου). However, the memory of him has come to be almost non-existent, at least for the Western Church. That is what John Painter claims in his book *Just James* where he puts forward some explanations for the historical decline of the veneration of James, and highlights a picture of him, from the history of early Christianity, which shows the exact opposite. James was highly regarded both in history and in tradition, and that of various groups who tried to preserve the teachings of Jesus within a Jewish Christian context.  

With the destruction of the temple of Jerusalem in 70 CE, the Jewish Christian Church was scattered. Despite a list of a continued succession order to its episcopate, mentioned by the historian Eusebius (260-339 CE), the Church in Jerusalem never regained its former power. Its shape transformed from a Jewish-Christian Church with a messianic message to a pagan Christian one with a universalistic message of salvation.

According to Painter's analysis of the historical sources, James became the first bishop of Jerusalem because of his family relationship to Jesus, and he died as a martyr in 62 CE. James died probably by being thrown down the temple's stairs, and then hit on the head with a club, or by stoning. James got the title "the Righteous" since he was known for his piety but also because he defended the poor against the rich and the powerful, something that might have been the actual reason for his death. The motive behind James execution was, according to Painter, most likely political, since James defended the poor priests on the countryside, who literally starved to death, and criticized the rich and prosperous aristocratic priesthood in Jerusalem.

James lived, despite his prestigious position, very modest. He did not drink wine and did not eat meat. He did not shave nor wash either. He spent his days praying for his fellow human beings in a kneeling position “until the skin on his knees looked like a camels.” Tradition has then altered the story of James’ martyrdom in order to place him in a line of righteous sufferers whose deaths were predicted by the prophets, Isaiah in particular. Eusebius placed James in a series of righteous

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74 Painter, *Just James*, 269.
75 According to one passage in Flavius Josephus (37-100 CE) *Jewish Antiquities*, James was executed along with some other law-criminals on the order of the Sadducean High Priest Ananus II. Ananus took the opportunity to summon the Sanhedrin council while Judea was missing its procurator. The former one, Festus, was dead and his successor Albinus was on his way from Alexandria. However, that would take some time. Ananus ordered then the execution to be carried out by stoning. See *Jewish Antiquities*, XX, IX, 197-203. Stoning was the capital punishment that first century law stipulated for the crime of blasphemy. Josephus account is the earliest source we have on James’ death.
76 Painter, *Just James*, 158.
77 Hegesippus quoted by Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, 2.23.4-18.
78 The book of Isaiah must have been very interesting from a “gnostic” point of view. It starts with the wrath of God and the punishment of Judea for the unjust treatise of the righteous. In the New Testament, Isaiah is quoted many times and ten times the references are about the “Suffering Servant” and how he will suffer and die to save many from their sins. To many Christians, Isaiah was the prophet who really foresaw the death of Christ and the destruction of Jerusalem. For a gnostic believer, this prophecy could be used to describe what really happened to the city. The angry and punishing God of Isaiah was acting vengefully and in ignorance. The righteous sufferers are only killed in matter, thus tricking this Demiurge, their spirits escaping his realm with the help of secret knowledge.
martyrs, including Jesus, James the son of Zebedee, and Stephen. Early Christian historians like Hegesippus (110-180 CE), the main source of Eusebius, attributed James martyrdom as a result of James’ defense speech of Jesus. This is a motif that became supreme in both history and tradition. According to Painter, it is a distinctively Christian motif which has been added in order to exalt James. It is not present in the historical accounts of neither Clement of Alexandria (150-215 CE) nor Josephus.⁷⁹

What we know from Clement of Alexandria about James is of significance though for the understanding of the authority given to him. In book six of his Outlines (Hypotyposes) Clement states that “After the ascension of the Savior, Peter, James, and John did not claim preeminence because the Savior had specially honored them, but chose James the Just as bishop of Jerusalem.” Then in book seven, Clement writes that after the resurrection, the Lord entrusted James the Just, John, and Peter with “the higher knowledge.” They imparted it to the other apostles and the other apostles to the seventy.⁸⁰

The apocrypha and pseudepigrapha that write about James seem to build upon the tradition and legends of him, as well as on some historical facts. The texts that mention James outside the canonical scripture and patristic literature are amongst others The Gospel of the Hebrews, The Pseudo-Clementine letters, and The Protoevangelium of James.

4.3.2 James as a gnostic ideal

Within the Nag Hammadi Codices, three texts portray James in particular. The Apocryphon of James in Codex I, and the 1ApocJas together with the 2ApocJas in Codex V. Moreover, in the Gospel of Thomas from Codex II, in logion 12, James is mentioned as the natural leader of the apostles after Jesus departure: “The disciples said to Jesus, “We know that you will depart from us. Who is to be our leader?” (ΝΗΙ ΠΕ ΕΤΝΑΡ ΝΟΘ ΕΣΙΡΑΙ Ε ΧΩΝ) Jesus said to them: “Wherever you are, you are to go to ‘James the righteous’ (ΙΑΚΩΒΟΣ ΠΙΑΡΑΙΟΣ) for whose sake heaven and earth came into being.”⁸¹ This logion exalts the figure of James, not only being the natural successor of Jesus but also being in a special, elevated position because of his righteousness.

In the Apocryphon of James (NHC I, 2), a pseudepigraphic James writes to a certain Cerinthos⁸², about how he and Peter received a “secret book” (apocryphon) in a revelation from Christ. This

⁷⁹ Painter, Just James, 156-158 and 176.
⁸⁰ Clement quoted by Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History 2.1.3-4.
⁸² The reconstruction of this name is not certain due to a lacuna.
revelation occurred 550 days after the resurrection. James is here depicted higher in rank than Peter though, as guardian of the higher knowledge and as the leader of the disciples with his authority centered in Jerusalem. During the revelation given by the Savior, it is only James that “gets it,” in contrast to Peter, who shows no understanding at all. Scholars see this depiction of Peter and James as opposing symbols, being metaphors for the emerging Orthodox Church (Peter) and the Gnostic community (James), who is in no need of an ecclesial structure. At the end of the story, James sends of the other apostles to different places and returns himself to Jerusalem. He is the only one with the secret knowledge. Many scholars also agree that the Apocryphon of James belongs to a Valentinian school of thought, mostly because of its placement in Codex I, which in many ways bears Valentinian features. The end of the Apocryphon of James also resembles the ending of the Gospel of Truth, a text often referred to as Valentinian. Regarding the text from a Jewish Christian point of view, John Painter describes the text as bearing clear evidence of a James tradition. “The text suggests a Jewish Christian Gnostic tradition that became accessible to other Gnostic movements without losing earlier Jewish Christian features.”

The 1ApocJas and the 2ApocJas are both emphasizing the family bonds of James and Jesus. In both of the texts, Jesus is addressing James as “my brother” (Παύσων). This troublesome relation which caused all kinds of different explanations during the centuries, is here explained in a gnostic way. They are brothers indeed, but in spirit, not in matter: “I have given you a sign of this things

83 In the Ascension of Isaiah, a Jewish apocryphal text with Christian interpolations, the time between the resurrection and the second coming of Christ is 18 months, or 540 days.


86 Irenaeus mentions a text owned by Valentinians, called “The Gospel of Truth”, in Against Heresies 3.11.9. If it is the text found in the NHC we do not know, but many scholars suggest it is. Some scholars even attribute the Gospel to Valentinus himself. About the topic on the Valentinian origins of the Gospel of Truth see Einar Thomassen, The spiritual seed: The church of the “Valentinians” (Leiden: Brill 2006). 146-16; Jörgen Magnusson, Rethinking the Gospel of truth: a study of its eastern Valentinian setting, (PhD diss., Uppsala university, 2006), 16-38.

87 Painter, Just James, 168.

88 The relationship of James and Jesus has always been a disputed matter. Was James the real brother of Christ? How could that be if Mary was a virgin? To explain the relationship early theologians drove different hypothetical scenarios. Three theories became prominent during the centuries and still are. The first one is the full-brother or Helvidian theory. According to a layman, Helvidius (380 CE), the brothers and sisters of Jesus were the children of both Joseph and Mary. Helvidius saw no problem with Mary being the real wife of Joseph since all the patriarchs had been married men and that procreation was a participation in the divine creativity. The second hypothesis is the half-brother theory which proclaims that the brothers and sisters of Jesus were the children of Joseph, but from a previous marriage. According to the apocryphal Gospel of James, Joseph was a widower and had children before marrying Mary. Both of these hypothesis distinguishing James, the brother of Jesus, from James, the son of Alphæus, the apostle, and thus assume at least three Jameses in the New Testament. Finally, according to the third theory, James and Jesus were cousins. This theory assumes only two Jameses, identifying them with the sons of Alphæus. This theory originated from Jerome (383 CE) as a refutation of Helvidius theory. It was primary an attempt of preserving the virginity of both Mary and Joseph, and thus promoting asceticism. For further reading see: Painter, Just James, 213-223.
James, my brother. For not without reason have I called you my brother, although you are not my brother “materially” (2η οὐκιν).” (NHC V, 3 24.12-16).

In the 2ApocJas, the nature of this spiritual relationship is not clearly outspoken. At any case, the statement made here is that the material Jesus and James, share the same mother but not the same father. But which fathers are they speaking of? Joseph and God? The Demiurge and the real God? The text is unfortunately too fragmentary to tell. It ends with the martyrdom of James carried out by the priests and Sadducees of the Temple, very much alike Josephus historical account. Like in the 1ApocJas, James seeks Jesus’ help as to how to face death. Nicola Denzey Lewis emphasizes here on James’ human nature and its importance to the reader: “As a human, James does not make the same round-trip journey (to the Pleroma and back) as Jesus did during his incarnation. But this is where James becomes an important example for ordinary Christians: those facing an early, ugly death were more likely to identify (and be able to be comforted by) James’ fate than by Jesus’ fate.”

One other interesting feature in the 2ApocJas is the deep intimacy that is portrayed between Jesus and James. In the 1ApocJas it is James that embraces and kisses Christ when he recognizes him. In the 2ApocJas it is Jesus who kisses James on the mouth, calling him “his beloved”. This form of greeting is very symbolic as the receiver of the kiss is honored by the one who kisses him. After the greeting, Jesus tells James that he shall reveal everything to him concerning esoteric knowledge:

“And “he kissed my mouth” (ακτιν τι επωî). He took hold of me saying: “‘My beloved!” (πανηπαρτ) Behold, I shall reveal to you those (things) that (neither) [the] heavens nor their archons have known. Behold, I shall reveal to you those things that he did not know… Behold, I shall reveal to you everything my beloved.” (56.14-57.5)

These Nag Hammadi texts where James is the protagonist, depict him as the chosen one, the beloved spiritual “brother,” who is worthy of the esoteric teaching of Christ. He is also portrayed as intelligent, the one who understands this knowledge, and is therefore also entrusted with keeping it within him until it is time to reveal it to coming generations. As I shall try to argue, James is by tradition the foremost important symbol of Jewish Christianity, and thus the ideal figure to use in

89 “He (Christ) said to me ‘Hail my brother; My brother, hail’ (Χαρης παντον· πανον Χαρης). As I (James) raised my face to stare at him, my mother said to me: “Do not be frightened, my son, because he said ‘My brother’ to you. For you (pl.) were nourished with this same milk. Because of this he calls me ‘My mother.’ For he is not a stranger to us. He is your [step brother].” (NH V, 4 50.11-23). Here, the text brakes into a big lacuna and four lines are missing. The final sentence is literal translated “He is the brother of your father” (πανον [α] πάκερον πανον). The translation “stepbrother” is made by Charles W. Hedrick. Other suggestions involve “milkbrother” (πανον πάκερον) by Böhlig, and “nephew” (πανον κόηρον) by Funk. See Charles W. Hedrick “The (second) Apocalypse of James,” in The Coptic gnostic library: a complete edition of the Nag Hammadi codices Vol.3 (ed. Robinson, James Leiden: Brill 2000[1975]), 121-122 and note 50, 23.

90 Denzey Lewis, Introduction to Gnosticism, 183.

91 See page 41 in the present thesis.
this kind of gnostic revelations. The Jewish tradition, together with all of what it stands for and all what it is represented in, is contrasted to a gnostic way of thinking. According to both history and tradition, James is the one standing closest to the Hebrew God, manifesting all kinds of attributes of believing in that God. What Christ is trying to tell him in the 1ApocJas, is that by recognizing him (Christ) as God instead, as a portal to the One-who-is, James will finally be able to break the spell of the Demiurge and see the reality of this so-called “Just God.”

### 4.4 Paul and James

The relationship between Paul and James has been a subject of discussion for centuries. It is a common understanding, at least in the Protestant Christian world, that while Paul stands for justification by faith, James does so by works. During the Reformation, Martin Luther claimed that the book of James contradicts the gospel of Paul, and should, therefore, have a secondary standing in scripture. This contradiction melts down to two single passages found in James respectively Paul:

**Faith without Works Is Dead:**

What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but do not have works? Can faith save you? If a brother or sister is naked and lacks daily food, and one of you says to them, “Go in peace; keep warm and eat your fill,” and yet you do not supply their bodily needs, what is the good of that? So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead. (James 2:14-17)

**Righteousness through Faith:**

Then what becomes of boasting? It is excluded. By what law? By that of works? No, but by the law of faith. For we hold that a person is justified by faith apart from works prescribed by the law. (Rom 3:27-28)

The difference in understanding what justifies a person became crucial in the religious disputes during the Reformation. The protestants often used the passages quoted above in order to convince the public that “faith alone” was enough. For a long time, this was the picture that the Protestant Church, as well as many scholars of religion and theology, withheld. Today, however, scholars have

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93 All the biblical texts cited in this thesis are the *English Standard Version*’s translation.
come to understand that the differences between Paul and James are only skin deep. The two men do not appear to mean the same thing when they speak about “faith” and “works.”

For Paul, “faith” means the believing in Christ and his resurrection, and “works” means the Jewish law (such as eating kosher, being circumcised, and respecting the Sabbath). For James on the other hand “faith” appears to mean the common intellectual understanding that there is a God and that people, as well as demons (see James 2:19), accept that fact. This kind of “faith,” as an acknowledgment of God, does not justify in itself. But “works” do. So the kind of “works” that James implies, do not seem to emphasize the Jewish law, rather the work of good deeds (such as feeding and caring for the poor, not speak evil about others, not judging thy neighbor.) “Works” are then to be understood ethically, not ritually, as in Paul.

From Acts 15 and then from Galatians 2, we get a picture of an actual controversy between Paul and James however. This controversy was caused by an initial agreement, made by James, Paul, and Peter at the council of Jerusalem, one that was not withheld. The agreement among Peter, Paul and James was that it would be possible for non-Jews to become members of the circle of believers of Jesus, simply by being baptized, with no requirements for circumcision. Paul confirms this agreement in Galatians 2:7-10. But then something happened that disturbed Paul and lowered his trust for the so-called “three pillars” of Jerusalem (Peter, James and John).

Paul is in Antioch on a mission and Peter joins him after a while. Everything seems to go well with the conversion of Gentiles. Then James sends a delegation of his people to Antioch. It seems that the delegation is not pleased with the fact that Jews and non-Jews sit at the same table (probably because of the kosher laws). Peter then refuses to sit and eat with the Gentiles, something he, according to Paul, did not have a problem with before. Paul accuses Peter of being a hypocrite. To his further annoyance, the other Jews and even Barnabas (one of Paul’s closest friends) join Peters hypocrisy. If one looks to James side of the story in Acts 15, it becomes evident that the two men understood the agreement in different ways. In Paul’s mind, all became people of Israel with baptism. James did not see it that way. He agreed on the fact that Gentiles could be baptized, but that they will still be Gentiles.

What historians have implied then, is that James and Paul deeply disagreed on the topic of who was to be considered a “true follower of Jesus.” Some have even implied that James was the one responsible for the arresting and killing of Paul, when he returned to Jerusalem. Or that James did

94 Ehrman, The New Testament, 337. See also Pierre-Antoine Bernheim, James, brother of Jesus (London: SCM Press, 1997), 238-244; Painter, Just James, 265-269; Richard Bauckman.“James and Jesus,” in The brother of Jesus: James the Just and his mission, 1 ed, Bruce Chilton and Jacob Neusner (Louisville, KY : Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 100-137.
not do anything to prevent it from happening. With this kind of background it is intriguing to see that both Paul and James are used as protagonists in gnostic texts, and in the case of the Nag Hammadi Corpus, they are also placed side by side. Codex I starts with the *Prayer of the Apostle Paul* followed by the *Apocryphon of James*, and in Codex V, the *ApocPaul* is followed by the *First and Second Apocalypse of James*. Let us, therefore, turn to the texts in question, and see how they respectively portray Paul and James.

5 The texts in question

5.1 The Apocalypse of Paul (NHC V,2)


In his doctoral dissertation from 1968, Murdock made a new English translation of the text. He intended to trace the origins of the *ApocPaul* in Jewish apocalyptic tradition as well as in Greek and Egyptian mythology. Murdock also drew parallels between *ApocPaul* and other gnostic texts, primarily those that were considered to belong to the Valentinian school. However, he failed to notice that the text could itself be traced to the Valentinian school, even though that much in his thesis pointed towards that fact. The purpose of the text, he stated, was to raise the status of Paul’s apostleship. Paul’s narrative character, Murdock concluded, represents a model for how to proceed with the resurrection according to Jesus.

In the early 2000s, the University of Laval published a new French edition of *ApocPaul* in the *Series Bibliothéque copte de Nag Hammadi*. Jean-Marc Rosenstiehl made a new translation in French, and together with Michael Kaler, he wrote an introduction and comments to the text. The two researchers collaborated in the project but had different views on specific issues. Rosenstiehl, e.g., thought that the text was not gnostic, a viewpoint that according to Kaler, caused Rosenstiehl to miss significant parallels to other gnostic texts. Kaler went even further, arguing that the text was not just gnostic but much suggesting that it could be Valentinian as well.

96 Murdock, “The *Apocalypse of Paul*,” 240.
97 Kaler, *Flora Tells a Story*, 43.
98 Kaler, *Flora Tells a Story*, 225.
Like Murdock and Klauck, who sought to find the literary origin of the text in late antiquity and Jewish traditions, Rosenstiehl drew many parallels to Jewish language and Jewish apocalyptic scenes. Kaler, on the other hand, was more interested in the context in which ApocPaul was created and what function it might have had, the Sitz im Leben of the text. In his doctoral thesis Flora tells a story, Kaler presents, in an interesting and at the same time, entertaining way, a possible scenario of how the text may have been composed. Flora, a woman, initiated in the Valentinian mysteries, loses a theological debate about Paul’s revelation in a public forum. Frustrated, she goes home and writes what “really happened” from a gnostic point of view. 99

According to Kaler, the ApocPaul depicts Paul as an apocalyptic hero whose task is to give a “gnostic” understanding of the cosmos and Paul’s letters. Looking at the ApocPaul in the light of the theological and ideological disputes concerning Paul’s heritage in the third century CE, one can interpret the text as a kind of propaganda which purpose was to attract new potential members to the gnostic Valentinian movement. In summary, the text is a product of three contemporary early Christian thought streams, namely gnosticism, paulinism, and apocalypticism. 100 In his conclusion, Kaler writes: “The Apocalypse of Paul is a text, written in the late second or early third century by a “gnostic” (possibly Valentinian) author.” 101 Valentinian or not, the text’s interest in Paul is, in fact, more mythical than doctrinal, a phenomenon Kaler describes as “heroic Paulinism”. 102 The interest of the reader is not focused on Paul’s thoughts, but rather on his actions. Even if several allusions to Paul’s letters are traceable in the ApocPaul they are more concerned with the image or legend of Paul than with his theology.

In “Becoming Paul: Becoming Christ.” Mathew Twigg compares the ApocPaul with the Gospel of Philip. By comparing these texts, he wants to show how Valentinian sacraments such as, e.g. baptism (and thus the divine name’s soteriological power) are narrativized in the ApocPaul. The main purpose is, therefore, to situate the ApocPaul in the context of Valentinian Christianity and show how it was used in its practical religious settings. Twigg emphasizes that a Valentinian wrote the text for Valentinians. 103 He argues that Paul’s ascension through the ten heavens shows traditions (with roots in Jewish apocalyptic literature) about a surrogate heavenly temple, an image explained with Valentinian terms in the Gospel of Philip. Valentinian initiates could already in this lifetime

99 Kaler, Flora Tells a Story, 62-63. Kaler’s definition of “gnosticism” is that it is a literary and theological term for various kinds of early Christian mystical literature. Typical characteristics of this type are, e.g., the myth of man’s true spiritual nature who has fallen into an inferior material world governed by an oppressive being. A message to fully realize one’s true nature as separate from this cosmos, and so on.

100 Kaler, Flora Tells a Story, 44.
101 Kaler, Flora Tells a Story, 225.
“enter the temple” as “priests” and rise with the right knowledge (gnosis) and right ritual practice. From this, he concludes that the text could have been used in a catechetical context. However, it is far from clear precisely in what setting the ApocPaul would have been read, digested, and discussed by its Valentinian candidates. The reworked Jewish image of the heavenly temple in the ApocPaul, now supporting Valentinian theology, was thus used by its writers to primarily distinguish the True God from the Subordinate Demiurge.

5.2 The First Apocalypse of James (NHC V, 3; CT 2)

The 1ApocJas from the Nag Hammadi Codex V and James from the Tchacos Codex (TC) are almost identical in their stories. The TC version, examined and translated in 2001, is more complete and therefore it is now possible for scholars to reconstruct previous missing parts in the NH version. That has come to change some previous understandings of the 1ApocJas. However, this new knowledge is still based on the thoroughly work made on the NH version since the 1950s.

The two copies do not show any form of dependency. Both are written in Coptic and probably translated from Greek. Different types of dating analysis (made with the help of textual parallels, radiocarbon dating, and electron microscopy) place both of the copies in the late third century, and their original composition in Greek to the late second or early third century. Both of the texts have a passage in them, (TC 20.10–21.18, NH V 33.20–34.18) that correlates with a Valentinian formula, mention by Irenaeus in Against Heresies 1.21.5. This parallel, which also contributes to the dating of the documents, has made scholars presume that the 1ApocJas is Valentinian, or that it contains Valentinian material, and that it is, in different ways, related to Valentinian (Marcosian) death rituals.

In 1969, Alexander Böhlig argued that the 1ApocJas was originally a Jewish Christian text that had then transformed within a gnostic context. Böhlig listed eleven points of evidence for that. Among other things, he mentioned the presentation of James as the brother of the Lord, and him

bearing the epithet “the Just.” Moreover, he referred to the exodus of James (and the Jerusalem Church) to Pella, James’ authority over the twelve apostles, and the objection to sacrifice.\textsuperscript{109}

Finding these parallels quite vague, William Schoedel proposed that the 1ApocJas was a docetic\textsuperscript{110} text instead. The author was using the figure of James and the events following his death in Jerusalem, as an explanation of that what was happening on earth, also took part in the heavens. In this way, the gnostic, docetic message of salvation was delivered, by the figure of James, as an alternative to the one of the emerging Orthodox Church.\textsuperscript{111} Both Schoedel and Wolf-Peter Funk placed the 1ApocJas within a Syrian Christian context. Funk states: Although the precise individual who authored this work is unknown, we can be reasonably sure that the work was composed in Syria, in some part of the Jewish community exiled from Jerusalem.\textsuperscript{112} Both of the scholars also declared that the Valentinian formula that corresponds to the one described by Irenaeus shows that the text was written after the rise of Valentinianism.\textsuperscript{113}

The reading and analysis of James in the TC version shed new light on the 1ApocJas. Scholars have even changed their minds about previously made statements about the text. Thomassen declared that: “the presence of the material in James raises the question whether James as such is to be considered a Valentinian document. I have previously suggested this myself. I now strongly doubt, however, that this is correct.”\textsuperscript{114} Thomassen provides an interesting hypothesis as to how the Valentinian formula got into the text in the first place: “…it seems likely that Valentinianism also existed as the ideological basis for the activities of religious entrepreneurs offering secret knowledge, ritual experiences and redemption in the afterlife to a more ephemeral type of clientele.”\textsuperscript{115}


\textsuperscript{110} Docetism, from the Greek “to seem,” is the belief that Jesus was never born as a human but only appeared to be human. In this way he never suffered on the cross. This was a way for some early Christians to preserve Jesus divine status from the unreasonable and repellent idea that God inhabited a human body only to suffer and die through crucifixion.


\textsuperscript{114} Thomassen, “The Valentinian Materials in James,” 80.

\textsuperscript{115} “It is in the latter kind of context that the eschatological text in Irenaeus probably belongs, both with regard to the motive for its original composition and as for its subsequent transmission and distribution. As a document offering the way to post-mortem escape from the powers and ultimate redemption, it must have possessed considerable religious market value, causing it, one may imagine, to be widely copied and to be deposited in tombs together with the dead. This document then falls into the hands of the compiler of James. He sees, probably from an inscription advertising its content, that it describes the way to achieve post-mortem apolytrosis (redemption). He then decides to use it as a central building-block in his dialogue between Jesus and James, as an item of secret knowledge imparted only to James (and hidden from the Twelve).” (Thomassen, “The Valentinian Materials in James,” 88-89.)
On the other hand, April DeConick understands the whole text as being Valentinian. It is not only the formula mentioned by Irenaeus that shows its Valentinian origins she says but: “The text assumes a Valentinian discussion of the nature of the primal Monad and its male and female polarities… and assumes distinct Valentinian doctrines such as the view that the ignorant Demiurge treated the descending Son well, like his own son.”\textsuperscript{116} DeConick does not see a problem between the portrayal of James’ martyrdom in the \textit{1ApocJas} and the general assumption that Valentinians were opposed to martyrdom.\textsuperscript{117} She understands Heracleon, the only Valentinian expressing himself about martyrdom, not as a condemner of this way of confession “with the mouth before authorities” but as a supporter instead. From her point of view, “James tells us what Valentinianism looked like in the third century, as it became more eclectic while still retaining distinctive Valentinian features. The good news is that these third-century Valentinians believed that they had the liturgy which would vanquish the cosmic powers and gain the soul its freedom. The bad news is that things on earth are not what they seem to be, and suffering is around every corner.”\textsuperscript{118} The purpose of the story told in \textit{James} is according to DeConick, to embolden Gnostic Christian readers who faced persecution and martyrdom, thus showing them that the real enemies were not the humans that arrested them but the rulers of the Demiurge who wanted to keep their spirits entrapped.

6 Analysis

6.1 The scene – The apocalyptic journey

In order to try to understand the imaginary world of the reader of the texts, the analysis will start by comparing the apocalyptic sceneries, describing how the journeys of Paul and James take form. Both of the narratives are placed in the apocalyptic genre, thus following specific patterns. Before we get to the journeys, some must be said about the genre itself.

6.1.1 The genre of apocalyptic literature- Form and function

According to the Semeia Definition, stipulated by the SBL (Society of Biblical Literature) in 1978, apocalyptic writings are:

A genre of revelatory literature with a narrative framework in which revelation is mediated by an otherworldly being to a human recipient, disclosing a transcendent reality which is both temporal,

\textsuperscript{116} DeConick, “Apostles as Archons,” 275.  
\textsuperscript{117} About this issue see Mikael C. Haxby, \textit{The First Apocalypse of James: Martyrdom and Sexual Difference} (PhD diss., Harvard University, 2013), 11-15.  
\textsuperscript{118} DeConick, “Apostles as Archons,” 276.
insofar as it envisages eschatological salvation, and spatial insofar as it involves another, supernatural world.  

In the same journal, from where this definition is quoted, Francis Fallon analyzed the apocalypses of the NHC by type and hence characterized *ApocPaul* as a revelation with a journey in dialogue form, and the *1ApocJas* as a revelation, also in dialogue form, but without a journey. This categorization is understandable and fits the *ApocPaul* very well. Nevertheless, concerning *1ApocJas* we have to keep in mind that even if there is no journey taking place in the real time of the narrative, Jesus reveals to James his post mortem journey, from beginning to end, in detail. Thus journeys are being described in both of the texts. The one experienced and the other one to be experienced.

Following Fallon’s typological pattern, Pheme Perkins emphasized the “dialogue form” as a gnostic genre in itself. In her book *The Gnostic Dialogue*, Perkins highlights a big difference between gnostic revelatory dialogues and e.g., philosophical Platonic dialogues: “...the Gnostic dialogue does not aim at an exchange of ideas and an examination of philosophical positions. The Gnostic dialogue sets of statements of Gnostic myth and teaching.”

Starting with the taxonomy of apocalypses made by the SBL and a conference on apocalypticism held at Uppsala in 1979, a more modern approach was made by scholars, in their attempts to describe and define the genre of apocalyptic literature. John J. Collins focusing on Jewish apocalypses, Adela Yarbro Collins on early Christian and Francis Fallon on gnostic ones, came to categorize them in six types within the genre. Those types emanated in their turn out of two more prominent types, *historical apocalypses*, and *otherworldly journeys*. In the earliest pre-Christian apocalypses this distinction was clear, the scholars asserted, historical apocalypses did not have otherworldly journeys (e.g., Daniel 7-12, Jubilees 23, 4 Ezra and 2 Baruch), but as time went by the two types started to overlap, thus producing different hybrids like:

119 John J. Collins, “Introduction: Towards the Morphology of a Genre,” in *Apocalypse: The Morphology of a Genre* (ed. J.J. Collins; Semeia 14; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 1979), 9; In 1979, the same year that the SBL group published its findings in Semeia 14, a conference on apocalypticism in the Mediterranean world and the Near East was held at Uppsala, resulting in a volume of essays on the topic. See David Hellholm (ed.) *Apocalypticism in the Mediterranean world and the Near East: proceedings of the International colloquium on apocalypticism*, (Uppsala, August 12-17, 1979, Mohr; Tübingen, 1983).


122 That in contrast to the *Religionsgeschichtliche Schule* with prominent names like Wilhelm Bousset (1865–1920) and Richard Reitzenstein (1861-1931). Their *history of religions school* searched after the New testaments background in Hellenistic and ancient Near East religions with many interesting and groundbreaking results. Their explanations where though, typically for their time, a bit to speculative, searching for the big answers instead of looking at the apocalyptic writings for what they were.
• Historical apocalypses with journeys. A scarce type, e.g., *The Apocalypse of Abraham* and *3 Enoch*.

• Apocalypses with cosmic or political eschatology. Such as *The book of Revelation*, *The Shepherd of Hermas*, *The Hypostasis of the Archons*, and *The Second Apocalypse of James*.

• Apocalypses with only personal eschatology. Like the *1ApocJas* and *The Apocalypse of Adam*.

• Otherworldly journeys with cosmic or political eschatology. Such as *1 Enoch 1-36*, *Similitudes of Enoch* and the *ApocPaul*.

About the same time, in 1980, Alan F. Segal looked at the broader picture of the theme, concluding that heavenly ascents follow a similar pattern, that of the relation between perfect heaven and an imperfect world. Between those worlds, a mediator appears in order to bring them together. This pattern could be found in all Near East apocalypses, according to Segal. However, the pattern changed, of course, depending on the religious and social context.\(^\text{123}\)

However, the more all this scholarship tell us about the genre and its motifs, the origins, types, and interpretation of the texts, the less it tells us about the *function* of the apocalyptic heavenly ascent. There has been more focus on the *when and where* than on the *why*. Why did people write these texts, and why did they read them? One attempt to answer this question is to be found in Leif Carlsson’s dissertation “Round trips to heaven: otherworldly travelers in early Judaism and Christianity.”\(^\text{124}\) Here, Carlsson looks at the function of eleven apocalyptic texts\(^\text{125}\) in their historical and social context, and comes up with two types of understanding. Heavenly ascents could be either “identity-providing” or “death-informing.”\(^\text{126}\)

In the first case, the visionary hero of the apocalypse attains a new identity by seeing God enthroned, something that gives the text authority and encourages the tradition group that reads it. However, in the “death-informing” texts, the visionary functions as an example of how people will experience death and the afterlife. In this case the visionary does not make it all the way up to God, but serves instead as a witness to what is going on with the souls of the dead while awaiting the End of Times.

Applying Carlsson’s two definitions to the *1ApocJas* and the *ApocPaul* they both fit both of the revelations. In the *1ApocJas*, James is told that he will be given a new identity after his martyrdom. Only then will he attain to Him-who-is, and by fusion he will no longer be James but The One-who-

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\(^{126}\) Carlsson, *Round trips to heaven*, 188.
is.” In the *ApocPaul*, something happens after his encounter with the enthroned Demiurge in the seventh heaven. Paul is free to ascent to higher realms, thus showing that he is higher in rank than the creator God. Both narratives are thus given an authoritative status similar to their protagonists and read as hero stories, and they certainly encouraged the tradition group that read them.

The texts are also “death informing” though. In the *1ApocJas* there are clear depictions on what awaits James after death. Christ tells him in detail about the powers that will try to stop him and what he is to say to them, in order to pass. As for Paul, in the fourth and fifth heaven, he becomes an eye witness to what happens to the souls. They are judged unfairly, tormented, beaten, and brought to their judgment by angels with whips. The authors of both *ApocPaul* and the *1ApocJas* were very explicit in describing what happens to the dead, both the righteous and the sinners, the *ApocPaul* being more graphic in its depiction though.

Another feature that defines apocalypses is that they mainly are entitled with pseudepigraphical names. According to Martha Himmelfarb, as to many other scholars of the genre of apocalypses, pseudepigraphy was known, accepted and organically related to the content of the apocalypse.\textsuperscript{127} The authors of apocalyptic material deliberately chose pseudepigraphy, drawing on traditions associated with a particular ancient hero. Himmelfarb describes pseudepigraphy as a social phenomenon and argues that: “apocalypses are literary documents in which the depiction of the hero’s experience needs to be understood as an act of imagination, with its specifics determined by the author’s manipulation of conventions, rather than as a literary representation of the author’s own experience.”\textsuperscript{128} The phenomenon of pseudepigraphy will be discussed later on while analyzing the choice and significance of Paul and James as the protagonists and heroes of the texts.

In summary then, regarding the genre, apocalyptic journeys are being described in both of the texts. The one journey is experienced, and the other one is to be experienced. Both of the apocalypses are in line with the Semeia Definition in all its parts. As types of otherworldly journeys, the *1ApocJas* is about personal eschatology, and the *ApocPaul* is about a cosmic one. When it comes to their function, both of the revelations could be seen as identity-providing but also death informing. Finally, both of them are pseudepigraphic with the heroes’ experiences needed to be understood imaginatively. So, what was it then that the reader imagined about Paul’s and James’ journeys? What was there to know and interpret? The two journeys will be described in short here, in order to provide a more clear picture of them, and then the analysis of the texts will go deeper into the details of their events.


\textsuperscript{128} Himmelfarb, *Ascent to heaven*, 98.
6.1.2 Paul’s journey

In the ApocPaul, it is the Holy Spirit that is disclosing a transcendent reality to Paul by guiding him up through the ten heavenly realms and showing him what to do in order to ascent. Paul is actually on his way to Jerusalem to meet his fellow apostles when he encounters the Holy Spirit in the form of a child. The child tells Paul to awaken his mind and see the invisible which exists in the visible. When Paul “awakens his mind” he looks up to the sky and sees a heavenly representation of the twelve apostles. Then Paul is raptured from the material world by the Holy Spirit, and the depiction of Paul’s journey begins in the fourth heaven. Here Paul witnesses a soul being tormented by angels and then prosecuted for her sinful passions on earth. The trial does not end well for the soul, which is condemned to be cast down to the material world and reincarnate.\(^{129}\)

Paul also has an “out of body experience” in the fourth heaven. He looks down upon the earth and sees his material body walking together with the twelve apostles while the Holy Spirit is leading their way. In the fifth heaven, Paul sees four angels who are quarreling with one another, driving souls to their judgment with whips. In the sixth heaven, Paul meets his fellow apostles, and he sees a great light shining down from above. At the gate of the seventh heaven, Paul encounters a guard in the form of a toll collector. Paul tells him to open the gate, and the gatekeeper obeys. Then, in the seventh heaven, the Hebdomad, Paul meets an old man with white clothes. He has a throne,\(^{130}\) and the place is shining seven times brighter than the sun. The scenery much resembles the visions of Daniel (Dan7:9) and Enoch (2 Enoch 20-38) and their encounter with YHWH. Scholars commonly agree on the fact that the old man in the seventh heaven is the Demiurge. That is due to the polite but, still, unpleasant interrogation of Paul and the threat of not letting him escape the old man’s dominions and authorities.\(^{131}\) However, by providing him with the correct answers and giving the

\(^{129}\) The idea of the judgment of the soul and reincarnation is also to be found in Greek classical work as in Plato’s “Phaedon”. There, in a dialogue between Socrates and his friends, one learns that the souls of the incurably bad people go to Tartarus (Hell). Other bad people get reincarnated, according to their persona, into the bodies of bad animals such as donkeys and wolves. Decent people reincarnate as better animals or as people. Holy, virtuous people pass on to the “Pure Abode” and finally the philosophers end up in an even better place who according to Socrates is hard to describe. For a modern translation see Moses Mendelssohn, Phaedon, or on the immortality of the soul (Peter Lang Publishing Inc, 2006).

\(^{130}\) Some translators of the ApocPaul have the word throne (οπονος) in their translations and others do not. Due to a lacuna on page 22 line 27, the reconstruction of it varies. Murdock and MacRae’s translation uses οπονος: “[His throne] which is in the seventh heaven, was brighter than the sun by [seven] times.”(William R. Murdock and George W. MacRae. “The Apocalypse of Paul,” in The Coptic gnostic library Vol.3, 46-63). Kaler’s translation in Flora Tells a Story, 4, does not make any effort of reconstructing this passage because of the damage of the document and the generic form of the remaining descriptive items. However, Marvin Meyers translation is also using the reconstruction with οπονος: “[His throne] which is in the seventh heaven, was [seven] times brighter than the sun.” (Madeleine Scopello and Marvin Meyer. “The Revelation of Paul: NHC V,2,” in The Nag Hammadi Scriptures (ed. Meyer, Marvin New York: HarperOne 2008), 313-319).

old man a sign, Paul escapes and then goes up to the Ogdoad, the eighth heaven, where he once more sees the twelve apostles welcoming him.

One could guess that here is where the story ends, while the Ogdoad is the highest realm in Valentinian mythology. However Paul continues, he goes up to the ninth realm where he greets “those in the ninth heaven,” and finally he ascends to the tenth heaven, where he greets “his fellow spirits.” The scenery of the ApocPaul is thus very simple. The focus of the story lies on the protagonist Paul, his angelus interpres in the form of the Holy Spirit and the bad guys: the toll collectors and gatekeepers and the old man with all of his dominions and authorities.

The angels who torment the souls give the impression of a harsh and violent environment, something that one does not want to be a part of. This hostile environment starts in the fourth heaven with the judgment of the soul, and it continues up to the seventh heaven with the threats of the old man. It comes to an end in the Ogdoad, where Paul sees the familiar faces of the apostles, and they welcome him. In the ninth and tenth heaven, a sense of relief and security is given due to the greetings between Paul and the inhabitants of the realms.

6.1.3 James journey to come

James post mortem journey, told by Christ, does not occupy the whole text but is a central part of it. Starting on page 33 in the NH version, where Christ says that he will reveal to James his redemption, it ends on page 36, where James is instructed to keep these secrets hidden within him, and only reveal them to Addai. In contrast to the heavenly journey of Paul, James journey is not depicted as an ascent through different realms. It is only one realm that Christ describes, that is the place between physical death and “Him- who-is”.

Christ tells James that soon after his martyrdom, James will be seized by a multitude of hostile beings. First by three toll-collectors who receive toll for sins, but also blocking the way of the souls’ ascent. Here James is instructed to provide one of them, their guard, with specific answers to his questions. James is to answer as to who he is and where he comes from. Moreover, he has to give an accurate explanation of the nature of Achamoth and her offspring, and finally answer where he is.

133 For the significance and meaning of greetings see Kaler, Flora Tells a Story, 214 ff. The theme is also discussed on page 41 in the present thesis
135 In the TC version the passage starts from 20.1 and continues to 22.16.
136 Addai (אֲדָדָא) is the Syrian name for Thaddeus who according to tradition was one of the 72 apostles that Jesus sent ahead of him in pairs (See Luke 10:1). According to Eusebious, Thaddeus was sent to Edessa by Thomas Didymus in order to heal king Agbar V of Osroene. By succeeding he also managed to convert the king and his people. During the fourth century, the story told by Eusebious was rewritten and elaborated by Ephrem the Syrian. A text called The doctrine of Addai exists from 400 CE.
going. After giving the toll collector the correct answers, James will be able to escape and avoid further attacks.

Christ goes on, telling James that there is another scenario possible too. James might be caught by those three, called detainers, and in order to escape them, he has to tell them the truth about their mother Achamoth. The truth is that she conceived them by herself, without a male, and that they, therefore, are inferior to James, who is a “more honored vessel” than their mother. By telling the toll collectors about their true roots, they will fall into confusion, and then they will let James go up to what is his. Here there is, unfortunately, a lacuna in the text from the NH version, with two lines missing. In the TC version, though, we are told that James will return to his roots when the toll collectors fall into confusion, “his roots being the fetters that are their fetters.”

With the two apocalypses described in short, it is now time to analyze the different parts and features of their stories.

6.1.4 Ascent and rapture – The call for adventure

One may be only casually strolling, when something catches the wandering eye and lures one away from the frequented paths of man.

When Martha Himmelfarb was searching for ritual practices and techniques of ascent in Jewish and early Christian apocalyptic literature, she found some interesting facts about the genre instead. 1) The process of ascent is initiated not by the visionary himself but by God. 2) There seems to be coexistence between two different kinds of understandings of ascent in the world of the apocalypses. That is the automatic ascent of the righteous after death and the rapture of the visionary privileged to ascend during life. Himmelfarb’s findings correlates with the ascents being described in the ApocPaul and the 1ApocJas.

137 In the TC version the adjective describing the vessel (σκεύος) is “honoured” (τιμημένος). In an article concerning the death rites of the Marcosians, Nicola Denzey Lewis describes this “vessel” as the spirit-soul aggregate that is released from the body after death. See Nicola Denzey Lewis, ”Apolytrosis as Ritual and Sacrament: Determining a Ritual Context for Death in Second-Century Marcosian Valentinianism”, JECS 17 (2009): 544-535. The term is also to be found in The Gospel of Philip (63.6 –11) where “vessels of clay” are compared to the better “vessels of glass” which are made through a breath. This could, according to Denzey Lewis, be understood as that the Demiurge is only able to produce bodies with souls but that he can not endow them with a spirit. Spiritual people are though imbued with spirit and they can therefore use the formula “I am a vessel more precious than Achamoth” when they meet the hostile powers of the Demiurge after death. The vessel-metaphor is also used in The Gospel of Truth. Here it is first used for describing the state of different soul-spirits: some are empty, some are full, some are poured out and so on (25.25-26.19). Then the term shows up again, this time connected to the ritual of anointment: Full vessels are the ones that are usually anointed (36. 21-23).

138 Campbell, The hero with a thousand faces, 58.


140 Himmelfarb, “The Practice of Ascent,” 133.
In the *ApocPaul*, the Holy Spirit reveals itself by saying that it knows who Paul is: “You are the one who was blessed from his mother’s womb” \(εχε \ ηλθόκ νε \ ηλαύκχογ έροκ \ χιν \ ηλνο \ ηλτη \ ηπηλλαγγ \).\(^{141}\) “For I have [come] to you that you may [go up to Jerusalem] to your fellow [apostles. ‘And] for this reason [you were called and]’ \(ετ\[βε] \ ηλι \ ηλνο \ ητο \ έροκ \ ηλω \).\(^{142}\) “I am the [Spirit who accompanies] you. Let [your mind awaken]...” (NH V 18.15-23). The imperative sentence “Let your mind awaken” (\(\ ηλτογοκ ηλεκνογ \)) is used twice at the beginning of the revelation. The second time it is connected with two other vital imperatives, namely see and know: “Let your mind awaken Paul and ‘see’ (\(\ ηλνα \)) that this mountain upon which you are standing is the mountain of Jericho, so that you may ‘know’ (\(\ ηκωμα \)) the hidden things in those who are visible.” Paul is urged to awaken his mind and to become a visionary in order to receive gnosis. He is in a privileged position, blessed before coming to material existence, and called by God. The Holy Spirit is thus sent to Paul in order to help him ascent and understand the meaning of the vision to come.

After being notified by the Holy Spirit that Paul is standing on the mountain of Jericho the Holy Spirit “raptures him” (\(\ λακτωρι ηλλο \)) up on high to the third heaven, and then up to the fourth. This passage links the *ApocPaul* with 2 Corinthians 12:2-5 where Paul tells about a man that was raptured up to the third heaven.\(^{143}\) In Irenaeus second book of Against Heresies, in chapter 30, Irenaeus criticizes the Valentinians for using this passage in order to elevate the apostle Paul and by doing that, elevate themselves above the Creator God. Remember, for Irenaeus, the Demiurge is equated with God, and he is therefore appalled by the way Valentinians describe him. The chapter is called “Absurdity of their styling themselves spiritual, while the Demiurge is declared to be animal.” When it comes to the content of chapter 30, it seems almost like Irenaeus has read the *ApocPaul* or that the author of the *ApocPaul* has read Irenaeus:

For if it is true that he (Paul) was becoming acquainted with that order of things which is above the Demiurge, he would by no means have remained in the regions of the Demiurge, and that so as not even thoroughly to explore even these (for, according to their manner of speaking, there still lay before him four heavens, if he were to approach the Demiurge, and thus behold the whole seven lying beneath him); but he might have been admitted, perhaps, into the intermediate place, that is, into the

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141 But when God, who had set me apart before I was born and called me through his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son to me, so that I might proclaim him among the Gentiles. In Greek the passage “before I was born” actually reads “in my mother’s womb” \(ε \ \ο ηλι \ ηλι \ ημολ \ \ ηυ \). (Gal 1:15-16).

142 This translation follows Murdock and MacRae’s reconstruction of the lacuna on page 18 line 20. Kaler and Rosenstiehl propose another solution for the lacuna with \(ετ\[βε] \ ηλι \ ηλνο\) \(\ έροκ \ λλω \). I was sent to you. Given the fact that the author of the *ApocPaul* seems to take much inspiration from Galatians 1:15-17 I am in favor for the “you were called” reconstruction. In Galatians Paul says: “But when God, who set me apart from my mother’s womb (\(ε \ ηλι \ ηλι \ \ ηλω \ ημολ \ \ ηυ \)) and called me by his grace (\(κα \ ηλε \ ηκ \ \ ηλι \ ημολ \ ηυ \)) was pleased to reveal his Son in me so that I might preach him among the Gentiles, my immediate response was not to consult any human being. I did not go up to Jerusalem to see those who were apostles before I was.”

143 I know a person in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know; God knows. And I know that such a person—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know; God knows—was caught up into Paradise and heard things that are not to be told, that no mortal is permitted to repeat. On behalf of such a one I will boast, but on my own behalf I will not boast, except of my weaknesses. (2 Cor 12:2-5).
presence of the Mother, that he might receive instruction from her as to the things within the Pleroma. For that inner man (Paul’s Spirit) which was in him, and spoke in him, as they say, though invisible, could have attained not only to the third heaven, but even as far as the presence of their Mother (Achamoth/Sophia). For if they maintain that they themselves, that is, their [inner] man, at once ascends above the Demiurge, and departs to the Mother, much more must this have occurred to the [inner] man of the apostle; for the Demiurge would not have hindered him, being, as they assert, himself already subject to the savior. But if he had tried to hinder him, the effort would have gone for nothing. For it is not possible that he should prove stronger than the providence of the Father, and that when the tuner man is said to be invisible even to the Demiurge. But since he (Paul) has described that assumption of himself up to the third heaven as something great and pre-eminent, it cannot be that these men ascend above the seventh heaven, for they are certainly not superior to the apostle.¹⁴⁴

Not a subject for this thesis though, I leave the assumption of the connection between Irenaeus and the *ApocPaul* aside.¹⁴⁵ However, it is at this point interesting to notice that Irenaeus claim of the Valentinian misuse of Paul’s ascent in 2 Corinthians, described in this way, correlates with the cosmology and the plot described in the *ApocPaul*. It also confirms, if one goes along with Irenaeus account, the Valentinian thought of Paul’s ascent as reaching higher above the Demiurge, thus presupposing that also themselves, or more correct their spirits would reach a higher state. Irenaeus does not mention the Ogdoad, but he does mention the realm of the Mother, the intermediate place, and the Pleroma. The Paul of the *ApocPaul* is in this way an archetype of the Valentinian Christian, demonstrating the power that his/her spirit possess. In other apocalyptic literature, Christian and Jewish alike, the highest point which a visionary can attain is by (the often enthroned) God. There is no surpassing because that would be an impossible situation.

Comparatively, James journey starts in a gentler kind of way. He does not get raptured. In the very beginning of the 1*ApocJas*, Jesus tells him: “See now the completion of my ‘redemption’(swte). I have given you a sign of this things James, my brother. For not without reason have I called you my brother, although you are not my brother materially.” (NH V, 3 24.12-16) The “although you are not my brother materially” (ἐντὸς πάντος ἡμῶν οὐκ ὄντας ἄν) indicates that the author used the traditional concept of James (as being the biological brother of Christ) and transformed it into a gnostic one. If the brother is not material, then he is to be understood as a spiritual one. The privileged position as Jesus spiritual brother is one reason as to why Christ decides to share the secrets of his redemption with him. Later on, we get to know another reason.

¹⁴⁴ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 2.30.7.3-4.

¹⁴⁵ The topic has already been discussed. See Michael Kaler, Louis Painchaud and Marie-Pierre Bussières, “The Coptic Apocalypse of Paul, Irenaeus’ Adversus Haereses 2.30.7, and the Second-Century Battle for Paul’s Legacy.” JECs 12 (2014) : 173-193. The scholars came to the conclusion that the *ApocPaul* was probably written due to a dialogue between orthodox and heterodox Christians over the meaning and nature of Paul’s ascension in 2 Cor 12.2–4. The similarities between Irenaeus account and the *ApocPaul* are the result of a commonality of purpose. “Both authors are constructing accounts of Paul’s ascension that draw on Valentinian speculation, and both are using 2 Cor 12.2–4. But while the author of the Apoc.Paul wants to show that Paul’s ascension complements Valentinian beliefs, Irenaeus wants to show that it contradicts them” (p. 189). In summary, the scholars neither believe that Irenaeus influenced the author of the *ApocPaul* or that Irenaeus was influenced by the same.
After his passion, Christ reveals himself to James on the mountain of Gaugelan. James is in the act of praying when Christ appears to him, and because of that, he stops. James then embraces and kisses his “brother.” The exchange of greetings and kisses was a well known motif in early Christianity and it was used in both gnostic and hermetic writings. Their symbolic meaning was either connected with the ritual of baptism or with the recognition of one belonging to a community of baptized Christians. In the ApocPaul, Paul gets greeted by the apostles after his “awakening” and greets his fellow spirit after giving the Demiurge the sign. Michael Kaler connects therefore the sign with the act of baptism and the greetings of the apostles with the acceptance of Paul into the gnostic community.

In the 1ApocJas, Christ tells James that what he just did (that he stopped the prayer and recognized him) shows that James has become “sober” (νήφε, νήφος). He stopped his praying to the “Just Demiurge” as “James the Just” (ἀκωβος πάικαος) recognizing the true God instead. Therefore he gets to keep the epithet “the Just” but now as “a just man of God.” (οὐκαίαος ὶτε πνοῦτε) (NH V 31.1-32.8, TC 17.1-18.25) With his act of embracing and kissing Christ, James recognizes the Savior, as the first one to be “baptized”, that is resurrected and redeemed.

Once more, the author alters here the meaning of tradition. In this case, it is the epithet “The Just” that is by tradition given to the apostle James for his ascetic living at the Temple, and his compassion for his poor fellow Jews. However, in the 1ApocJas, the epithet is understood as standing in connection to the Just Demiurge. After becoming sober and clear about the truth, James is now the just man of God, of the real God, of the “One Who Is”, instead of the Demiurge. At the end of the 1ApocJas, this is confirmed when some people announce that they will not take part in the killing of James: “We have no part in this blood, for a just man will perish through injustice (Τὴν κοινωνίαν επείσχων ἵνα οὐράμη γὰρ ἴακαίαος εὐκατάκο γείν οὐχίθι δαίκος).” (NH V 43. 16-21).

The recognition of “the Just God” as the Demiurge, is also the subject of matter in the Valentinian teacher Ptolemy’s letter to his initiate Flora. In his letter, Ptolemy is trying to explain to Flora the

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146 See Rosenstiehl and Kaler, L’Apocalypse de Paul, 204-205; Julio César Dias Chaves, Nag Hammadi Codex V and Late Antique Coptic Hagiographies : A Comparative Approach, PhD diss (Université Laval, 2018), 251-259.

147 Kaler, Flora Tells a Story, 215-217.

148 The term of becoming “sober” (νήφος, νήφειν) is a metaphor for seeing things clearly or with a clear mind after receiving knowledge. In the Gospel of Truth (NH I, 3 22.1-18), the one who has received the knowledge about where he comes from and where he is about to go, is like a drunk person who “has shaken of his drunkenness.” (Translation made by Jörgen Jörgen Magnusson, Rethinking the Gospel of truth, 102).

149 We get to know this thanks to the TC version that in contrast to the NH version does not contain as much lacuna in this particular passage: “But watch out, because ‘the just God is angry’ (πνοῦτε πάικαος νοῦς), for you have been ‘a servant’ (σλα) to him, and that is why you received the name ‘James the just’ (ἀκωβος πάικαος). See, already have you been ‘released’ (κακ ἐγόα), since you will know me and you will know yourself, and you yourself stopped the prayer that the just God prayed.” (TC 2, 18.16-25)
nature of the Demiurge. He is neither good or bad, he says, but somewhere in between. The Demiurge is “just” but in the wrong kind of way. It is not this justice the spiritual should look up to. Now, if Ptolemy actually thought this way or if it was just an attempt to downplay a hostile view of the Creator God, in order not to scare Flora away, that we do not know. However, we do know that Valentinians attributed the Demiurge as “the Just God” and that the term is used in the 1ApocJas, in order to explain the correct interpretation of the epithet of James.

Now, many scholars assume that the text was used as preparation for martyrdom or in order to face persecution. To me, it seems though more likely that the 1ApocJas is more about a critique of the interpretation of the Jewish law and the Jewish tradition than it is about ways of facing martyrdom. Well-known to have died as a martyr, James’ story is used in order to demonstrate “correct” interpretations of God, justice, suffering, salvation, and even martyrdom. Clement of Alexandria was mocking Valentinians for being cowards in their refusal to die as martyrs. However, Valentinian texts are not against martyrdom and suffering per se. They are merely criticizing a theology that promises man that he will overcome death through suffering martyrdom. That is what I think that the 1ApocJas is trying to say. The martyrdom of James is not the answer to his salvation, it is merely a gate, among many, for the spiritual to use his knowledge on his way to salvation. Seeing James as a martyr hero is not contradictory to the story, however. The reader gets to know new ways in interpreting the actions and the persona of a well-known hero-stereotype, the martyr.

Going back to the beginning of the 1ApocJas, when Jesus is still alive, we also get to know in which way James will receive the knowledge about Christ’s and about his own true nature. Jesus tells him: “And I am not ‘ignorant’ (αὐτέμε) concerning you, so that, when I give you a ‘sign’ (μαεῖν)152, –‘know and hear’ (εἰμεν οὖς καῦτί).” (NH V 24.16-18). In the TC version the word μαεῖν does not appear at all. The same passage quoted above goes: “You are ‘ignorant’ (αὐτογγυνε) concerning yourself, so that I shall tell you who I am. ‘Listen!’ (καῦτι) (TC 10.5-8).

Then Christ explains to James that it is first after his physical death that James will be able to

150 Ptolemy writes: For if the Law was not ordained by the perfect God himself, as we have already taught you, nor by the devil, a statement one cannot possibly make, the legislator must be some one other than these two. In fact, he is the demiurge and maker of this universe and everything in it; and because he is essentially different from these two and is between them, he is rightly given the name, intermediate. And if the perfect God is good by nature, in fact he is, for our Savior declared that there is only a single good God, his Father whom he manifested; and if the one who is the opposite nature is evil and wicked, characterized by injustice; then the one situated between the two is neither good nor evil or unjust, but can properly be called just, since he is the arbitrator of the justice which is his. On the one hand, this god will be inferior to the perfect God and the lower than his justice, since he is generated and not ungenerated. (Ptolemy’s letter to Flora. Translation from http://gnosis.org/library/flora.htm (Last retrieved: 2019-06-04)).


152 The word μαεῖν appears four times in the NH version but not at all in the TC version. However, this can not be related to the “sign” in the ApocPaul which uses the Greek word σημίων instead of μαεῖν.
If you want to give them (the Archons of the realms) a number now, you will not be able to do so until you ‘cast away from yourself blind thought, this bond of flesh, which encircles you.’ (ε&ξοκ ημικοινα ηκελαν ηείκας ετκοτε εροκ ηκε τερας:) And then you will reach ‘Him-who-is’ (πετβοοο). And you will no longer be James; ‘rather you are The One-who-is’ (αλλα ηικοκ πε πι ετσουοο-’)’ (NH V 27.1-10). After his passion, Christ comes back from the other side to give James more detailed information.

To sum up, God selected both of the protagonists sending them supernatural aid through a protective figure. Even if God is not mentioned in the ApocPaul, the Holy Spirit was sent by someone, and Paul was called. As for James, he is also called to a post mortem journey, but being afraid and distressed about the matter, Christ has to explain to him about the truth and of what lies ahead. James goal is to merge with God and thus become divine. Paul is having a vision while still alive, but James must first die in order to experience the same transcendent reality. Paul is chosen from his mother’s womb, James is chosen because of the spiritual bond of brotherhood that exists between him and Christ. Paul is exhorted to see in order to receive gnosis (see and know) while James is told to listen (hear and know).

Concerning then Himmelfarb’s two types of ascent, it could not be more clear of a distinction between 1ApocJas and ApocPaul. James story is about the automatic ascent of the righteous after death. However, in contrast to Jewish apocalypses, his righteousness is explained in a whole other way. The gnostic interpretation of “James the Just” is not as tradition has it. It is rather a critique of the Jewish interpretation of the word “Just” itself, and in that way, also a critique of the Demiurge, “the Just God,” which is a typical Valentinian attribute of him. According to Jesus instructions, James will face some big trouble ahead, but the reader is quite convinced that everything will work out for him because James is Just in the right kind of way and he also possesses the knowledge. The narrative confirms it when Christ tells him: “Now since you are a just man of God, you have embraced and kissed me. Truly, I say to you that you have stirred up great anger and wrath against yourself. But this has happened so that these others might come to be.” (NH V 32.6–12).

As for Paul, the ApocPaul portrays his ascent, like that of the privileged visionary’s, starting by rapture. Contrary to James, Paul does not die; he ascends in order to get to know the “hidden things,” and then he returns to share this knowledge with other spirituals. Following Campbell’s nuclear unit of the monomyth (separation-initiation-return), the ApocPaul is the perfect example:

A hero ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder: fabulous forces are there encountered and a decisive victory is won: the hero comes back from his mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his fellow man. 

154 Campbell, The hero with a thousand faces, 30.
However, the journey of ascent is not “a walk in the park” just because the hero is a privileged visionary or a righteous man of God. The journey of ascent demands knowledge of different kinds – knowledge about the truth as well as practical knowledge in the form of formulas and secret numbers. Knowledge is not just given however, but requires hard work.\(^{155}\) James needs to know the correct way to pass through the guards. Paul needs to know how to escape the guards of the realms too, and how to correspond to the Demiurge in the seventh heaven. In order then to get this knowledge (and thereby transfer it to the reader), Paul needs to see and understand some horrible things, and James needs to listen and memorize.

6.1.5 Jerusalem – The world navel

The effect of the successful adventure of the hero is the unlocking and release again of the flow of life into the body of the world… The torrent pours from an invisible source, the point of entry being the center of the symbolic circle of the universe around which the world may be said to revolve. Beneath this spot is the earth supporting head of the cosmic serpent, the dragon, symbolical of the waters of the abyss, which are the divine life creative energy and substance of the demiurge, the world-generative aspect of immortal being.\(^{156}\)

In the very beginning of the ApocPaul, Paul is looking for the way to Jerusalem and asks a child (the Holy Spirit) for directions. “[By which] road [shall I go] up to [Jerusalem]?” (εἰναβοχὶ γῇ ᾠῳ ἔγεραι εοίην (NH V 18.4-5). The child answers him that he will show him the way if he tells him his name. When the child later explains that it already knows who Paul is, it tells him: “I have come to you that you may go up to Jerusalem to your fellow apostles.” (εἰνὰ ἡ[ει] ἐροκ ἔχε ἐκνα[ρῳκ] εἰρα[μ] [εο[η] ὁλ η[εκφρ[π αποκτολο]] (NH V 18.17-19). After the exhortation for Paul to “awaken” at the mountain of Jericho, the child spirit says that it is to the twelve apostles that Paul must go, and they will “greet” (παταιζε) him as “elect spirits” (ζηνιθα εψοτηθ) (NH V 19.15-18).

Because then Paul gets raptured up to heaven, where he encounters the spiritual form of the twelve apostles in the fifth heaven and later on in the Ogdoad, one understands that the Jerusalem which the child spirit implies is the heavenly one (see Galatians 4:26). In the fourth heaven, Paul is told to “look and see” (ἰψετι φησι εναι) down upon his “likeness” (εἰ[ε]) on earth. When Paul looks

\(^{155}\) The pursuit of knowledge was not an easy task for the educated elite of the Greco Roman world. Both money, time and effort was invested in order to achieve the status of an intellectual. The way of education was described by the second century satirist Lucian as climbing up a steep hill with the students struggling to come up to the top. Some of them managed to get there and enjoy the view. Others though, turned back grasping for breath and dripping with sweat. The difficulties of studying and the toilsome road was then very well incorporated into the intellectual grown up. Knowledge was equal with hard work. See Raffaella Cribiore, Gymnastics of the mind. Greek education in Hellenistic and Roman Egypt (Princeton N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2001).

\(^{156}\) Campbell, The hero with a thousand faces, 40-41.
down upon the “creation” (κτίσις), he sees the twelve apostles walking on his left and right side (NH V 19.26-20.5).

So, there is an essential distinction between the earthly Jerusalem and the heavenly one, as it is between the earthly apostles and the spiritual ones,\(^{157}\) who by the end of the ApocPaul dwell in the Ogdoad. Paul goes further though, up to the ninth and tenth heaven, thus showing his spiritual superiority over the twelve. However, the reader gets to know that Paul is going back to the earthly Jerusalem to “take captive the captivity”. He makes a promise about that, while facing the Demiurge in the seventh heaven. In Galatians 4:25-26, Paul compares the city of Jerusalem to Hagar, the slave wife of Abraham, who is in slavery with her children. That is unlike the “Jerusalem above, who is free” (ἡ δὲ ἡροουσαλήμ ἐλευθέρα ἐστίν) he states. Thus, Jerusalem on earth is a bad place and as such meant to be destroyed. However, Jerusalem in the heavens is redemption.

The concept of the two Jerusalems was wide spread and accepted both by Christians and Jews. The author of the ApocPaul though, wants to explain the duplex form of the city in a gnostic way. By telling people in Jerusalem about the true nature of the city (that it is a slave to the Demiurge and his rulers), Paul has a chance to help restore the unbalance in cosmos by collecting spirits to the heavenly Jerusalem. The Holy Spirit has shown Paul in his vision that both the city and the apostles, that he initially was on his way to see, only are types of their real manifestations in heaven.

The negative view of the earthly Jerusalem is much more outspoken in the 1ApoJas though. Jesus tells James that he ought to leave (separate from) Jerusalem (αλλὰ ἡροουσαλήμ εὖ ἀναθημα) “for it is She who always gives the cup of bitterness to the sons of light. She is a dwelling place of a great number of Archons.” (ταὶ γὰρ τετῇ ἡματικῇ ἄνωτε ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν ἡ ἡροουσαλήμ ἐντὸς ποιοεῖν· οὐμα χωαπε πε ἤνοικαν πε ἤνοικαν Ταύρωσος) (NH V 25.15-19). Compared to the TC version, we understand that, after his stoning, James is not to “return,” but understand his separation from Jerusalem as a means for his redemption (αλλὰ ὑπὲρτα· τεθη εὐποιαὶ ἀναθημα) (TC 11.23-24). James will take another way, after his death. Just as Paul is rerouting from the earthly to the heavenly Jerusalem and then back again, James shall walk the same path in the afterlife as Christ. Right after the crucifixion, Christ will first encounter the rulers himself, and then bring back the information about how to deal with them to James. This will happen only when Christ himself is redeemed (TC 10.1-11.14-15, NH V 24.12-25.8).\(^{158}\)

\(^{157}\) About this correspondence between heaven and earth, April DeConick writes: “The Gnostic literature is obsessed with mapping the correspondence between the heavens and the earth. The reason for this is that the Gnostic Christian systems of salvation depend upon altering the cosmic structures, physically changing the universe from a cage that traps the spirit to a portal that frees it.”

\(^{158}\) That the Savior himself is redeemed is a motif that, as far as Einar Thomassen knows, is only to be found in Valentinian texts. See Thomassen, “The Valentinian Materials in James,” 89, footnote 42.
When the redeemed Christ comes back and tells James of what he now knows about the rulers and their mother and the formulas of free passage et cetera, he asks James to keep everything “hidden” (_'.$200%_401_) and only reveal it to Addai when James “departs” (NH V 36.14-16). In the TC version, we get to know the same thing. Christ says: “You must keep these things I have said hidden, and they will be in your heart and you will be quiet about them. But you will reveal them to Addai ‘when you depart from the flesh’ (_'.$200%_402_ $\text{2}^\text{OTAN EK\text{M}E\text{NE E\text{BO}L E\text{N} T\text{C}\text{AR}\text{E}}$)” (TC 23.10-15).

Immediately after his martyrdom, Christ tells James, a war will break loose in the land. “[Weep]” (NH V 36.17-19) “and She will drink her cup (of bitterness), for She has angered the God who dwells in Jerusalem” (TC 23. 17-19). The passage alludes to the destruction of the city in 70 AD which, according to tradition, was a punishment from God because of the execution of James the Just. In this version of altered tradition, it is Christ and James who have angered the Just God (the Demiurge) and in that way brought about the destruction of the city. This was meant to happen, not as a punishment for the killing of Christ and James, but in order for the spirituals to understand that they are slaves, living in an illusion. Their beloved city of Jerusalem is not the real one.

At the end of James’ story, in the TC version, we get to know that James is mistaken for another man, also named James, who is in prison and about to be executed. Even if many people understand that James is innocent, they still condemn him to be stoned. The last words that James utters are the forgiving words of Christ on the cross in Luke 23:34: “Father forgive them for they do not know what they are doing.” James last words in the TC version are: “My father who are in the heavens, forgive them for they do not know what they are doing.” Once more, the ignorant people of Jerusalem, those without the knowledge, are killing an innocent man. However, “this must happen in order for the other things might come to be.” (NH V 32.12).

The verse of the forgiving praying Jesus, only found in Luke, is a typical feature of Luke in his depiction of Jesus as calm and in control, even while facing death. In his blog “The History and Literature of Early Christianity,” Bart Ehrman comments on the verse: “More concerned with the fate of others than himself; it shows Jesus in prayer, a distinctive emphasis of Luke, long recognized; the prayer itself embodies the motif of ignorance, a notion used throughout Luke-Acts to account for Jesus’ unlawful execution.” To highlight the connection of the theme “Jerusalem as

159 The reconstruction of the lacuna with the word “weep” $\text{47\text{a} [\text{M} \text{PH\text{H}}]}$ does not seem to fit the text when compared to the TC version. There we get to know that He who dwells in Jerusalem is the angry God. Maybe a better reconstruction of the lacuna in question could read “Do not be afraid of him who dwells in Jerusalem.” ($\text{47\text{a} E\text{A}T\text{H \text{E} N}}$).
160 About the way this assertion came to be, namely Eusebius falsely quoting Josephus, see Painter, Just James, 132-133.
the place of ignorance and rulers” between the gospel of Luke and the 1ApocJas, let us look at two examples from Acts.

In Acts 3:11-26, Peter talks to the Israelites in Solomon’s portico, after healing a disabled beggar. Peter upbraids the crowd for being amazed by the miracle and tells them that he was only able to heal the man by the power of Jesus Name. Jesus, that “Holy and Righteous One” (τὸν ᾧ δίκαιον καὶ δίκαιον) that they had handed over and rejected in the presence of Pilate, and even asked to have a murderer given to them instead. To this we are witnesses (ἡ ἐμεῖς μάρτυρες ἐσμέν), Peter continues. However, Peter understands that they acted this way because they did not know better: “And now, friends, I know that ‘you acted in ignorance’ (κατὰ γνώμα πράξατε), as did also ‘your rulers’ (οἱ ἄρχοντες ὑμῶν). In this way God fulfilled what he had foretold through all the prophets, that his Ἀγίος Messiah would suffer.”

Then in Acts 13:13-28, Paul is addressing members of a synagogue in Antioch of Pisidia. He tells them about the deeds against Jesus in Jerusalem: “Because the residents of Jerusalem ‘and their leaders’ (καὶ οἱ ἄρχοντες αὐτῶν) did not recognize him or understand (ἀναγνωσκόμενας) the words of the prophets that are read every Sabbath, they fulfilled those words by condemning him. Even though they found no cause for a sentence of death, they asked Pilate to have him killed.”

In both of the accounts mentioned in Acts by Luke, Jesus is described as a righteous victim of injustice, but not as a victim of evil but of ignorance. That is the ignorance of the people in Jerusalem and their rulers. However, according to Luke, Jesus was destined to die on the cross, in order to fulfill the prophecies. Now, when it comes to the 1ApocJas and the martyrdom of James, the story uses the tradition about the suffering, cause, and destiny of Christ’s death, replacing it with that of James’. However, this imitation of Christ (imitatio Christi), common in stories of martyrdom, goes beyond ways of understanding redemption by suffering and dying like Christ. The imitation of the righteous sufferer in the 1ApocJas is used in order to explain the real situation in Jerusalem, as the dwelling place of ignorance, the Demiurge and his Archons. Moreover, the deaths of Christ and that of the imitating James are also necessary, not because they are predestined by the prophets, but in order for the spirituals to become aware as to how they shall free themselves.

6.1.6 The twelve apostles

In the ApocPaul, the apostle’s true nature, their spirits, reside in the Ogdoad, and as we understand, Paul surpasses them by going even further up. In the 1ApocJas, the “earthly” apostles are depicted in a much more complex way. According to April DeConick the twelve apostles in the
1ApocJas correspond to the twelve Archons, who rule the twelve heavens, each consisting of a hebdomad. Before the discovery of the Tchacos Codex this passage was unreadable in the NH version. But now we know what Jesus explains to James about the twelve Archons. He tells him that when James dies, he must number the Archons in order to pass through them. He does not need to do so with all of them, but only the first twelve. James is astonished by this news and asks Jesus if it is really twelve hebdomads and not seven, as they are in the scripture. Jesus confirms that by saying: "James, he who spoke concerning the scripture had a limited understanding (ΙΑΚΩΒΟΣ ΠΕΤΑΦΩΛΧΕ ἈΣ ΤΕΙΓΡΑΦΗ ΕΙΛΑΦΕΟΟΥΝ ΧΑ ΠΕΙΝΑ). I however, shall reveal to you what has come forth from him who has no number." (NH V 26.6-10). Then he goes on explaining to James that these twelve Archons have seventy-two subordinates under their power. At the end of the story, before James martyrdom, Christ goes to the twelve apostles and rebukes them and “casts out of them contentment concerning the way of knowledge” (NH V 42.20-24).

“The teaching that the twelve apostles are Archons is a concept deeply depended on ancient astrology, imploded within Gnostic environments,” DeConick explains. “The baseline thought-form of astrology in antiquity is captured in the Hermetic maxim, “as above, so below,” as well as Jesus’ prayer “as in heaven, so on earth.” It is characterized adequately as the reality of heaven-and-earth correspondences, that vertical, analogous, symmetric vision of the world, where what happens in the heavens also happens on earth. The corresponding relationship between the heavenly event and the earthly one was often viewed as simultaneous. The meaning of the dual events needed to be probed in order to grasp what was really going on.”

DeConick summarizes that the twelve apostles in the 1ApocJas, are types of the twelve Archons. Their seventy-two subordinate powers that are arranged in twin pairs (σοεις) are the seventy-two disciples that Jesus sent before him two by two (See Luke 10:1 and the legend about Thaddeus (Addai) on page 37 footnote 136). These powers are armed against Jesus and by so, against James too. They are further aligned with the people in Jerusalem, who are ignorant and forgetful, and because of that, they condemn these righteous men to their death. Among the people are the twelve Archons who correspond to the disciples, whom Jesus returns to and rebukes in order to grant the salvation of the faithful.

Nevertheless, the earthly Jerusalem is lost, and it will be destroyed in war, as Christ foretells James. In the TC version the axis mundi, or world navel (polos), is mentioned as emanating from these twelve Archons: “But those that are greater (the twelve) than they (the seventy-two) are the powers that are above, ‘those through which the entire axis (of the universe) is established’ (ΝΑΙ ΕΤΕΡΕ
Franklin Trammell suggests that “the polos” mentioned in the TC version, is to be understood within an astrological and mythological context. Trammell argues that the author of *James* related the polos to the Zodiac, where the twelve zodiacal powers (a negative view of the twelve apostles) are under the influence of “the God who dwells in Jerusalem” a.k.a. the Pole Dragon. Naturally intertwined with mythology, the astrological discourse equated the Hebrew God with the Pole Dragon, whose powers made up the cosmos. According to Trammell, the crucifixion of Jesus is the binding of the Dragon to the Pole.164

So, Jerusalem as the world navel where the Dragon dwells, is represented on earth as well as in heaven. It is a portal that has been opened by the Savior Christ. The examples given above point to the fact that the ideal reader was partly well aware of the gospels, Jewish Christian traditions, Jewish mythology, and astrology, in order to grasp the complexity of the texts in question. The world navel is the source of all existence, Campbell states, and it produces the worlds plenitude of both good and evil. Ugliness and beauty, sin and virtue, pleasure and pain, are equally its production. The readers of these texts were trying to understand this duality and thus explain, amongst other things, why there is suffering and injustice in the world. All of these details within the texts must have been subject to an intellectual discussion, given the complexity of their literary context. The killing of innocent, holy people like Jesus and James, the destruction of Jerusalem, as well as the question raised about the nature of correct representative Christianity, demanded explanations, that for some people went beyond politics. Or put more correctly, even if the answers to these problems were sought in politics, these politics were still interpreted through mythology and with the help of the stars.

6.1.7 Mountains and the appearance of supernatural aid

In the *ApocPaul*, before Paul gets raptured to the third heaven, he is told to awaken his mind and see that the place he is standing on is the mountain of Jericho (αὐων ἐναν τῇ πτοιῳ ἐτέργην πέραν τῆς μόρνος). This Paul must do, so that he “may know (κοιων) the hidden things in those that are visible.”(NH V 19.13-14).165 The mountain of Jericho is not an actual


165 The creation of the visible, material world is described in *The Hypostasis of the Archons*: “And she (Pistis Sophia) established each of his (The Demiurge, here called Samael “God of the blind”) offspring in conformity with its power – after the pattern of the realms that are above, for by starting from the invisible world the visible world was invented.“ ἔερσα ἐν νεωτὸν ἅπαν ἄκρωτον ἕως (NH II, 4 87.10 ). In the *ApocPaul* the sentence “so that you may know the hidden things in those that are visible.” εἰς ἐκκοιων ἄναμμα ἐκπαλαὶ ἐν οὐτον ἕως shares the same key words as the mythical creation story.
mountain but a metaphor for opening one’s eyes and see the truth of things. According to Matthew Twigg, *The Mountain of Jericho* is a reversed allusion to the journey of Jesus from Jerusalem down to Jericho. The sentence *trample on the Mountain of Jericho* is a metaphor for overcoming the hostile powers of the material world. That is only possible for those who have been baptized and no longer fear Satan or his demons. Twigg explains: “An ascent from Jericho to Jerusalem reverses the journey taken by the traveler in Luke’s Parable of the Good Samaritan, which is itself described as a descent (See Luke 10:30-37). Early Christian readers, including Valentinians, tended to interpret this story as an allegory for the descent of the soul from heaven to the material world. In such allegorical interpretations, the man descending from Jerusalem to Jericho represents the human soul, the robbers are the worldly powers, and the Samaritan is Christ. Jerusalem represents the heavenly world, and Jericho the material world where the soul is oppressed by hostile cosmic powers.”

With this reversed journey, the author of the *ApocPaul* wants to show Paul freeing himself from the captivity of the material world (Jericho) and making his way up to the heavenly (Jerusalem).

However, one can also think of Jericho as the place where Jesus healed the blind man (Luke 18:35-43, Mark 10: 46-52) so that ‘he immediately could see’ (καὶ παραγρήμα ἄνεβλεψεν). The mountain of Jericho is then to be understood as a place where the visionary starts to see things clearer. At the beginning of the 1*ApocJas*, Jesus is alive, giving a promise to his brother that he will return to give him instructions after his death. When Christ, after his passion, comes back to James, he has been on the other side and knows things that will help James on his quest. There is not only hope for the anxious James but also certainty for his deliverance. That fills James with courage and clearness about his mission. Like in the *ApocPaul*, a mountain is mentioned. It is the place where the protagonist becomes aware of the truth and sees things clearer. It is on the mountain of Gaugelan (*γαυθηράν*) where James first encounters Christ after his passion. A crowd of disciples has followed James up to the mountain, but it is first when James is alone in prayer that Christ appears to him (NH V 30.18-31.2). On the mountain of Gaugelian or Galgelam, Christ reveals the truth about his

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166 Twigg, *Becoming Paul, Becoming Christ*, 158.

167 In the TC version (17.9) the mountain bears the name Galge[la]m (ʁaʁgɛ[la]m). William Schoedel did not know of this version back in 1991 when he criticized Alexander Böhlig for connecting Gaugelan to the mountain of Galgala (Gilgal) near Jericho. Schoedel preferably identifies Gaugelan with the Calvary: “Moreover, since the scene is connected with the death and resurrection of Jesus, the reference probably is to Golgotha after all. The word “skull” -Golgtha- was subject to much variation.” See William R. Schoedel, “A Gnostic Interpretation of the Fall of Jerusalem: The First Apocalypse of James,” NT 33 (1991), 157. In retrospect though, Böhligs hypothesis should not be rejected. Böhlig was trying to identify a Jewish Christian background regarding the *1ApocJas* and Galgala situated near Jericho, sounds a lot more like Galgelam (TC version) than Golgatha. Moreover, according to Böhlig, Jericho was an important center of Jewish Christianity. As mentioned above, it is also the imaginary mountain mentioned in the *ApocPaul*. There is though a more reasonable understanding of the mountain of Gaugelan/Galgelam. Given the other evidence of Syriac influence, like the character of Addai, the mountain could be the mountain of Gaugalas near Edessa, described by Salaminus Hermias Sozomen (400-450 CE): “Besides the above, many other ecclesiastical philosophers flourished in the territories
passion and says: “I am he who was within me. Never have I suffered in any way, nor have I been distressed. And this people has done me no harm.” (NH V 31.17-22). Jesus explains that it was the material Jesus, a figure or type of the rulers who was destroyed, and not the true Christ. He goes on and says to James: “You see how you will become sober when you see me.” (NH V 32.3-5).

It is interesting how both Paul and James get their clearness or soberness on top of a mountain. Thus, the start off point of the journey located on a mountain gives the reader a sense of elevation right at the beginning of the story. The metaphor of seeing things with a clear, sober mind from above, indicates that something new will be introduced to the reader. And it does, when a powerful message is being revealed to the protagonists: What you think is real, is not! Paul awakens his mind and sees his reflection upon earth. James becomes sober and gets to know about the false crucifixion. During Paul’s heavenly journey and James dialogue with the resurrected Christ, they both learn about the rulers and of their impact on the material world. Although they are dangerous beings, the rulers are an easy target for those who possess knowledge. Their primary goal is to enslave the spirits of humankind and keep them in an unending circle of suffering and reincarnation. However, the rulers are still quite stupid and ignorant in that they fail to understand that they harm their own creation. Because of that, spirits with knowledge do not need to fear them. The notion of being closer to God is also empowering for the hero. At the mountain of Jericho, Paul is able to awaken his mind and see, that there is an earthly Jerusalem and a heavenly one. He is then ready to

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168 In *The Apocalypse of Peter*, Jesus reveals the same thing to Peter. In a vision, Peter witness how Jesus gets arrested and crucified. During the crucifixion, a figure is smiling and laughing above the cross. Jesus explains to Peter that his crucifixion is a hoax, a false killing of him, which the rulers, ignorant as they are, believe in: “He whom you see smiling above the cross, glad and laughing, is the living Jesus. But he into whose hands and feet they are driving the nails is his physical part, which is the substitute” (NH VII, 3 81.15-21). The theme of the false crucifixion is also found in the Second Discourse of Great Seth in NH V II, 2.

169 Arne Naess lists the symbolic values of a mountain primarily as:

- The movement upwards. The eye moves upwards as an expression of elevation, increase of any positive kind.
- Ascension. A person moving upwards is symbol of a person increasing in every positive way.
- Highness. The elevation reached and the difference in altitude in comparison to the environment, symbolizes excellence, nobility, majesty, steadiness, coolness, superiority.
- Transcendence. Every “ascension” is a passage to the beyond, a rupture of the level, a passage from the region of the trivial or profane to that of surpassing, overwhelming importance. In short; to reach the mountain top is to transcend the human condition, reaching the unreachable.
- A mountain is the nearest to heaven. Or, mountains “touch” the heavens, and are therefore considered to be “the center” in the sense of the meeting place between the heavenly and the earthly.
- The struggle towards the summit, towards the highest quality. The way up, the difficulty, the fatigue, of this struggle. Ritual ascension is a “difficult ascension”.
- The unreachable. The passage to the beyond, “transcendence”, may be possible or not possible for humans. The highly valued unclimbableness of mountains symbolizes the unreachableableness of the absolute - absolute virtue, power or also immortality. See Arne Naess, “Mountains and mythology,” Trumpeter 12, 4 (1995).
“fly”, with a bit of assistance of course, up to the heavens. At the mountain of Gaugelan, James encounters Christ and soberes up. It is also there, that he gets to know the truth about the earthly Jerusalem, putting his perspective about the city, its people and rulers, (and thereby the readers perspective), straight.

6.2 The gnostic apocalyptic hero

6.2.1 The toll collectors as guards – Crossing the first threshold

With the personifications of his destiny to guide and aid him, the hero goes forward in his adventure until he comes to the “threshold guardian” at the entrance to the zone of magnified power.  

Juxtaposing some characters found in the ApocPaul and the 1ApocJas, one interesting aspect is that of the guards of the realms depicted as “toll collectors” (τελώνης). The term is not mentioned anywhere else in the NHC, which is something certainly interesting regarding the intertextuality of the two apocalypses. In the ApocPaul the figure of the “toll collector” is mentioned twice. The first one is to be found in the fourth heaven where the soul, whipped and about to be judged, asks what she has done to deserve this kind of treatment. The toll collector, who dwells in the fourth heaven, answers her that it is because of the sins that she has committed in the world of the dead, that is, the material world (NH V 20.10). He then permits the soul to bring forth witnesses, but still, those are of no help, and she gets condemned to reincarnation. The toll collector in the fourth heaven acts both like a judge and a gate-keeper. Paul does not get stopped by him, however, and with the assistance of the Holy Spirit, he continues up to the fifth heaven.

It seems that Paul can pass through the first five heavens unnoticed, being only an observer of what is happening. It is not until in the sixth heaven that Paul speaks up for the first time. He commands the toll collector there to open the gate (πύλη) for him: “I spoke, saying to the toll collector who was in the sixth heaven: ‘[Open] to me and the [Holy] Spirit [who is ]before [me].’ He opened [to me.” (NH V 22.19-23) For Paul, it is surprisingly easy to get into the seventh heaven and the Demiurge’s realm. He just says “open.” There is no interrogation scene here, as one should expect, nor are there secret formulas or magic words. James, on the other hand, needs to learn some formulas in order to pass the toll collectors.

170 Campbell, The hero with a thousand faces, 77.
Christ tells James that shortly after his martyrdom: “a multitude will arm themselves against you, that <they> may seize you. And, in particular, three of them will seize you—they who sit there as toll collectors. Not only do they demand ‘toll’ (τελος), but they also take away souls ‘by theft’ (στερεσίμος = Νκλιμί) (NH V 33.4-11). Christ then instructs James, that when he comes into their power, one of them who is their “guard” (γαρές, φυλάξ in TC 20.9) will ask who James is, or from where he is. He is then to answer: “I am the son, and I am from the father.” (xe anok πε ποιήρε αυβ εβολ 2ίτι πιρτ) (NH V 33.16-18); (ανακ ουφαίρε αυβ ανοκ ουεβολ ςι πιρτ) (TC 20.12-13).

In Irenaeus account of this formula, toll collectors are not mentioned. The soul of the deceased is to answer to the “principalities and powers” (π τ ς ρχ ς κα ξουσίας ἐ ὶ ὰ ἀ ὰ ὶ ἐ) instead: “And they (the Marcosians) instruct them, on their reaching the principalities and powers, to make use of these words: ‘I am a son from the Father--the Father who had a pre-existence, and a son in Him who is pre-existent.’” With or without “toll collectors”, the answer-question motif, described in Irenaeus, matches very well to the one in the 1ApocJas, indicating a close inter-textual relationship. It is difficult to say which came first though, but according to Thomassen, who stresses some mistakes made by the translators of the 1ApocJas, it was probably Irenaeus’ version. As we shall see in the next part of the analysis, the question-answer motif is to be found in different kinds of gnostic texts, as well as within Greek and Egyptian mythology concerning the afterlife.

The gatekeeper is a typical character in this kind of apocalyptic mythology, and he acts as a servant of God or the Gods. He guards the gates to the underworld, or of the realms, and is mentioned in Egyptian sources (The Book of the Am-Tuat, The Book of the Dead), apocalyptic early Christian pseudepigraphy (Ascension of Isaiah 10:24-27), as well as in Jewish sources (3 Enoch 18:3-4).

171 In the margin of page 33 in the NH version the word στερεσίμος is explained as Νκλιμί (by theft). In the TC version this word is not used. The passage that correlates to the one on page 33, is on page 20 and it reads: “Not only do they receive toll for sins, but they also extort (?) and carry of souls.” (ου μονον ευξ τελος Ννοε αλλα Ντου εγκλατ εγκι γίνεσθι). I would use the word “demand” for εγκλατ (Greek:ἀπατείν, see Crum 594 a) instead of “extort”, so the toll collectors demands souls and takes souls. That is also the meaning of the sentence in the NH version, where the Greek word στερεσίμος/στερεσίμος comes from στερέω which means to deprive. The note in the margin of page 33 is interesting because without it there would not be a translation “by theft”. It seems to me more likely to be the copyists own perception of the figure of the toll collector, rather than the intended meaning of the sentence. The word στερεσίμος is repeated on page 34, line 24, but because of a lacuna we can not see any note in the margin. The word has a sign (≈) over it though, as it has on page 33, indicating there is a note in the margin. The toll collectors are then neither extorting souls nor taking them by theft.

172 Irenaeus, 1.21.5. Irenaeus is talking about a Valentinian group, called the Marcosians. Epiphanius repeats this formula but ascribes it to another Valentinian group instead, the Heracleonites. (Panarion 36.3.1-6).


174 Rosenstiehl and Kaler, L’Apocalypse de Paul, 223. Kaler states here, that the concept of a toll collector functioning as a guardian of the gates between the heavens is to be found in these sources. By a closer examination though, the term toll collector or tax collector does not occur in these texts. In the Egyptian sources, like in the Book of the Dead, they are named “gatekeepers” or “watchers”, “guardians of the doors” or “doorkeepers.” In the Ascension of Isaiah they are called “those who keep the gates” and in 3 Enoch “doorkeepers.”
In Egyptian mythology, the role of the gate keeper was to guard the doors of the underworld, devour the bodies of the dead, punish souls, and give right and truth to the soul. In order for the soul to pass the gatekeepers it had to provide them with the correct formulas, words of power or magical names. This is evidence of death rituals, also recognized in later gnostic theology like in the Two Books of Jeu, as well as the 1ApocJas. However, it is only in that latter and in the ApocPaul that the term “toll collector” appears, in order to depict the gatekeeper, within the NHC.

The concept is, however, found in the work of third-century church fathers, like Clement of Alexandria. In his Stromata, Clement explains what awaits the soul of the deceased when encountering the “toll collectors”: “For those who ‘demand toll’ (ο ι τ ο τέλος ἀπαπτώντες), detain those who bring in any worldly things, who are burdened with their own passions. But him that is free of all things which are subject to duty, and is full of knowledge, and of the righteousness of works, they pass on with their good wishes, blessing the man with his work.”

According to Clement then, the toll collector is not an evil being, but merely doing what he is supposed to do, stop the ascending of sinful souls and allowing the righteous and those of knowledge to pass. Clement’s statement demonstrates how early Christians imagined the afterlife, as did the authors of the ApocPaul and 1ApocJas. Unlike the soul in the fourth heaven, who is stopped and judged because of her earthly passions, Paul passes the guards by the knowledge provided by the spirit. James will pass the guards, Christ explains, with the right kind of knowledge. In that “gnosis,” also lies the notion of “true” righteousness. The Valentinian reader would, therefore, understand the use of “toll collectors” as gatekeepers of the realms in a broader sense. The toll collectors examine the souls, allowing only for the spirituals to pass because they, in various ways, have demonstrated that they do not belong to the Demiurge. However, there is also a social context as to how the reader understood the character of the toll collector.

In real life, toll collectors were not popular, often depicted as greedy, dishonest and violent extortioners. See for example, in Luke 18:9-14 where the Pharisee exclaims: God I thank you that I am not like other people-robbers, evildoers, adulterers – or even like this tax collector. In the NT,

175 Oswald Burmester, “Egyptian Mythology in the Coptic Apocrypha,” Orientalia 7 (1938) 304-305.

176 I have not been able to find the term elsewhere in related literature, except for in the Acts of Thomas 148. Here the heavenly “toll collectors” (τελῶνα) are depicted as hostile figures, and Thomas is praying for a safe ascent of his soul: “May the toll-collectors not see me, nor the ‘tax-gatherers’ (ἀπαπτωται) oppress me.” And again, Acts of Thomas 167 reads: “May the toll-collectors not see me, nor the ‘tax-gatherers extort me through false accusation’ (και ο ι απαπτωται μη συκουφαντείσων με.” See Twigg, Becoming Paul, Becoming Christ, 188. There are also some similarities to this concept in Eastern sources, like in Mandean literature. In the Left Ginza III 15, seven demons, detectors of the soul, are said to dwell in “the house of the toll keeper.” When a being of light comes to the assistance of the soul it smashes their watch houses and scares them away, enabling the soul to ascend to the Place of Light. See Kurt Rudolph, Gnosis. The Nature and History of Gnosticism (San Francisco: Harper, 1987), 179-180.

the term τελώνης is found frequently in Matthew and Luke, twice in Mark but then nowhere else. It is often used as a description of the profession, and in many cases, as seen above, in a much negative sense. They are indeed placed next to other sinners, like prostitutes and adulterers. Still, Jesus cares for them in the gospels.

In Matthew 9 and 10 we get to know that he himself was a toll collector (Μαθθαίος ὁ τελώνης) before he joined the Jesus movement, and that he met Jesus outside his working place, the tax booth (τελώνιον). When Jesus was invited to Matthew’s house and sat at the dinner table together with him and other “toll collectors and sinners” (τελώναι καὶ ἁμαρτωλοί), the Pharisees asked his disciples about this distasteful gesture. Jesus answer to them was simple: “I have come to call not the righteous but sinners.” (Matthew 9:13) Moreover, as we get to know from the continuing of The Parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector, mentioned in Luke 18 above, Jesus justifies the toll collector, and not the Pharisee, for his humble way of praying to God.

Even if the term “toll collector” does not occur in Paul, the term “tax” does. In Romans 13, Paul is urging the congregation to obey the authorities and do what is right, like paying taxes: “For the same reason you also ‘pay taxes’ (φόρους τελείτε), for the authorities are God’s servants, busy with this very thing. Pay to all what is due them—taxes (φόρος) to whom taxes are due, revenue (τέλος) to whom revenue is due, respect to whom respect is due, honor to whom honor is due.” (Rom 13:6-7) To pay taxes is for Paul a way of being righteous, and that goes along with other ethical behavior, like showing respect and honor for each other and, as seen later in his letter, to show love for each other.

In the case of the toll collectors that Paul in the ApocPaul is facing and the ones that James is about to face, they do not appear to be evil in any way. They are just doing their job, and they seem to understand the Demiurge, as the Just God. The notion that they “take away souls by theft” is more of an after construction rather than what the texts say (see footnote 171).

In the 1ApocJas, Christ tells James that he will also face more of these gatekeepers. There are three of them called “detainers” (ἀμαστε) and, according to the TC version, it is with them that the real trouble will begin: “When you come to these three who carry of the soul, there is indeed a great struggle in that place” (TC 21.21-24). James shall then say to them: “‘I am a vessel that is more


179 In Romans 13:6 the plural of φόρος seems to be a general form of all taxes, while verse 7 distinguishes between the individual poll tax (φόρος) and the indirect commercial taxes on property, transportation and crops (télos). (Source: Everett F. Harrison and Geoffrey W. Bromiley, The international standard Bible encyclopedia. Vol. 4, Q-Z, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1988, 742.)

180 See Acts 9.15. Here in a vision, God tells Ananias, a believer in Christ, that he must go and find the converted Paul and heal him from his blindness: “Go, for he is an “instrument” (σκεύος) whom I have chosen to bring my name before Gentiles and kings and before the people of Israel”
precious than Achamoth’ (Ἀρχὴ οὐκ ἔχει ἐπὶ τὰ ἔνα ἀρχαῖον), the female that created you.” (21.25-27) He will further explain to them about the two Sophias (The real Sophia and Achamoth), and when the guards then find out the truth about their imperfect mother, they will be disturbed/shaken (φτορτί)\textsuperscript{181} by the news, and let James pass.

The guards in the 1ApocJas are not villains then, but victims themselves. They are born as imperfect beings because of the error of Sophia. It is thus ironic that they serve as guards who are punishing the souls for their sins. Their earthly counterpart, the toll collectors of Matthew and Luke, are personifications of “the sinner” but one to whom Jesus shows compassion. To Paul, it is important to pay taxes during lifetime and obey authorities because that is part of being righteous. To the church fathers, like Clement, it is more than right that the toll collectors of the realms, stop the sinners and allow the righteous to pass. The implied reader then was probably aware of the toll collector-character as a symbol for “the sinner made righteous by Christ” as the Synoptics depict him. Seen from elsewhere in this analysis, the reader was also probably familiar with Paul’s letter to the Romans. There is no harsh picture of the “toll collector” in these writings. They are just unfortunate people who happen to have a social and cultural disliked profession. They are just doing their job, and so do their heavenly counterparts. The spirituals will, therefore, pass them at the gates, the reader knows that. Be it by correct formulas, sacraments, or by other rituals conducted before death. The guards, in the form of toll collectors, are thus only to be found in the ApocPaul and the 1ApocJas in the NHC. Even if they are depicted negatively (as a potential threat and helpers of the Demiurge), they are not to be understood as evil. As a matter of fact, they are like the Demiurge, ignorant of their true nature, believing that they are working for the right cause:

The “Wall of Paradise” which conceals God from human sigh, is described by Nicholas of Cusa as constituted of the “coincidence of opposites,” its gate being guarded by “the highest spirit of reason, who bars the way until he has been overcome.” The pairs of opposites (being and not being, life and death, good and evil...) are the clashing rocks (Symplegades) that crush the traveler, but between which the hero always pass.” \textsuperscript{182}

\textsuperscript{181} The Greek translation of the word φτορτί (φταρτ in the TC version) is ταράσσειν which literary means “to shake/ to disturb.”

\textsuperscript{182} Campbell, The hero with a thousand faces, 89.
6.2.2 The Demiurge and Sophia - Atonement with the father/The helpful female

One must have a faith that the father is merciful, and then a reliance on that mercy. Therewith, the center of belief is transferred outside the bedeviling god’s tight scaly ring, and the dreadful ogres dissolve. It is in this ordeal that the hero may derive hope and assurance from the helpful female figure, by whose magic (pollen charms or power of intercession) he is protected through all the frightening experiences of the father’s ego-shattering initiation. For if it is impossible to trust the terrifying father-face, then one’s faith must be centered elsewhere; and with that reliance for support, one endures the crisis-only to find in the end, that the father and mother reflect each other, and are in the essence the same. [183]

6.2.3 Paul - The visionary hero who comes back with gnosis

I think of a hero as someone who understands the degree of responsibility that comes with his freedom.

- Bob Dylan -

In the ApocPaul, the apostle answers the Demiurges questions with quite enigmatic and bold answers. The Demiurge asks where Paul is going. Paul answers him very short: “To the place from which I came.” (NH V 23.9-10) The old man then asks Paul where he comes from and Paul’s answer is a bold wordplay: “I am going to go down to the land of the dead in order to take captive the captivity that was taken captive in the Babylonian captivity” (ⲉⲓⲛⲁⲃ ⲱⲕ ⲉϩⲣⲁⲓⲓ ⲉⲡⲕⲟⲥⲙⲟⲥ ⲛⲛⲧⲉ ⲛⲉⲧ ⲙⲛⲟⲟⲩⲧ ϫⲉⲕⲁⲁⲥ ⲛⲛⲧⲉ ⲛⲉⲧ ⲙⲛⲟⲩⲧⲉ ⲛⲉⲧ ⲙⲛⲟⲟⲩⲧ ⲛⲛⲧⲉ ⲙⲛⲙⲟⲥ ϩⲛⲛ ϯⲁⲓⲭⲙⲁⲗⲱⲥⲓⲁ ⲛⲛⲧⲉ ⲙⲛⲙⲟⲥ ϩⲛⲛ ⲙⲛⲙⲟⲥ ⲛⲛϯⲁⲭⲙⲁⲗⲱⲥⲓⲁ ⲛⲛⲧⲉ ⲅⲑⲙⲉⲁⲓⲣⲛⲁⲭⲙⲁⲗⲱⲧⲓ ⲛⲛⲧⲉ ⲙⲛⲙⲟⲥ ⲛⲛⲧⲉ ⲅⲑⲙⲉⲁⲓⲣⲛⲁⲭⲙⲁⲗⲱⲧⲓ ⲛⲛⲧⲉ ⲅⲑⲙⲉⲁⲓⲣⲛⲁⲭⲙⲁⲗⲱⲧⲓ ⲛⲛⲧⲉ ⲙⲛⲙⲟⲥ ⲙⲛⲙⲩⲧⲉ ⲅⲑⲙⲉⲁⲓⲣⲛⲁⲭⲙⲁⲗⲱⲧⲓ ⲛⲛⲧⲉ ⲅⲑⲙⲉⲁⲓⲣⲛⲁⲭⲙⲁⲗⲱⲧⲓ ⲛⲛⲧⲉ ⲅⲑⲙⲉⲁⲓⲣⲛⲁⲭⲙⲁⲗⲱⲧⲓ ⲛⲛⲧⲉ ⲅⲑⲙⲉⲁⲓⲣⲛⲁⲭⲙⲁⲗⲱⲧⲓ ⲛⲛⲧⲉ ⲅⲑⲙⲉⲁⲓⲣⲛⲁⲭⲙⲁⲗⲱⲧⲓ ⲛⲛⲧⲉ ⲅⲑⲙⲉⲁⲓⲣⲛⲁⲭⲙⲁⲗⲱⲧⲓ ⲛⲛⲧⲉ ⲅⲑⲙⲉⲁⲓⲣⲛⲁⲭⲙⲁⲗⲱⲧⲓ ⲛⲛⲧⲉ ⲅⲑⲙⲉⲁⲓⲣⲛⲁⲭⲙⲁⲗⲱⲧⲓ ⲛⲛⲧⲉ ⲅⲑⲙⲉⲁⲓⲣⲛⲁⲭⲙⲁⲗⲱⲧⲓ ⲛⲛⲧⲉ ⲅⲑⲙⲉⲁⲓⲣⲛⲁⲭⲙⲁⲗⲱⲧⲓ ⲛⲛⲧⲉ ⲅⲑⲙⲉⲁⲓⲣⲛⲁксиⲏⲁⲣⲛⲁⲓⲭⲙⲁⲗⲱⲧⲓ ⲛⲛⲧⲉ ⲙⲟⲩⲧⲉ ⲙⲛⲙⲟⲥ ⲛⲛϯⲁⲭⲙⲁⲗⲱⲥⲓⲁ ⲛⲛⲧⲉ ⲅⲑⲙⲉⲁⲓⲣⲛⲁⲭⲙⲁⲗⲱⲧⲓ ⲛⲛⲧⲉ ⲅⲑⲙⲉⲁⲓⲣⲛⲁⲭⲙⲁⲗⲱⲧⲓ ⲛⲛⲧⲉ ⲅⲑⲙⲉⲁⲓⲣⲛⲁⲭⲙⲁⲗⲱⲧⲓ ⲛⲛⲧⲉ ⲅⲑⲙⲉⲁⲓⲣⲛⲁⲭⲙⲁⲗⲱⲧⲓ ⲛⲛⲧⲉ ⲅⲑⲙⲉⲁⲓⲣⲛⲁⲭⲙⲁⲗⲱⲧⲓ ⲛⲛⲧⲉ ⲅⲑⲙⲉⲁⲓⲣⲛⲁксиⲏⲁⲣⲛⲁⲓⲟ奚ⲁ ⲛⲛⲧⲉ ⲛⲉⲧ ⲙⲛⲙⲟⲥ ⲛⲛⲧⲉ ⲅⲑⲙⲉⲁⲓⲣⲛⲁächstⲉⲕⲁⲁⲥ ⲛⲛⲧⲉ ⲛⲉⲧ ⲙⲛⲙⲟⲥ ⲛⲛⲧⲉ ⲅⲑⲙⲉⲁⲓⲣⲛⲁเช่นⲭⲙⲁⲗⲱⲧⲓ ⲛⲛⲧⲉ ⲅⲑⲙⲉⲁⲓⲣⲛⲁⲭⲙⲁⲗⲱⲧⲓ ⲛⲛⲧⲉ ⲅⲑⲙⲉⲁⲓⲣⲛⲁⲭⲙⲁⲗⲱⲧⲓ ⲛⲛⲧⲉ ⲅⲑⲙⲉⲁⲓⲣⲛⲁⲟⲕⲛⲁⲩⲓ ⲛⲛⲧⲉ ⲅⲑⲙⲉⲁⲓⲣⲛⲁⲭⲙⲁⲗⲱⲧⲓ ⲛⲛⲧⲉ ⲅⲑⲙⲉⲁⲓⲣⲛⲁⲭⲙⲁⲗⲱⲧⲓ ⲛⲛⲧⲉ ⲅⲑⲙⲉⲁⲓⲣⲛⲁⲟⲕⲛⲁⲩ ⲛⲛϯⲁⲭⲙⲁⲗⲱⲥⲓⲁ ⲛⲛⲧⲉ ⲙⲟⲩⲧⲉ ⲙⲛⲙⲟⲥ ⲛⲛⲧⲉ ⲅⲑⲙⲉⲁⲓⲣⲛⲁⲭⲙⲁⲗⲱⲧⲓ ⲛⲛⲧⲉ ⲅⲑⲙⲉⲁⲓⲣⲛⲁⲭⲙⲁⲗⲱⲧⲓ ⲛⲛⲧⲉ ⲅⲑⲙⲉⲁⲓⲣⲛⲁⲭⲙⲁⲗⲱⲧⲓ ⲛⲛⲧⲉ ⲅⲑⲙⲉⲁⲓⲣⲛⲁⲭⲙⲁⲗⲱⲧⲓ ⲛⲛⲧⲉ ⲅⲑⲙⲉⲁⲓⲣⲛⲁⲭⲙⲁⲗⲱⲧⲓ ⲛⲛⲧⲉ ⲅⲑⲙⲉⲁⲓⲣⲛⲁⲭⲙⲁⲗⲱⲧⲓ ⲛⲛⲧⲉ ⲅⲑⲙⲉⲁⲓⲣⲛⲁ.GetInstance 183 Campbell, The hero with a thousand faces, 130-131.

184 In his own words: “this motif consists of a series of statements dealing with the nature, origin, and destination of the soul of the protagonist, statements usually elicited by means of questions. In gnostic examples of the motif, these statements prove that the gnostic possesses the information she needs to regain her original home.” (Kaler, Flora tells a story, 209.)

In related apocalyptic literature the motif can be found in *The Gospel of Thomas* (NH II, 2 log. 49-50), *The Gospel of Mary* (BG 8502 15,1-17,7), *The Sophia of Jesus Christ* (NH III, 4 114.8-12), and of course in the *1ApocJas* (NH V 33.5 ff.) However, there is a significant difference in the *ApocPaul* compared to the standard answers given in other apocalypses. Paul’s answer to the Demiurge is more than a correct reply of a formula. It is a statement, a promise and a threat at the same time. He is coming back to the material world (the world of the dead), after his ascent. This is something that constitutes the uncompromising radicalism in Paul’s letters as well.186 The promise to come back alive, for the sake of others, is openly declared in Paul’s letter to the Philippians which he wrote from prison. Here Paul states to his congregation that he is much eager to die as a martyr and join Christ, but that he will not do so yet, in order to come back and help them.187

In the *Gospel of Philip* it is said that “He who is really free through knowledge is a slave because of love for those who have not yet been able to attain to the freedom of knowledge. Knowledge makes them capable of becoming free” (NH II, 3 77.26-30). This passage discusses a theme that is also to be found in 1 Corinthians 8-13 and 10:23-24.188 It is about how being free from sin should be correctly understood, that it is showing love for others, even sinners. The author of the *Gospel of Philip* most likely interprets 1 Corinthians 8, in a Valentinian way, and attaches it to the sacrament of Anointment-Chrism. Freedom from sin gained by the ritual of anointment does not lead to arrogance but to spiritual love for others. Spiritual love is anointment into the Valentinian community, and those who have been anointed also profit others who are standing nearby.189

According to Michel Desjardins, Valentinians emphasized ritual practice and knowledge as the way to be freed from sin, and not so much on moral behavior. This, of course, led Irenaeus and other heresiologists to consider the group as morally indifferent, because as spirituals the Valentinians considered themselves saved by nature. However, the Christian community of the author of the *Gospel of Philip* would not have been indifferent to the concept of sin, Desjardins

186 On Paul being a radical follower of Jesus and the Churches’ efforts to domesticate his message see Marcus J. Borg & John Dominic Crossan, *The first Paul: reclaiming the radical visionary behind the Church’s conservative icon* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2009).

187 For to me, living is Christ and dying is gain. If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me; and I do not know which I prefer. I am hard pressed between the two: my desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better; but to remain in the flesh is more necessary for you. Since I am convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with all of you for your progress and joy in faith. (Phil. 1:21-25).

188 For the NT-Paul, it was the understanding that following Jewish law (in this case, not eating sacrificial meat) does not automatically clean a person from sin. It is not enough to just follow the law. One must be a good example for others and help them achieve freedom of sin as well.

189 Spiritual love is wine and fragrance. All those who anoint themselves with it take pleasure in it. While those who are anointed are present, those nearby also profit (from the fragrance). If those anointed with ointment withdraw from them and leave, then those not anointed who merely stand nearby, still remain in their bad odor. (Gospel of Philip NH II, 3 77.35-38.7) Translation made by Wesley Isenberg, “Gospel according to Philip” in The Coptic gnostic library Vol. 2, 199.
states. Even with the coming of Christ, sin has not disappeared from the world that is still ruled by evil forces. Christ has just made that fact clear to those who listen. The Christians then have a responsibility to interact with others who are not aware of this fact yet, and through love, bring them to this truth by rituals, but also by themselves as examples, leading sinless lives.\footnote{Michel R. Desjardins, \textit{Sin in Valentinianism} (SBLDS 108; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990), 174.}

Back to the \textit{ApocPaul}, Paul’s enigmatic answer to the Demiurge thus shows how the Valentinian hero should think and act morally regarding others, even sinners. The journey through the realms is not just about attaining knowledge and redemption for oneself. Paul’s journey does not end with him staying with his fellow spirits but with him coming back with the “bounty,” which in this case is gnosis. While the paraenetic message\footnote{About paraenetic discourse within Valentinianism see Philip Tite, \textit{Valentinian Ethics and Paraenetic Discourse: Determining the Social Function of Moral Exhortation in Valentinian Christianity}, In Nag Hammadi and Manichaean Studies 67. (Leiden: Brill 2009).} of compassion for those who not have yet attained knowledge is much more outspoken in the \textit{Gospel of Philip}, the answer of Paul to the Demiurge in the \textit{ApocPaul} serves as a gateway to discussion for its readers. That is a discussion about the Christian responsibility of teaching others (accordingly to their level of understanding), to serve as good examples of moral conduct in order to influence others, and to be “slaves” for others, thus not using their freedom selfishly.\footnote{The responsibilities of those who have the knowledge, according to the \textit{Gospel of Philip}, are thoroughly analyzed in Minna Heimola, \textit{Christian identity in the Gospel of Philip} (Helsinki: The Finnish Exegetical Society, 2011), 295-305.}

In the \textit{ApocPaul}, the protagonist hero has a very personal superpower in that he can move freely between the material world and the transcendent, that is invisibility. However, Paul is not invisible to the Demiurge with whom he interacts. After showing the Demiurge the sign, he is released. Once more, the passing of this realm is a peaceful one, with no struggle, no thunder and lightning. The Demiurge is polite and just, and he even calls Paul “blessed one” (\textit{chamaat}) (NH V 23.3). Finally, he lets Paul go, because like the toll collector at the sixth gate, he understands that Paul’s spirit does not belong to him: “‘He turned his face downwards to his creation’ (\textit{apwte 
phqgo enecht e2pai eneqc rotated}) and ‘to those who are his own authorities.’ (\textit{nete nwq 
ne3ovia ne}) And then the seventh gate opened and we went up to the Ogdoad” (NH V 23.26-30- 24.1). Playing with the apocalyptic cliché of the enthroned YHWH in the seventh heaven, the author of the \textit{ApocPaul} wants to show the reader that there is no need to be afraid of this “God,” because he is not the real one. Paul knows that and shows it with a sign (reminded though by the spirit), and therefore, he can pass the Demiurge without a struggle.
6.2.4 James - The martyr hero?

Now, for James, the case is a bit different. He will need the assistance of “the undefiled Sophia” (ΤΣΟΦΙΑ ΝΑΤΧΩΘΗ) (TC 22.5; 23.6), in order for his spirit to get to his “real father” and be united with him. But first, he has to deny Achamoth, the false mother, and (in this case) the offspring of Sophia. After his answer to the guard of the toll collectors about who he is: “I am the Son, and I am from the Father” (TC 20.12-13), the guard will require a definition of those terms. James is then to tell him that he is “the Son who exists in the Pre-existent One” (ΠΙΝΗΡΕ ΑΕ ΕΤΨΟΟΠ ΖΗ ΝΕΤΨΟΟΠ ΧΗ ΝΗΨΟΡΗ). This sentence, as Mikael Haxby correctly puts it, confirms the fact that James becomes, in imitation of Christ, the Son who is in the One-who-is from the beginning. The next question that the guard poses is very interesting, while it goes beyond the borders of normal death formula questions: “Why have you come?” And James shall reply: “I have come to all those who are mine and those who are not mine.” This will confuse the guard, who will ask him why James has come for those who are not his. James shall answer that even those who are not his are his in some way: “On the one hand, they are mine, in accordance with the fact that she (Sophia) who is “mistress” (Lord) over them is from the preexistent One. On the other hand, they have become alien, because the preexisted One did not unite with her when she created them” (TC 21.9-15). The purpose of saying this to the guard is to let him understand that James possess the knowledge making him worthy of passing.

In the next sentence, when the guard will ask him of where he is going, James shall say that he is going to the place from which he came (TC 21.19). It is precisely the same answer that Paul gives to the old man in the seventh heaven (NH V 23. 8-10), a standard death-formula answer. As told before, the implied reader is probably aware of this question-answer motif as it is to be found in a variety of apocalyptic literature. However, the reader of the ApocPaul will be surprised by Paul’s bold and enigmatic answer to the Demiurge. Respectively, the reader of the 1ApocJas will be

193 About the complexity of the relationship between Achamoth and Sophia, see page 20, footnote 71 of the present thesis.
195 The word “mistress” is confusing to the English reader because it could be interpreted as “lover”, even if it is expressed as “mistress over them” or “mistress of them.” The translation into “mistress” is to be found in both Schoedel’s translation of the NH version and in Mayer’s and Gaudard’s of the TC version. The word ΧΟΙΣ is “Lord” (κύριος, fem:κύρια). For a correct interpretation then, it should say “Lordess” or “female Lord” or why not, pure “Lord.” Probably the best way of expressing the nature of Sophia. In this way the reader also understands the significance of the relation between Christ and Sophia, both entitled ΧΟΙΣ in the apocalypse. The Greek word κύριος, κύρια, also translates “master.” Moreover, as an adjective, it translates “the primary” as in “the primary reason” (ο κύριος λόγος). Rudolphe Kasser also translates ΧΟΙΣ to “maîtresse” in french, but comments in a footnote: Litt. “Seigneur.” According to Irenaeus, the Valentinians called this mother Achamoth for Ogdoad, Sophia; Terra, Jerusalem, Holy Spirit, and, with a masculine reference, Lord. (Against Heresies 1.5.3).
surprised by the guard’s question: Why have you come? The authors of both apocalypses introduce in this way new features to an old story. The micromyth turns into the macromyth.

The reader understands that the hero can pass by the guard with these answers, for this time. However, the reader also presupposes more trouble that lies ahead for James. As in the formula account from Irenaeus, James is to say to the next guards, the detainers, that he is a more precious vessel than Achamoth, the female who created them. Very bold, he is to tell the detainers that they need to sober up, understand that their primary (grand)mother Sophia created them without a spouse and that they, therefore, are imperfect. The same goes for their mother Achamoth, the offspring of Sophia, who does not seem to be aware of her imperfection either. James shall then both “plead to” (παρακαλέω) and “call upon” (επικαλέω) Sophia in order for both Achamoth and her offspring to grasp these things. With the calling of the “real mother,” all of them will be troubled/shaken and blame their own root and the generation of their mother. But as for James, he will go “to his roots, the fetters that are their fetters.”

Thus, the place to which the Valentinian spiritual hero is going to differs from the one in other mythologies. It is the place beyond enslavement, and the place of fusion of one’s spirit with the Pre-existing One. As Haxby points out, in his analysis of sexual difference presented in the 1ApocJas, at the beginning of the story (TC 10.8-27), Jesus describes the real God as the “One-who-is” (πατέρον). God is unnamable and ineffable, thus ungendered. In the following scene with the guards; however, James is to answer them that he is the “Son” (πάτερ) from the “Father” (πατέρ). Haxby understands this shift of description of God from ungendered to male, being connected with the perfected state of the human that can be ungendered or perfectly male too.196

At the beginning of the 1ApocJas, Christ tells James: “Since you have asked concerning “femaleness” (εφημερία), femaleness existed, but femaleness was not first. And it prepared for itself powers and Gods” (NH V 24. 26-30). Going back to the Valentinian myth of Sophia, we know that this action caused her to split and in that way giving life to Achamoth, who in turn gave life to the Demiurge. This “error” could confirm the superiority of maleness and the subordination of femaleness. However, the picture given regarding sexual difference in the 1ApocJas is not that simple. As one continues the reading of the apocalypse, femaleness is honored. Sophia is undefiled and belongs to the heavenly realms. She is “Lord” (μητρός). Seven female “disciples/spirits” are also mentioned in a much positive way (TC 25.18-26.10), as do three women who possess the knowledge, Salome, Mary, and Arsinoe (TC 27.25-8). Haxby concludes that the theological myth, with a tendency to articulate the difference between the one and the many in gendered terms,

196 Haxby, The First Apocalypse of James, 105.
characterizes Valentinian theology: “Sexual difference, then, can appear in two distinct forms. In one form, sexual difference can represent an aspect of the stable, perfect divine plurality. In another form, sexual difference can represent the dangers of plurality and the break between the divine realms and the world of humanity. As a consequence of this second form, sexual difference can appear as the aspect of the human which must be triumphed over in a return to perfection.”

James too, deeply in distress and afraid of what will happen to him after his death, is to seek courage in the Son-Christ, the true mother Sophia, the seven female Spirits and the three women who possess gnosis. Maleness, as well as femaleness then, will help transform him into perfection, and become the ungendered “The One-who-is.”

This change in the categorizing of genders that goes from a patriarchal view to an honoring of femaleness, and then finally to the notion that the androgynous or the ungendered is the perfect state (of both God and humans), indicates some interesting things. Once more, the author of the 1ApocJas seems to play with cultural and social clichés. This time regarding the social norms of gender, which in the Greco-Roman world were represented by a pyramid with adult male citizens at the top, women, children, and slaves at the bottom. However, archaeological evidence shows that even women had access to elementary education and that some of them were able to reach more advanced stages.

The notion that women partook in an intellectual discussion is also represented in Ptolemy’s Letter to Flora, and in the letters of Paul, where he mentions a number of women who seemed to have a leading role in his congregations.

The 1ApocJas then should be of interest for women, and it is not unthinkable that a woman could have written it too. Kaler has suggested that the ApocPaul could as well have been penned down by a woman. In the case of 1ApocJas, a woman could have used the stereotypes of the apocalyptic genre (with all the protagonists being male) to show how important femaleness is, in order to create the equilibrium of an ungendered state. Valentinian mythology certainly serves the purpose here, as a way of expressing philosophical ideas as well as a critique of established norms, with the help of reclaiming the status of the narrative, the myth. Concepts are personified, and thus more easy to grasp. To quote Gedaliahou Stroumsa: “Gnosticism was also an essentially mythological phenomenon, indeed, the last significant outburst of mythical thought in Antiquity…the Gnostic

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197 Haxby, The First Apocalypse of James, 109-110. See also Thomassen, The spiritual seed, 269; The Valentinian myth of Sophia on page 20.
198 Haxby, The First Apocalypse of James, 110-111.
199 Criboire, Gymnastics of the mind, 74-101.
200 Kaler, Flora Tells a Story, 13-33.
myths arose in a mental world where metaphysical problems had already been addressed in non-mythological ways, and it arose precisely as a rejection of these ways.”

In the 1ApocJas, the author is allowing the reader to evoke his/her recognition of the myth of Sophia and Achamoth, thus blending the notion of ritual (the formulas with correct answers to the guards) with that of mythology. Maybe the reader was also acquainted with the epistle of James, that also speaks of the two Wisdoms. Here the notion of Wisdom-Sophia, also takes the form of female ambiguity, separated into bad and good qualities:

Who is wise and understanding among you? Show by your good life that your works are done with gentleness “born of wisdom” (Ἐν πραΰτητι σοφίας). But if you have bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not be boastful and false to the truth. “Such wisdom does not come down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, devilish” (οὐκ ἔστιν σύνη ἡ σοφία ἄνωθεν κατερχομένη, ἀλλὰ ἐπίγειος, ψυχική, δαιμονιώδης). For where there is envy and selfish ambition, there will also be disorder and wickedness of every kind. “But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits,” (δικαιοσύνης) is sown in peace for those who make peace.

(3:13-18)

6.3 Redemption - Apotheosis - Apolytrosis

...this godlike being is a pattern of the divine state to which the human hero attains who has gone beyond the last terrors of ignorance. “When the envelopment of consciousness has been annihilated, then he (the hero) becomes free of all fear, beyond the reach of change.” This is the release potential within us all, and which anyone can attain-through herohood.

So what about the ending of the revelations? Paul’s journey may end in the tenth heaven, but he has earlier made a promise to return to the material world in order to free other spirits. If the narrative is an allusion to 2 Corinthians 12:2-4 the reader understands that Paul will come back. That makes the narrative of ApocPaul such a great example of catechetical material. The reader is left with a series of questions at such an abrupt ending. What did Paul see in the last three heavens? What did he mean by the word riddle in his discussion with the old man? Why is not God mentioned in the last heavenly realm? Maybe, because the narrative should be used as a matter of exegetical discussion. The reader gets to know that the twelve heavenly apostles reside in the Ogdoad. The reader is also aware that the Ogdoad is the heavenly realm in which Achamoth resides, sometimes Achamoth is the Ogdoad herself. What does that mean? That Paul surpasses Achamoth? Maybe, if we bring James into the picture, he too is destined to surpass Achamoth by calling upon her mother Sophia. He is also not to return to Jerusalem, the dwelling place of Archons. In his description of Valentinian theology, Irenaeus explains the Valentinian view of Achamoth: “They go

202 Campbell, The hero with a thousand faces, 150-151.
on to say that the Demiurge imagined that he created all these things of himself, while he in reality made them in conjunction with the productive power of Achamoth ... This mother they also call Ogdoad, Sophia; Terra, Jerusalem, Holy Spirit, and, with a masculine reference, Lord. Her place of habitation is an intermediate one, above the Demiurge indeed, but below and outside of the Pleroma, even to the end.  

The Pleroma (Fullness) then is to be located somewhere above the eight realm. We know that Paul will come back, he is not dead and he has made a promise to return. Still, in the tenth heaven he greets his fellow spirits. If this would be the place of total unity with the One-who-is, then it would not be able for Paul to return. Is this then the place where all the spirituals meet and unite with their angelic counterpart until they are totally complete in numbers, and finally restored into the perfect unity at the day of restoration? As the hero who returns back to ordinary life with the bounty, Paul is not ready for the completion of his redemption yet. Knowledge and faith in Christ seems to be Paul’s way to his redemption, but he has a responsibility of sharing that knowledge with others.

The 1ApocJas ends with him being killed by people not finding him worthy of life. The last words James utters are: My father, in heaven, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing. Like in Luke 23:48 when Jesus utters these same words at his crucifixion, James wants God to forgive his killers because they are deceived, unaware of the truth. Like in a typical martyrdom narrative, where the martyr seeks to imitate Christ,  the James of 1ApocJas does that in a gnostic way. His motivational source, being that of knowledge rather than that of faith, drives him to his martyrdom in order to undergo the real challenge posed to his deliverance. Knowledge and (ritual) works seem to be the road for James redemption. Like Paul, he too has the responsibility to pass this knowledge to coming generations. Not himself though, because he must die in order to be redeemed, but by revealing the knowledge to Addai. What is the core in this gnosis then?

After the enigmatic statement that James will return to his roots, Christ summarizes what he already has told James, in order for him to be redeemed. He says: Look James, I have revealed to you:

1) Who I am.
2) Who the Preexistent One is.
3) Who the prototype of the twelve disciples are.
4) Who the seventy-two companions are.
5) Who Achamoth, the female translated as Wisdom (Sophia), is.
6) Who you are.

Irenaeus, Against Heresies 1.5.3

7) Who the undefiled Sophia, through whom you will be delivered, is.
8) Who all the children, of the One-who-is, are. Those who have known themselves and are hidden within themselves. (TC 22.23-24. 10)

Then Christ asks of James to keep these things hidden within them and only reveal them to Addai, who will write everything down after James death. The implied reader summarizes this knowledge given by the story in dialogue form, before he/she continues the reading. If all of these things are not clear enough he/she probably shares her thoughts with other implied readers. The story is intriguing enough to ask more questions, that probably a teacher would be happy to answer and contributing to the neophyte’s growing gnosis. Or, the teacher could ask the students themselves to answer, creating a real “gnostic dialogue”:

-What are the “fetters”?
-The “fetters” are ignorance.
-What does that imply?
-When one frees himself/herself from ignorance his/her spirit can return to its roots.
-Why is Christ our Savior?
-Christ was the first to break the fetters. One should imitate him in order to break his own. He is the Redeemed Redeemer.
-Who is Sophia?
-Sophia is gnosis, through her comes the redemption.
-What is the redemption?
-The freeing of enslavement that is the material world.
-Should then one die as a martyr like James, in order to be redeemed?
-No, not necessarily, the spiritual has an obligation for the liberation of other’s spirits as well.
7 Discussion

The mythological narratives of the *ApocPaul* and the *1ApocJas* could, in both cases, be recognized as the classical hero’s journey, the Monomyth. The separation and the initiation parts are there, but also that of the return, where at least Paul becomes the “Master of two worlds,” and promises to come back and save others with the bounty, which is gnosis. Both of the heroes are called by a higher power and are predestined to make this journey. Paul as a visionary, James as an imitator of Christ. They both get help from a mediator with gnosis in order to succeed in their journey and they meet obstacles along the way too. Forces who try to stop them until they meet a higher and more dangerous deity. For Paul it is the Demiurge in the form of an old man in the seventh heaven, for James it is Achamoth and her offspring. When the last power is finally conquered, the heroes get their redemption and their spirits are set free from both body and soul. Their spirits surpass the eighth heaven and wander of to a higher place which is “the roots” of their spirits. Paul returns to earth first but James unites with the Pre-Existed father and becomes divine.

Disentangling the macromyths from the micromyths we can trace some of the imaginatively worlds of the ideal readers of these texts during the late second and early third century. The mythological material that the texts are built upon, comes from different cultures, times and genres. It is Egyptian and Greek mythology with stories of heroes who make their way in the underworld, encountering gatekeepers and entrapped souls. It is also (as the titles of the texts suggest) apocalyptic literature, with both Jewish and Christian elements in it. The authors also used legends of Christian heroes together with a tantamount of apocalyptic clichés, in order to reach an audience that was capable of understanding and decoding their symbolic language. Following up these diverse sources of myth and legend the scheme presented in Tables 1-3 emerged.
### Features

#### Some plausible sources (discussed in the thesis)

**Plausible sources of inspiration for the authors.**

**Plausible sources of intertextuality for the readers.**

**Plausible sources of oral transmission for the authors and the readers.**

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#### Timeline

- **1550-50 BCE**
  - Egyptian mythology:
    - The journey of the dead in the underworld
    - Tools: Magic formulas of passing
    - Gatekeepers in the underworld
    - Souls that are being judged.
    - Souls that are being questioned.
  - Different realms after death
    - The Book of the Dead
    - The Book of the Am-Tuat

- **400 BCE**
  - Greek mythology:
    - Epic heroes and their journeys.
    - Predestination.
    - Tools: Magic formulas of passing, the help of gods, endurance, courage.
    - Souls accused for their passions and condemned to reincarnation.
    - "Tartarus"
    - "Hades"

- **400 BCE-400 CE**
  - Jewish apocalypticism:
    - Pseudonymous hero.
    - Biblical preface.
    - Called by God.
    - Predestined. (Chosen from his mothers womb.)
    - Alone when the revelation occurs.
    - Revelation in dialogue form.
    - Vision during lifetime.
    - Mission: Return to earth and tell about what awaits.
    - Tools: The help of a mediator.

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#### Protagonists

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<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>ApocJas</td>
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<td>4</td>
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#### Other characters

- A divine mediator
- A Just God
- Gatekeepers
- Jericho
- Babylon as a place of enslavement
- Jerusalem on earth.
- The heavenly Jerusalem

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#### Places

- Jerusalem on earth.
- The heavenly Jerusalem.

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#### Table 1
### Timeline

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<thead>
<tr>
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<td>50 CE</td>
<td>The Gospels of Mark, Matthew, Luke, and John</td>
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<tr>
<td>50-100 CE</td>
<td>The Acts of the Apostles, the letters of Paul, and other writings</td>
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<tr>
<td>100-150 CE</td>
<td>The letter of Paul to the Romans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>150-200 CE</td>
<td>The letter of Paul to the Galatians</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>200-300 CE</td>
<td>The letter of Paul to the Corinthians</td>
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<td>300-350 CE</td>
<td>The letter of Paul to the Ephesians</td>
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<td>350-400 CE</td>
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<td>400-450 CE</td>
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### Protagonists

- **Paul**: The apostle, who was called by God, predestined, dedicated, and sent to convert Gentiles. Known for his mission and modest life, Paul was a critic of some aspects of the Jewish law.
- **James**: The brother of Jesus and the righteous sufferer, who was called by God, predestined, and sent to lead the Jewish Christian movement in Jerusalem. Known for his ascetic life and criticism of the rich Jewish aristocracy, James was a martyr hero, with a personal eschatology and tools like endurance and the courage to stand up for Christ among the Sadducees.

### Other Characters

- **Mary Magdalene**: A disciple of Jesus and a witness to his resurrection and ascension.

### Places

- **Jerusalem on earth**: Enslaved, as a place filled with ignorant people and rulers. Destroyed in 70 CE because God took revenge for the death of James.
- **Heavenly Jerusalem**: A place of freedom.
- **Jericho**: A place where blindness gets cured, an important center of Jewish Christianity.
- **Babylon**: A place of enslavement.
- **Mountain of Gaugelam**: Situated near Jericho or Edessa, a place of Syriac monks.

### Some plausible sources (discussed in this disaster)

- The Letter of Paul to the Romans
- The Letter of Paul to the Corinthians
- The Letter of Paul to the Ephesians
- The Letter of Paul to the Colossians
- The Letter of Paul to the Thessalonians
- The Letter of Paul to the Philippians
- The Letter of Paul to the Galatians
- The Twelve apostles
- The seventy two apostles
- Addai
- Tolun collectors as gatekeepers
- Jesus Christ
- Crucified and resurrected
- Christ as Savior
- The Twelve apostles
- The seventy two apostles
- Addai
- Tolun collectors as gatekeepers
- Jerusalem on earth as a place filled with ignorant people and rulers. Destroyed in 70 CE because God takes revenge for the death of James.
- The heavenly Jerusalem as a place of freedom.
- Jericho as a place where blindness gets cured.
- Jericho as an important center of Jewish Christianity.
- Babylon as a place of enslavement.
- The Holy Spirit as a mediator.
- The Twelve apostles as gatekeepers.
- Jesus Christ as a mediator.
- Crucified and resurrected.
- Christ as Savior.
- The Twelve apostles as gatekeepers.
- Jerusalem on earth as a place filled with ignorant people and rulers. Destroyed in 70 CE because God takes revenge for the death of James.
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- Jericho as a place where blindness gets cured.
- Jericho as an important center of Jewish Christianity.
- Babylon as a place of enslavement.
- The Holy Spirit as a mediator.
- The Twelve apostles as gatekeepers.
- Jesus Christ as a mediator.
- Crucified and resurrected.
- Christ as Savior.
- The Twelve apostles as gatekeepers.
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<td><em>The Apocryphon of James</em></td>
<td>100-200</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>The Gospel of Truth</em></td>
<td>140-180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>The Gospel of Philip</em></td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Ptolemy's letter to Flora</em></td>
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### Some Plausible Sources (Discussed in this Thesis)

- Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*
- *The Apocryphon of James*
- *The Gospel of Truth*
- *The Gospel of Philip*
- *Ptolemy's letter to Flora*
The complexity of the texts then, and the high frequency of symbolic language, metaphors and allusions must have been an interesting topic of discussion for a community of readers. The narratives could most certainly have been placed within a Christian educational/catechetical context, and after the analysis made on them, it would fit very well to a Valentinian audience. With the apocalyptic clichés altered and new mythological twists of already well-known stories, a Valentinian community of interpreters could understand the language as metaphors for the Valentinian path to redemption, and as inspiration for the ideal way of living and practicing the Valentinian teaching. Above all, such a community would understand the message of the narratives as the correct way of understanding one’s own particular relation to God and death, in contrast to Judaism, Jewish Christianity, and other forms of early Christianities.

What in the narratives then suggests that the *ApocPaul* and the *1ApocJas* represent Valentinian thought and could the hero’s journey in these two texts be compatible with Valentinian mythology? To start with, both of the texts want to depict YHWH as an inferior creator God. This God, dwells in Jerusalem together with his rulers and all consider him to be Just. Even James does that, praying to him and living a just life, according to mosaic law. But then something happens. Christ dies and resurrects, and he comes back as the Redeemed Redeemer in order to enlighten spirituals about the illusion of the material world and the true nature of things. That it exists a more superior deity, a Pre-existed and ungendered One and that the goal of every spiritual should be to merge into that One-who-is.

The Just God that James and Paul believed in before they became sober and opened their minds, is not an evil God but an ignorant one, even unaware of his own inferiority. When the higher deity Sophia, the Wisdom, steps in and reminds him, all hell breakes loose. Jerusalem gets sacked for example, and that is because of the illusion that is starting to fall apart. But in order for the Unity of the Pre-existed Father to be completed, more generations of spirituals are required. That is also represented in the missions of Paul and James. Paul shall return to earth after his heavenly journey in order to enlighten other spirituals and their coming children. James on the other hand shall reveal the knowledge given to him by Christ to Addai, who will reveal it to coming generations after the death of James. I can think of three lessons that these two narratives are trying to show:

1) Fear and death is an illusion, because what causes it is an illusion.

2) With spiritual freedom comes the responsibility for others.

3) There will always be help available for the one who chooses to follow the way of the spiritual.

On the other hand, I do not belong to that interpretive community, so I will probably never know what others considered important within these texts. Putting together historical facts, and then applying philology and hermeneutics, can do no more than merely produce a reconstruction of how
things might have happened. Nevertheless, my purpose with this study was an attempt to do
comparative mythology and shed some light on the imaginatively world of both the authors and the
readers of these texts in the beginning of the formation of Christianity.

Today, many scholars see the Valentinian movement as a Christian one. Still, it is important to
understand that it was something else too, something so different that it later on came to be
considered as heretical. This thesis has tried to demonstrate the uniqueness of the Valentinian myth
and how it was used. The results that are, to an extent, demonstrated in the scheme table above, are
hopefully contributing to the historical research on Valentinianism. The results and conclusions may
also inspire further research on this long lost religious movement. One could look at the embedded
Valentinian myth from a cognitive science approach, for example, as to see what kind of emotions
these particular hero stories could evoke. One could also look at the phenomenon as a “quiet”
counter-cultural or political protest on the established norms and social reality of that time. The
possibilities are many, and the scanty but still imaginatively rich material of the Nag Hammadi
Codices has lots to tell. Comparative mythology should be done. The comparison entails what the
myth does, all the way down to the individual level. It shows us ways in which we humans can
understand each other over time and space, and over culturally boundaries as well.
8 Bibliography


