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BRILL

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APOSTLES AS ARCHONS

The Fight for Authority and the Emergence of Gnosticism in the Tchacos Codex and Other Early Christian Literature

April D. DeConick

When I wrote *The Thirteenth Apostle: What the Gospel of Judas Really Says*, I highlighted two aspects of the *Gospel of Judas*.¹ The first—the concept of Judas as the thirteenth apostle and demon double of Ialdabaoth—I was able to explore more fully than the second—the concept of the twelve other apostles as the archons below him. Even as I was putting the finishing touches on the book manuscript, I realized that I had not plummed the depths of this second concept. I had only barely scratched the surface.

In my book, I had concluded from Jesus' nightmarish interpretation of the disciples' dream, that the correspondence of the twelve apostles with the twelve archons below Ialdabaoth, was understood by the author of this text to be a negative correspondence. I postulated that this correspondence was made for polemical reasons since the Sethian Christians were criticizing the Apostolic Christians for basing their teaching on ignorant disciples who were unwitting assistants to the archons and worshipers of Ialdabaoth. But I was unable to penetrate these issues more fully at that time.

I had no idea that the significance of the correspondences between the apostles and the archons went far beyond the scope of the *Gospel of Judas*, that in fact, when fully mapped, understanding these correspondences would lead me to offer answers to questions whose answers have perplexed me and others for a very long time.² What I discovered by studying the correspondences between the apostles and the archons is that they not only reveal information about the relationships of

¹ DeConick 2007.

² For coverage of the recent debates over the category "Gnosticism," see Pearson 1994, 105–114; Layton 1995, 334–350; Williams 1996; King 2003; Marjanen 2005; Logan 2006.

Gnostic Christians to the Apostolic Church, but when set out chronologically with respect to the various Gnostic traditions, they also reveal information about how Gnosticism comes to be. Since I have been an advocate to severely restrict the use of the word "Gnosticism" in our field, this was very much a surprise to me.

These correspondences show a progressive social demarcation over four centuries that begins as a religious lodge movement, an esoteric gathering for hierophantic teaching, attended by Jews and Christians who were still affiliated with local synagogues and churches. Eventually some of these lodge movements turn into reform movements which continue to maintain their membership in the synagogue and church, and allegiance to Judaism and Christianity, but understand their movement as a protest and reform of those traditions. Other Gnostic lodge movements become separatist movements that turn against the synagogue and church, under the impression that the synagogue and church are so corrupt as to be irredeemable. These Gnostics begin to worship as completely separate groups from the synagogue and church. It is their opinion that they alone know the road to salvation, and non-Gnostic Jews and Christians should convert in order to be saved. Ultimately, this progression culminates in the establishment of a new religious movement that we can properly call Gnosticism, a movement that produces at least two great Gnostic religions, Manichaeism and Mandaeism, but also the handbook compendia of *Jeu* and *Pistis Sophia*.

GNOSTIC ASTROLOGY

The teaching that the twelve apostles are archons is a concept deeply dependent on ancient astrology as it imploded within Gnostic environments. 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 properly characterized as the reality of heaven-and-earth correspondences, that vertical, analogous, symmetric vision of the world, where what happens in the heavens happens also on the earth. This relationship of correspondences is not always causal or mechanical as one might initially think. Instead, 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.³ This concept is clearly expressed by the Valentinian Theodotus who taught that "the stars themselves do nothing except show the activity of the ruling powers, just as the flight of the birds it points out something, but does nothing (τὰ δὲ ἄστρα αὐτὰ μὲν οὐδὲν ποιεῖ, δείκνυσι δὲ τὴν ἐνέργειαν τῶν κυρίων δυνάμεων, ὥσπερ καὶ ἡ τῶν ὀρνίθων πτῆσις σημαίνει τι, οὐχὶ ποιεῖ)."⁴ The ancient astrologers hoped to be able to grasp the meaning of these celestial occurrences and their earthly correspondences in order to discern the voices of the gods and figure out what was happening around them.⁵

The Gnostic literature, although not unique in its astrological underpinnings, is obsessed with mapping the correspondences 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. The universe before the advent of the Savior Jesus, is not only the creation of a lesser god—who is described as arrogant, jealous, ignorant, and in some cases, evil—but it functions as a prison for the spirit. The prison guards are the celestial beings, the rulers or archons, who reside in the planetary spheres above the earth and in the sublunar realm where the abyss or Hades was believed to be.

The various Gnostic systems play with the number of these archons, but all of them are built from astrological speculation about the numbers seven and twelve commonly assumed in the Greco-Egyptian and Hermetic environments in which these Gnostic systems originated. The number seven reflects the seven planets: Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, the Sun, Venus, Mercury, and the Moon. The Gnostics have even left us with enough evidence to reconstruct particular identifications of certain planets with certain named archons, although these identifications are not constant across the literature.⁶ The number twelve is a correspondence with the twelve signs of the Zodiac: Leo, Virgo, Libra, Scorpio, Sagittarius, Capricorn, Aquarius, Pisces, Aries, Taurus,

³ Von Stuckrad 2000b, 1–40; cf. Faivre 1994, 10–15; Hanegraaff 1995, 1–49; Hanegraaff 1996, 396–401.

⁴ Clem. Alex., *Exc.* 70.2. Greek: Casey 1934, 84; translation mine.

⁵ For recent treatments of astrology in ancient Judaism and Christianity, see Von Stuckrad 2000a; Popovic 2007; Hegedus 2007.

⁶ Welburn 1978, 241–254.

Gemini, and Cancer. Exactly how the planetary archons relate to the Zodiac signs has been discussed by scholars in the past, but has not been worked out satisfactorily yet.⁷

By the time the Gnostic texts began to be authored, this Hellenistic astrological system was combined with the old Egyptian decanal system. Egyptian astrological speculation placed a very significant emphasis on stars they called the "decans." Egyptian astrologers had observed constellations that ascended with the sun every ten days. The rising of the decans were used to divide time into hours.⁸ The decans were considered very powerful gods because, unlike the stationary constellations, these stars, the astrologers thought, did not stand in stations. Unlike the planets, they did not move backwards nor could they be eclipsed by the sun.⁹ Chapter six in Stobaeus' Hermetic handbook describes the decans as stars that rule from an area just above the Zodiac signs in the sphere of the fixed stars, so that "they hold up the circle of the universe and look down on the circle of the Zodiac."¹⁰ They exercise great power by slowing the circle of the universe and hastening the movement of the planets. According to Stobaeus, one of the decans, called the Bear, was thought to be centrally located in the Zodiac, functioning like the spoke of a wheel making the Zodiac revolve. The decans were the guardians of the cosmos, holding together everything and watching over the order of everything.¹¹ In the Hellenistic period, the Egyptian astrologers parsed the thirty-six decans into the Zodiac by allotting three decanal gods to each of the Zodiac signs. This combination can be observed on the second-century astrological boards recovered from an old well in Grand, a village in Lorraine.¹²

In Egyptian speculation, these gods were doubled, so that seventy-two rulers were apportioned to the Zodiac. This meant that thirty-six decans and thirty-six horoscopes were each considered rulers of every five-degrees of the Zodiac. Collectively they were identified as seventy-two spirits.¹³ Because they referenced every five-degrees of the

⁷ Welburn 1978, 241–254; Pleše 2006, 183–191.

⁸ Barton 1994, 20.

⁹ Barton 1994, 28–29.

¹⁰ Stob. Exc. 6.3–5. Festugière 1954a, 34–35.

¹¹ Cf. Firmicus Maternus, *Mathesis* 2.4, 4.22; Chadwick 1953, 496.

¹² Abry 1993; Evans 2004, 4–7.

¹³ Von Stuckrad 2000a, 641–642.

Zodiac, they were considered to be special stars by the astrologers.¹⁴ An important second-century astrological calendar based on this fifth-degree division of the Zodiac is published among the Oxyrhynchus Papyri. The year is divided into five-day weeks which are overseen by seventy-two deities who influence, for good or bad, what happens during their reign, including particular illnesses associated with them.¹⁵

So important were these stars, that some Egyptians singled out a favorite, a decan with a snake's body and a lion's face with sun rays radiating from his head. They called this decan, Chnoubis or Chnoumis. His image was reproduced on numerous green stone amulets.¹⁶ This is the image that is eventually associated with Ialdabaoth, suggesting that the origins of the Ialdabaoth god are connected with a particular Egyptian decan.¹⁷

The identification of the archons with the planets, the Zodiacal signs, and various degrees of the Zodiac meant that powers opposing the supreme high God controlled not only what happened on earth, but what happened to the fallen spirit. Although there are many renditions in the Gnostic literature about how this happened in terms of agents, the baseline story is that the otherworldly spirit sinks into denser and denser cosmic materials, until it lodges within a human soul and body. This process was understood as a descent of the spirit through the cosmic realms through various Zodiac gates or along the cosmic pole, the *axis mundi*.¹⁸ As the spirit sank, it literally passed through various constellations and planets, receiving along the way, the psychic or soul inclinations of each of these beings.

This speculation was assumed knowledge typical of Middle Platonic thought. Philosophers such as Numenius taught that as the *psyche* descended from the upper sphere of the fixed stars, it passed through certain star gates into the lower planetary spheres where certain faculties accumulated in the soul.¹⁹ Some of these faculties were positive while others were negative. Macrobius says that the natural philosophers attribute to Saturn the rational powers of the soul, to Juptier the

¹⁴ Quack, forthcoming.

¹⁵ P. Oxy. 465. Grenfell-Hunt 1903, 126–137. I owe Adamson thanks for this reference.

¹⁶ King 1887, 215–225; Mastrocinque 2005, 61–70.

¹⁷ This is also the expressed opinion of Mastrocinque 2005, 78–79.

¹⁸ For a discussion of the *axis mundi* in ancient religious literature, see Trammell's contribution to this volume.

¹⁹ On this see Porphyry, *Antr. nymph.* 70.21–24.

active, to Mars the spirited, to the Sun the perceptive, to Venus the appetitive, to Mercy the linguistic, and to the Moon the nutritive.²⁰ Similar lists are attributed to Proclus and Servius.²¹ The Hermetic traditions understood these accumulations to be largely negative. In the first book of the *Corpus Hermeticum* we find just such a negative list: falsehood, unlimited appetite, presumptuous audacity, arrogance, appetitive guile, evil devices, and nutritive.²² Similarly we find negative equations in the Valentinian *Gospel of Mary* where “the wisdom of the wrathful person” is derived from Saturn the seventh planet, “the foolish understanding of the flesh” from Jupiter the sixth planet, “the rule of the flesh” from Mars the fifth planet, “the zeal for death” from the Sun the fourth planet, “ignorance” from Mercury the third planet, “desire” from Venus the second planet, and “darkness” from the Moon the first planet.²³ In Gnostic literature, these inclinations are largely negative ones, because they are derived from capricious or malicious archons.

In the *Apocryphon of John*, the psychic traits given to the descending soul are recounted in a slightly different fashion, since this text understands that each planetary archon is trying to fashion Adam’s soul to imitate the image of the first perfect Man which had been revealed to them from above. Thus the writer of the *Apocryphon of John* states that the archons created the first man “by means of their respective powers in correspondence with the characteristics which were given. And each Authority supplied a characteristic in the form of the image which he had seen in its psychic form.”²⁴ In this case, the planets appear to be described in ascending order by their powers, and each give one characteristic to Adam’s soul. The Moon, associated with the archon Athoth, is called the “excellent” planet. He gives Adam his “bone-soul.” The second planet, Mercury is the archon Eloaio(u). He is characterized by “foreknowledge” and creates for Adam his “sinew-soul.” The third planet, Venus, is described as “divinity” and gives him “flesh-soul.”

²⁰ Macrobius, *Comm. Scipio* 1.12.1–16.

²¹ Proclus, *Comm. Timaeus* 1.148.1–6 and 3.335.12–15 (theoretical, political, spirited, linguistic, appetitive, perceptive, nutritive). Servius, *Comm. Aeneid* 6.127 (torpor, desire for absolute power, anger, passion, greed).

²² C.H. 1.24–26.

²³ *Gos. Mary* BG,1 16.5–12. Coptic: Tuckett 2007, 96. Translation mine.

²⁴ *Apoc. John* NHC II,1 15.5–9.

Venus is the archon Astaphaio(s). The Sun, Iao, is the fourth planet. He is known by his “lordship” and creates Adam’s “marrow-soul.” Mars, the fifth planet is known as the “Kingdom.” His archon name is Sabaoth. He gives the “blood-soul” to Adam. The sixth planet, Jupiter, is characterized by “envy.” His archon name is Adonin or Adonein and he gives Adam “skin-soul.” The seventh planet, Saturn, is called Sabbede or Sabbateon. His psychic characteristic is “understanding,” so he makes Adam’s “hair-soul.”²⁵

This text, as well as the teaching of Basilides, suggest that a large number of Gnostics even thought that different astrological powers—three-hundred and sixty(-five) to be exact—were responsible for creating each physical body part.²⁶ This means that each part of the human body was controlled by a different demon who was understood to be a stellar entity within the celestial realms, corresponding to the degrees of the Zodiac (plus five extra calendrical days). Basilides was known for his keen interest in *melothesia*, the exact correlation between the different parts of the human body with the different astrological entities that controlled them.²⁷ *Melothesia* is dependent on an astrological feature of the Zodiac called by astrologers the *monomoiriai* or single degrees of the Zodiac. Epiphanius, in fact, tells us about Phibionites, who, like the Basilidians, associated individual archons with every degree of the Zodiac. The ascending soul has to invoke each archon name in order to pass through the archons’ territories and escape the hands of the authorities.²⁸

The way that the universe and the human being were designed by the archons means that the spirit is entrapped in the material world. This continues to be so even after death. Upon the death of the body, the soul is seized by a particular archon who is the overseer and judge of souls. Since the soul, from the time of its incarnation until its release at death, is under the influence of the demonic archons, it cannot live piously. It is unable to transform its negative psychic aspects. So it remains impossible for it to gain its freedom and ascend back

²⁵ *Apoc. John* NHC II,1 11.23–12.25; 15.14–24. *Apoc. John* BC,2 48.11–50.5, supplies a different laundry list. Waldstein-Wisse 1995, 88–91. For the exact planetary associations, see Welburn 1978, 241–254.

²⁶ *Apoc. John* NHC II,1 15.30–19.6; Epiph., *Pan.* 24.7.6.

²⁷ On *melothesia*, see n. 28.

²⁸ Epiph., *Pan.* 26.9–10.

up the cosmic pole or through the star gates. Nor can it know about the existence of the supreme God, or how to worship that God since it is satiated or asleep, sedated by matter. Since the negative psychic aspects cannot be sloughed off, this also means that, upon the death of the body, the overseer archon is justified to put the soul back into another human body. Over the centuries, the spirit within the soul sinks deeper and deeper into matter. It becomes unconscious, buried alive in a tomb it can never leave.

It is only a divine action external to this cosmic system that can alter this situation. So Gnostic systems rely on the descent of redeemer gods into the universe to save the spirit. The most powerful redeemer god in the Gnostic Christian systems is Jesus, whose advent and death result in a physical restructuring of the cosmos. The story of his birth star allowed for the theory to take root that a new star was born which replaced the old *axis mundi*, a bright day star around which the cosmos now revolved. The death of Jesus was interpreted through Paul's teaching in 1 Corinthians 2:6–8, Ephesians 6:12, and Colossians 2:14–15, as the vanquishing of the cosmic powers. Jesus' crucifixion was their own. This meant, for Christians, that the cosmic archons and powers no longer controlled their fate, but Jesus did. After death, their souls would be able to ascend from Hades up through the cosmos along the *axis mundi*, unhindered by the archons. John 10:7, "I am the door," became a literal reality. The saved would enter the Pleroma through a new door that had opened up out of the heavens—Jesus himself.

This teaching had implications for Jesus' disciples, who numbered twelve and like the twelve tribes of Israel, were being mapped onto the twelve signs of the Zodiac. The ways in which these correspondences worked appear to have reflected some ways in which the ancient people thought that magic worked. For instance, in order to control demons and conquer them, to bid powers and harness them, magicians operated from the perspective that their actions on earth could and would affect the celestial gods, the stars and the planets. There seem to me to be at least two sorts of actions common to the magic arts. The first is foundational for the practice of exorcism. It is a concept based on a *counterpoint*. In this performance, the magician is able to subjugate the demon by invoking, through incantations or inscribing angel names, an angel opposite the demon. He might also use a sign of God or Christ to drive out the devil. In this case, the magician

uses the principle of antipathy, an *opposite* power or counterpoint, to neutralize the demon.²⁹

An early Christian application of the *counterpoint* correspondence is known from the *Pseudo-Clementine* literature.³⁰ What must have been a widely circulating tradition—that the twelve apostles stood in for the Zodiac—is preserved in the *Homilies*: "The Lord had twelve apostles, bearing the number of the twelve months of the sun."³¹ This sort of speculation may be as early as the first century in Christianity, and occurred as well in Judaism.³² The book of Revelation may be our earliest Christian reference to this correspondence when it describes Jerusalem as it descends down through the heavens. Upon the twelve "foundations" of the outer wall encircling the city are inscribed the twelve names of the apostles.³³ Although dated to the early fifth century, there is a Christian artifact housed in the Geneva Museum that visually depicts this *counterpoint* replacement of the apostles with the Zodiac. Stunningly, Jesus' image is in the center of a lamp. He is the new *axis mundi* around with the Zodiac whirls on the rim of the lamp. But the standard Zodiac signs are not present. Rather they have been replaced with the busts of the twelve apostles.³⁴ Behind each of these examples is an early teaching preserved by the fourth century bishop of Verona, Zeno, and, as we will see later, the second century teacher Theodotus the Valentinian—that converts when baptized are born again under a new set of Zodiac signs which destine them all to heaven.³⁵ It fits this pattern of belief then that we should have examples of early Christian sarcophagi picturing the twelve apostles with stars, one above each of the apostles' heads.³⁶

²⁹ Cf. Mastrocinque 2005, 33–34 and n. 132.

³⁰ Cf. Daniélou 1959, 14–21.

³¹ *Hom.* 2.23. Rehm-Irmscher 1969, 44.

³² On the Zodiac in Judaism, see *Esth. Rabba* 7.11; *Num. Rabba* 14.18; *Pesiq. Rab.* 20, 27–28; Sukenik 1934, 33–35; Dothan 1962, 153–154; Kraeling 1956, 42; Charlesworth 1977, 183–200.

³³ Rev 21:10–14.

³⁴ Deonna 1920, 176–179.

³⁵ Zeno, *Teaching* 1.38; Clem. Alex., *Exc.* 25.2. For a complete analysis of the apostles and the Zodiac, see Hübner 1975, 120–137; Hübner 1983.

³⁶ Gundel 1972, 462–709; Leclercq 1907, 3014.



Christian zodiac on fifth-century red clay lamp
 Inv. no. C 1478, The Geneva Museum of Art and History
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The second practice is based on the concept of the *counterpart*. This is the idea that “like affects like,” where the acts performed by a magician on a “double” were thought to be experienced in duplicate on the magician’s subject. It is imitative by nature, or as Frazer long ago described, “homeopathic,” a description that I still find *apropos*.³⁷ The *counterpart* concept relies behind the making of talismans, effigies, and certain types of amulets. It is believed to be effective because the magician’s subject should experience the same fate as its double—a certain “sympathy” exists between the two.

³⁷ Frazer 1900.

If Orosius and Turibius fairly represent Priscillian’s teaching on astrology, including Orosius’ quotation of a letter fragment purported to be Priscillian’s, the Priscillians in the fourth century provide us with a fine example of *counterpart* mapping of the Zodiac.³⁸ It follows from their reports that the Priscillians believed that souls were derived from a storehouse, and salvation depended upon their ability to conquer the bodies in which they had been bound by evil archons when they descended through the spheres. The bodies had been sealed with a written bond saying that they were the property of these evil powers, trapping the souls within. The Zodiac signs controlled the formation of the body, corresponding to twelve powers of Darkness and matter’s domination. The soul’s formation was controlled by the twelve heavenly spirits, who served as counterpoints to the twelve negative Zodiac powers. The twelve Jewish patriarchs, who represented the twelve virtues that strengthened the various parts of the soul, were mapped as the counterparts to these twelve spirits: Reuben the head-soul; Judah the breast-soul; Levi the heart-soul; Benjamin the thigh-soul; and so forth. In fact, Orosius says that they believed that each Patriarch ruled over a different aspect of the soul just as the signs of the Zodiac ruled over different parts of the body: Aries the head; Taurus the neck; Gemini the arms; Cancer the breast; and so forth.³⁹ When Jesus was nailed to the cross, the bond that trapped the soul in the body was nailed too, liberating the soul.⁴⁰

In the Gnostic story, Jesus replaced the old cosmic pole, providing a restructuring of the cosmos which allowed for the escape of the trapped spirit. From this it followed, that his disciples must stand in

³⁸ Orosius, *Commonitorium de errore Priscillianistarum et Origenistarum* 2; Leo, *Ep.* 15, praef. 2, 15.16; Sigebertus Gemblacensis, *Chron.* a. 386.

³⁹ *Sefer Yezirah* parallels the Zodiac signs to the twelve parts of the human body. On this see Scholem 1955, 77–78. Similar examples of *melothesia* can be found in Manichaean texts, especially *Kephalaia* 70, “On the body that is constructed according to the form of the cosmos,” which has the same correspondences between the Zodiac signs and body parts: Aries (head); Taurus (neck and shoulders); Gemini (arms); Cancer (breast); Leo (stomach); Virgo (loins); Libra (vertebrae); Scorpio (sexual organs); Sagittarius (loins); Capricorn (knees); Aquarius (shinbones); Pisces (soles of the feet). This appears to be common knowledge, expressed also by Sextus Empiricus, *Adv. math.* 5.21–22; Manilius 2.456–65, 4.702–709; Vettius Valens 2.36; Porphyry, *Introductio in Tetrabibulum Ptolemaei* 44; Firmicus Maternus, *Mathesis* 2.24; P. Ryl. 63 (third century, Plato learns a *melothesia* from Peteësis an Egyptian prophet); P. Mich. Inv. 1, 1290 (second century, an extremely detailed mathematical *melothesia*).

⁴⁰ Hübner 1983, 18–24; Chadwick 1976, 190–202, 211–215; cf. Burrus 1995, 47–78.

for the Zodiacal signs, which were the archons. Whether this was a positive or negative correspondence, depends on both the peculiar Gnostic tradition engaging the correspondence and the date of the text in which this discussion is occurring. In the end, understanding these correspondences can help us resolve what Gnosticism is. It can help us see how Gnosticism is the culmination of a religio-social process that began as a lodge movement supplementing the synagogue and the church and ended as a new religious movement competing with them and persecuted by them.

GOSPEL OF JUDAS

The cosmic structures laid out in the mid-second century *Gospel of Judas*, from the beginning to the end of this gospel, mirror that of a group of Sethian Christians. The entire gospel is dependent upon a cosmos with the number thirteen as its ordering principle. In this volume and elsewhere, Marvin Meyer has suggested that the thirteenth realm in the *Gospel of Judas* is likely the same thirteenth realm from which Pistis Sophia is separated in a Gnostic text that bears her name.⁴¹ Meyer no longer maintains his argument for a hero Judas who was Jesus' "soul-mate" as he envisioned Judas in his original essay published in National Geographic's first edition of *The Gospel of Judas*.⁴² Meyer now suggests that Judas is something between a hero and a villain. Judas is a tragic figure similar to the repentant Sophia. "Like Sophia in other texts and traditions," Meyer writes in the second edition of his commentary in National Geographic's *The Gospel of Judas*, "Judas in the Gospel of Judas is separated from the divine realms above, even though he knows and professes the mysteries of the divine and the origin of the savior; he goes through grief and persecution as a *daimon* confined to this world below; he is enlightened with revelations that no human will ever see; and at last he is said to be on his way, much like Sophia, to the thirteenth aeon of gnostic lore."⁴³

⁴¹ Kasser et al. 2008, 125–154.

⁴² In Kasser et al. 2006a, 137–169.

⁴³ Meyer in Kasser et al. 2008, 151.

Meyer's equation of the thirteenth Aeon, the residence of Pistis Sophia, with the residence of Judas is problematic and unconvincing. As we will see in the final section of this chapter, the *Pistis Sophia* is a very late Gnostic text, from the fourth century, written two hundred years after the *Gospel of Judas*. The text is dependent on the late third century Gnostic texts called the *Books of Jeu*. Together they comprise a compendium of Gnostic instructions about ascent and salvation. The teachings in these books do not represent a single school of Gnosis, but rather are an eclectic blend of Sethian, Valentinian, and Manichaean instructions, complete with diagrams and magical seals. The result is a totally unique form of Gnosticism that emerges in the late third century. It is not a representative of mid- to late second century Sethian Christianity. The thirteenth Aeon that Pistis Sophia flees is not the same place where Judas is going to go, as Meyer suggests. In the text *Pistis Sophia*, it is imagined as a place *beyond* this cosmos and its stars, ruled by the father of Ialdabaoth, Authades, rather than a realm *in* this cosmos with a star in it as the *Gospel of Judas* indicates. Judas does not follow Sophia's pattern as Meyer says. He does not start out in the thirteenth Aeon. He is not punished and driven out of it. He is not suffering here in the cosmos because he is in exile, or because he has been forced out of the thirteenth Aeon by the father of Ialdabaoth. Nor does he await redemption in top of the twelfth realm like Pistis Sophia. What and where is the thirteenth Aeon according to the *Gospel of Judas*?

Thirteen Realms and Their Archon

Although the top of p. 52 is fragmentary, it appears that the author of the *Gospel of Judas* knows a version of the Sethian myth in which Nebro-Ialdabaoth and his lieutenant Saklas live in a cloud in Chaos. The *Gospel of Judas* eventually drops references to Nebro-Ialdabaoth and consolidates these archons into one demiurge who emerges in the text by the name Saklas. For convenience and consistency, I have chosen to refer to this many-named demiurge by his well-known name Ialdabaoth, although I could have chosen to call him Saklas or Nebro just as easily.

Nebro-Ialdabaoth and Saklas each create six angels as their assistants. Another twelve angels are created to rule the heavens below them. Five of these are said to be the archons appointed to rule the Abyss, leaving the other seven, who are called collectively "the first," to

ceremonies.⁵⁴ These were amulets with *apotropaic* functions, warding off the evil angels with powerful words and images. The reward is that the soul will be transfigured, acquiring power and salvation.⁵⁵ In our fragmentary version, only the name Gamaliel survives, although the text probably contained many more names of powers and angels since it relates that the initiate should not cease “naming the angels.”⁵⁶

It is in the first half of *Marsanes* where we find the author reappropriating the number thirteen in a ritual sequence of thirteen seals. The performance of this series results in an ascent out of this cosmos and through the Pleromic aeons to the Unknown Silent God who is the foundation of the indistinguishable God. The first six seals work the soul through the cosmic realms, including the arenas where disembodied and repentant souls are kept, as well as the perfected souls. The seventh sealing begins the ascent through the Pleroma in the Aeon of Autogenes, ending with the thirteenth sealing in the Aeon of the Unknown Silent God.⁵⁷ The reappropriation of the number thirteen in this fashion likely was the result of the fact that in earlier Sethian texts, salvation and admittance to the Pleroma depended on the soul's ability to overcome thirteen archons. The thirteen sealings in *Marsanes* do not correspond to thirteen cosmic realms, and so are not equivalent to the thirteen cosmic realms in the *Gospel of Judas*.

The manuscripts of the *Apocryphon of John* and the *Gospel of the Egyptians* give alternative lists of the names of the twelve Archons:

| | | | | |
|-------------------|---------------|----------------------|--------------------|------------------|
| NHC II 10.28–11.4 | NHC IV 17.1–5 | BG 40.5–18 | NHC III 16.20–17.5 | NHC III 58.6–23 |
| Athoth | | Yaoth | Haoth | Athoth |
| Harmas | | Hermas | Harmas | Harmas |
| Kalioumbri | | Galila | Galila | Galila |
| Yabel | | Yobel | Yobel | Yobel |
| Adonaiu-Sabaoth | | Adonaios | Adonaios | Adonaios-Sabaoth |
| Cain | | Sabaoth | Sabaoth | Cain |
| Abel | Abel | Cainan, Cae, Cain | Cainan Kasin | Abel |
| Abrisene | Abrisene | Abiressine | Abiressia | Akiressina |
| Yobel | Yobel | Yobel | Yobel | Yubel |
| Arumpieel | Armoupiel | Harmoupiel | Armoupiel | Harmupiel |
| Melcheiradonein | | Adonin | Adonin | Archir-Adonin |
| Belias | | Belias | Belias | Belias |

⁵⁴ *Mars.* NHC X 35.1–3.

⁵⁵ *Mars.* NHC X 39.18–40.3.

⁵⁶ *Mars.* NHC X 64.20; 39.5.

⁵⁷ *Mars.* NHC X 2.12–4.24.

These lists are not stable, especially when it comes to spelling and sequence, and sorting out possible Zodiacal correspondences with their planetary rulers is no easy task, although Welburn attempted this in a classic article on the subject.⁵⁸ The list of five Archons in the *Gospel of Judas* aligns with the first five Archons in these above lists, although the author has identified them as the five Abyss demons rather than the planetary ones. It may be that the author of the *Gospel of Judas* was reading the list in ascending order rather than descending, thus making a mistake in this identification.

| | | | | |
|-----------------|------------|------------------|------------------|------------|
| NHC II 10.28–34 | BG 40.5–10 | NHC III 16.20–25 | NHC III 58.6–15 | TC 52.4–11 |
| Athoth | Yaoth | Haoth | Athoth | [...]th |
| Harmas | Hermas | Harmas | Harmas | Harmathoth |
| Kalioumbri | Galila | Galila | Galila | Galia |
| Yabel | Yobel | Yobel | Yobel | Yobel |
| Adonaiu-Sabaoth | Adonaios | Adonaios | Adonaios-Sabaoth | Adonais |

The first name preserved in the list in the *Gospel of Judas* must be reconstructed. My initial reading “Atheth” followed the *Critical Edition's* reading, “eta”.⁵⁹ Now that I can view a high-resolution photograph of this area, I observe that all that is left is a theta with a broken area preceding it. At the bottom of the broken area, one dot of ink is preserved. Whether this dot is enough to reconstruct eta, let alone “[S]eth,” as the *Critical Edition* has it, is conjecture. The dot looks to me like it just as well could represent the bottom of the centerline of an omega, where the ink has eroded from the lower register as is the case with the omega at the beginning of line 11 on p. 50. The measurement between the centerline of this letter and the left edge of the theta appears identical to the distance between the centerline of the omega on 52.7 and the theta that follows it.

So there is no reason for us to think that the first archon in this list is any other than Athoth. In fact, the epithet of this archon, “Excellent (χρηστός),” and its placement in the list corresponds to Athoth elsewhere in Sethian literature. This archon is the who carries the title “Excellent (χρηστός)” identified by the standard abbreviation $\overline{\chi\text{C}}$ or $\overline{\chi\text{PC}}$ which is often confused with “χριστός.”⁶⁰ In the *Apocryphon of*

⁵⁸ Welburn 1978, 241–254.

⁵⁹ Kasser et al. 2007, 223. I have changed my reading to “omega” now that I have access to the photographs.

⁶⁰ Cf. *Gos. Jud.* 52.4–52.6. Layton 2007, section 17.

John, Athoth is the first Power, "Excellence ($\chi\bar{\rho}\bar{\sigma}$)."⁶¹ Thus, in the same text, II.10–29–30 should be reconstructed: "the name of the first one is Athoth, whom the generations call [the excellent one ($\eta[\text{OY}\bar{\chi}]\bar{\rho}\bar{\sigma}$)." The same can be said for the reference to him in the *Gospel of the Egyptians*. It should read: "The first angel is Ath[oth. He is the one] whom [the great] generations of people call ["the excellent one ($\eta\text{OY}\bar{\chi}\bar{\rho}\bar{\sigma}$)]".⁶² That the *Gospel of Judas* also has Athoth as the first archon in its list actually is confirmed in 52.7 where the scribe has made a copying error, perhaps due to *anablepsis*. He has accidentally repeated the archon's name following $\zeta\alpha\rho\mu\alpha$.

Judas as Ialdabaoth

The *Gospel of Judas* further plays on the correspondences between the archons and celestial beings by identifying the twelve planetary and abyss archons with the twelve disciples (including Matthias), while the thirteenth demon is said to be Judas. Jesus directly addresses Judas as the "Thirteenth Demon ($\omega\ \eta\mu\epsilon\zeta\eta\mu\eta\tau\eta\tau\eta\ \delta\alpha\delta\iota\mu\omega\eta\eta$)."⁶³ He tells him that he will be the "Thirteenth" cursed by the generations that he will preside over.⁶⁴ Although he will dwell in the thirteenth cosmic realm where his star will rule, Judas will not ascend beyond this realm to the aeon where the Holy Generation resides.⁶⁵ In fact, Jesus has separated Judas from the Holy Generation when he interprets Judas' dream in such a way that Judas is locked out of the place reserved for the holy ones, the aeon above the cosmos where the planets do not rule.⁶⁶ Because the gospel attaches a star to the thirteenth realm, it locates Judas *within* this cosmos. Thus it is inappropriate to interpret Judas' connection with the thirteenth realm in the *Gospel of Judas* with traditions of the number thirteen in *Marsanes* where the thirteenth seal is performed in the highest aeon of the Pleroma or traditions of the thirteenth aeon in Pistis Sophia where it is a liminal realm outside of the cosmos proper, but below the divine world, the Treasury of Light.

⁶¹ *Apoc. John* NHC II,1 12.16. Coptic: Böhlig-Wisse 1975, 75; translation mine.

⁶² *Gos. Eg.* NHC III,2 58.10. For this interpretation and reconstructions, Turner 2008b, 204 and n. 12.

⁶³ *Gos. Jud.* 44.21. Coptic: Kasser et al. 2007, 207–208; translation mine.

⁶⁴ *Gos. Jud.* 46.19–24.

⁶⁵ *Gos. Jud.* 55.10–11; 46.25–47.1.

⁶⁶ *Gos. Jud.* 46.16–18; 45.13–19.

Jesus tells him that Judas will become the "Thirteenth," cursed by the generations that he will "rule over."⁶⁷ This "ruling" terminology is associated with the Archons. The Coptic text here uses $\alpha\rho\chi\iota$, which is a Coptic variant of the Greek loanword, $\alpha\rho\chi\omega$, "to rule." What the Archon (or Ruler!) does is "rule" over the cosmic realms and its generations.⁶⁸ This image is repeated a few pages later in the gospel when Jesus tells Judas that he will come to dwell in the thirteenth realm where Judas' star will rule. Here the Coptic does not rely on a Greek loanword for translation, but puts the word into good Coptic, $\rho\ \epsilon\rho\omega$, "to reign."⁶⁹ Judas' future is bound up with the thirteenth realm. Judas will not ascend beyond this realm to the Aeon where the planets do not rule but where the Holy Generation, the kingless generation, resides.⁷⁰ This separation is made clear when in Jesus' interpretation of Judas' dream. According to Jesus, Judas is locked out of the place reserved for the holy ones, the Aeon above the cosmos where the sun and moon do not rule.⁷¹

These associations make Judas the earthly *counterpart* of the Archon Nebro-Ialdabaoth. This heaven-earth correspondence was completely transparent to the Sethian Christians who wrote this text, and so they have left behind subtle references to the correspondence in their gospel. Nebro-Ialdabaoth was known to them as the "Apostate ($\lambda\eta[\text{OC}]\tau\alpha\eta\sigma$)" Archon who was "corrupted with blood ($\epsilon[\text{C}]\chi\sigma\sigma[\zeta]\eta\ \bar{\eta}\sigma\eta\omega\sigma\ \epsilon\sigma\upsilon\eta\tau\alpha\sigma\ \bar{\eta}\mu\alpha\gamma$)."⁷² This image was traditionally linked to Judas in the Christian scriptures. He is the apostate, the rebel or traitor who had handed over "innocent blood," and whose thirty pieces of silver were used to purchase a cemetery for foreigners called the "Field of Blood."⁷³

These ideas may be connected to the widespread ancient belief that the places of demons are places filled with pain, blood, slaughter, weeping, mourning, and groaning.⁷⁴ But that Nebro-Ialdabaoth and Judas are being linked through this imagery is quite evident when it is realized that nowhere else in Gnostic literature do we find the

⁶⁷ *Gos. Jud.* 46.19–24. Coptic: Kasser et al. 2007, 211.

⁶⁸ *Gos. Jud.* 46.19–24.

⁶⁹ *Gos. Jud.* 55.10–11. Coptic: Kasser et al. 2007, 229.

⁷⁰ *Gos. Jud.* 46.25–47.1; 45.20–21; 37.1–6.

⁷¹ *Gos. Jud.* 45.13–19.

⁷² *Gos. Jud.* 51.11–15. Kasser et al. 2007, 220–221.

⁷³ Matt 27:4, 8; Acts 1:19.

⁷⁴ Cf. *Asc. NHC* VI,8 78. 25–31.

demiurge described as an apostate corrupted with blood.⁷⁵ He is, however, described as Sophia's "miscarriage of darkness" and his revolt is called an "apostasis" or "defection."⁷⁶ It is also fascinating that the Egyptians identified one of the presiding astral deities by the name "Nebu," a vulture-serpent faced ruler with the feet of a lion. Since he was the "Lord of wars," during his season when he reigned in the heavens there would be battle and destruction. Rebels (Greek: ἀποστάτης) would rise when he ruled the sky.⁷⁷ Could Nebu's portraiture have informed the Gnostic portrayal of Nebro/Nebruel and Judas's link to him?

In the *Gospel of Judas*, the "Lord over everything" is the one who commands that sacrifices be offered to him, sacrifices which are evil.⁷⁸ Judas will bring about the most evil of these sacrifices, because Judas will be the one responsible for Jesus' sacrifice.⁷⁹ Thus it is that Judas carries through on earth the will of his celestial star, Nebro-Ialdabaoth, who wants Jesus dead. His deed, in fact, is said to correspond to the moment when Judas' star moves through the heavens, which ascends above the other stars to Nebro-Ialdabaoth's realm, the thirteenth.⁸⁰ From this realm, Judas will rule over the twelve archons below him until the end of time, when the fate of the stars has been accomplished and the archons and their realms are destroyed.⁸¹ Judas the demon will lament exceedingly, just as the Gnostics expected the archons to do when they were faced with the truth.⁸²

Why is this *counterpart* correspondence between Judas and Nebro-Ialdabaoth so important to the Sethians? Because it turned on its head the teaching of the Apostolic Christians about the efficacy of Jesus' death as an atonement sacrifice made to God. The Sethian Christians were offended by this doctrine. For instance, in the *Second Treatise of the Great Seth*, the author calls the Apostolic atonement doctrine a "joke" (οὔκωρε) of the archons who "proclaim a doctrine of a dead

⁷⁵ The closest reference to "blood" corruption I have been able to locate, is to the fallen Sophia in the *Gos. Egy.* NHC III,2 57.1–5. But the passage is so fragmentary that it is impossible to know what the reference to blood actually means.

⁷⁶ *Apoc. John* BG,2 45.10–13. Coptic: Waldstein-Wisse 1995, 80.

⁷⁷ P. Oxy. 465 col. i.10–44. Grenfell-Hunt 1903, 128.

⁷⁸ *Gos. Jud.* 40.18–25; 56.11–17. Coptic: Kasser et al. 2007, 199, 231. Translation mine.

⁷⁹ *Gos. Jud.* 56.17–21.

⁸⁰ *Gos. Jud.* 56.23, 57.19–20, 46.19–24, 55.10–11.

⁸¹ *Gos. Jud.* 55.15–20, 57.9.

⁸² Cp. *Gos. Jud.* 46.11–47.1; *Orig. World* NHC XIII,2 125.32–35.

man and lies."⁸³ But it is only from the *Gospel of Judas* that we can puzzle out their reasoning. The Gnostics who wrote *Judas* take on the Apostolic Christians on their own turf, agreeing with them that Judas is a demon and that he is responsible for bringing about Jesus' sacrificial death. But then they ask the obvious. If Judas was a demon, and he brought about Jesus' sacrifice, was his sacrifice something that the demons desired? If so, sacrifice must be evil, and so must the doctrine of atonement. In fact, they concluded, this is all a trick by the demon who rules this world, Judas' celestial correspondence, Nebro-Ialdabaoth. It was brought about in order to deceive Christians and lead them astray. Whenever Christians perform a Eucharist ceremony in which the sacrifice of Jesus is reenacted, they are unwittingly worshipping Nebro-Ialdabaoth.⁸⁴

Can Judas break this correspondence? Can he overcome his destiny as Ialdabaoth's servant? Some ancient people thought that it was possible to break these types of negative correspondences, and one of the ways in which they tried to do so was through the use of magical spells. The magical technique for changing an undesirable destiny involved invoking the aid of a powerful god by chanting his name according to a certain prescription. When the god appeared, the petitioner was instructed not to stare at the god's face, but look down and beseech him, "Master, what is fated for me?" The god then was supposed to tell the petitioner about his "star" and "what kind of daimon" he had. If the petitioner heard some terrible fate or correspondence, he was commanded not to cry or weep, but ask the god to "wash it off or circumvent it, for this god can do everything."

As Grant Adamson argues in his contribution to this volume, this particular spell resonates on many levels with the story about Judas Iscariot in his gospel, and may be an echo of shared popular

⁸³ *Treat. Seth* NHC VII,2 60.13–22. Coptic: Riley, 1996, 176. Translation mine. The *Treat. Seth* should be recognized as a Sethian Christian writing. It contains many of the mythic characters associated with the Sethian myth, including Sophia, Ialdabaoth, Adonaios, and Ennoia. So in my opinion, its connection to Sethianism is almost certain. It is an example, however, of a *Christian* Sethian text, as is the *Gospel of Judas*. Thus its focus is on the descent of Christ into Jesus, his crucifixion, and his victory over the archons. The crucifixion scene is similar to what we know about Basilides' teaching on the subject, and suggests a sharing of knowledge between the Sethian and Basilidian Christians, as there was between the Sethian and Valentinian Christians.

⁸⁴ *Gos. Jud.* 34.8–10.

knowledge in antiquity about ways in which fate could be conquered.⁸⁵ When Judas approaches Jesus for teaching, like the suppliant in the spell, Judas turns away his face. Throughout the gospel, Jesus provides Judas with the information about Judas' destiny, none of which Judas likes—neither his star, nor its movement in the skies, nor his identification with Ialdabaoth the thirteenth demon, nor his future reign as the archon in the thirteenth cosmic sphere. But when Judas tells Jesus that he does not want any of this, Jesus does not take it away. The god does not grant his request probably because the Sethians understood Judas to be an apostate, and as such his damnation was sure. So instead of granting Judas freedom from his cursed destiny, Jesus repeats the information as evident, even in process, and Judas is left to weep.

Twelve Apostles as Counterparts of the Archon

Who is responsible on earth for leading Christians astray, for teaching them the doctrine of atonement and the celebration of the Eucharist? The twelve disciples who are the earthly counterparts of the twelve archons residing below Judas.⁸⁶ Each one of them represents a human generation who will curse Judas, generations which will never know Jesus.⁸⁷ The twelve apostles represent the human generations that do not have connections to the holy generation beyond the cosmic realms.⁸⁸

What is most fascinating here is the acknowledgement by the author of the *Gospel of Judas*, that Christians other than themselves understand this heaven-earth correspondence between the apostles and the stars in a positive sense. Thus the author of *Judas* mentions that some Christians say that the twelve apostles are "equal to the angels," by which these Christians mean that the apostles are "the stars which accomplish everything."⁸⁹ This is a *counterpoint* teaching about the apostles, that they, as positive entities, replace the stars and vanquish the stars' control over human Fate. These other Christians teach that

⁸⁵ PGM 13.705–715. Translated by Betz 1992, 189. Refer to Adamson's paper in this volume for a complete analysis of this important spell and its relationship to the *Gospel of Judas*.

⁸⁶ Gos. Jud. 46.5–24.

⁸⁷ Gos. Jud. 46.21–22; 34.15–18.

⁸⁸ Gos. Jud. 36.19–37.20.

⁸⁹ Gos. Jud. 40.15–18. Kasser et al. 2007, 199.

once initiated, the Christian's fate is no longer controlled by the stars, but by the apostles who have replaced these negative powers.

The author of the *Gospel of Judas*, however, goes on to insist that this *counterpoint* teaching is wrong. Instead the real teaching is that the apostles are twelve negative counterparts of the Archons. They are the twelve priests in the heavenly temple who make shameful sacrifices in the Name of Jesus. In so doing, they unknowingly make their offerings to the "Servant of Error," the "Lord over everything," leading countless of future generations astray. On the last day, they will be judged "guilty."⁹⁰

This negative correspondence probably develops out of a standard Sethian Christian teaching as described by Irenaeus—that Jesus' disciples were ignorant and did not as a group receive his esoteric teachings. He states that the Sethians affirm that many of Jesus' disciples were not aware of the descent of Christ into him. Even when they saw him risen, they did not recognize him as the Christ. The disciples greatest error was their teaching about a physical resurrection, not being aware that flesh and blood do not possess the Kingdom. They remain unaware that Jesus was united to Christ, the incorruptible Aeon. Furthermore, during the eighteen months after his resurrection, Jesus was only able to teach a few disciples.⁹¹

Servant(s) of Saklas

Gregor Wurst of the University of Augsburg continues to piece together leftover fragments from the Tchacos Codex. At the Codex Judas Congress on March 14, 2008, held at Rice University, Professor Wurst revealed an important line that he has pieced together from four small fragments.⁹² It reads [...]ϩϩⲁⲗ ⲛⲀⲔⲁⲗⲁⲔ, "servant(s?) of Saklas." Recently he has placed these fragments on page 55 of the Tchacos Codex, as words of Jesus spoken to Judas.⁹³ Jesus appears to be discussing the sins of the apostles who are servants of Saklas, telling Judas that he will rule over them.

Who is Saklas? In Sethianism, Saklas is understood to be both the demiurge's lieutenant living in the demiurge's cloud, and the

⁹⁰ Gos. Jud. 39.6–40.26.

⁹¹ Iren., *Adv. haer.* 1.30.13–14.

⁹² TC fragments I2, C29, H34, C4.

⁹³ Refer to Wurst's contribution to this volume.

demiurge himself. Sometimes he has both identities in a single text. In the *Apocryphon of John*, for instance, the demiurge is known as just "Ialdabaoth."⁹⁴ But it is also said in the same text that he goes by three names—Ialdabaoth, Saklas, and Samael.⁹⁵ In the *Apocalypse of Adam*, Sakla is the preferred name of the god of this world,⁹⁶ while in the *Gospel of the Egyptians*, the unnamed demiurge is created as a great angel with two monads, Sakla and Nebruel.⁹⁷ But later in the narrative, the god of this world goes by Sakla only, Nebruel vanishing along with the original unnamed demiurgic angel.⁹⁸

The *Gospel of Judas* is just as ambiguous. The demiurge is described as an "angel" whose face "flashed with fire." He is "corrupted with blood." His name is "Nebro(el)" which means "Apostate." But he is also known as "Ialdabaoth." A second angel, Saklas, simultaneously comes into being.⁹⁹ After this brief accounting of the names, Nebro(el) and Ialdabaoth fall out of the narrative, and Saklas emerges as the name of the demiurge throughout the rest of the gospel.

As I mentioned previously, for the purposes of simplification, I have chosen to call this figure "Ialdabaoth," but I could just as simply have chosen "Saklas" or even "Nebro(el)." I imagine that the confusion over these names across the Sethian literature has to do with the likelihood that the demiurge had several descriptive names early on in the tradition, just as Jesus in early Christianity was known by a multitude of names including the Son, Logos, Angel, Yahweh, Captain, Glory, Holy Spirit, Wisdom, God, and Lord. The multiplicity of names for the single Gnostic demiurge became confused over time with the existence of independent beings, a confusion apparent in the Sethian corpus.

This new fragmentary reference to Saklas is fascinating. It appears to refer to the apostles as "servants of Saklas" as they make obeisance to the demiurge, the apostate archon with whom Judas corresponds. The fragment is additional evidence that the *Gospel of Judas* has a very specific understanding of the heaven-earth correspondences. The thirteen Archons correspond to Jesus' disciples including Judas who emerges as their cursed leader because he was the instrument in bringing about

⁹⁴ *Apoc. John* NHC II,1 10.20; 11.35; etc.

⁹⁵ *Apoc. John* NHC II,1 11.15–18.

⁹⁶ *Apoc. Adam* NHC V,5 74.3, 8.

⁹⁷ *Gos. Eg.* NHC IV,2 57.1–26.

⁹⁸ *Gos. Eg.* IV,2 58.24–59.1.

⁹⁹ *Gos. Jud.* 51.8–17. Coptic: Kasser et al. 2007, 221.

the demiurge's greatest trick on people—the doctrine of atonement and its institution in the performance of the Eucharist.

A Separatist Movement

Whoever wrote the *Gospel of Judas* is developing this standard Sethian teaching about the ignorance of the disciples of Jesus in order to attack the Apostolic Church. The author does this by identifying its apostolic authorities with ignorant and rebellious Archons, demons who curse the very demon who made possible their atonement. The reason that the author of the *Gospel of Judas* portrays the apostles so harshly is not because he hates Christianity. Rather, I think that he worried that many Christians were being led astray by the Apostolic Church, which claimed to rely on teachings derived from the Twelve. From his acquaintance with the Gospel of Mark, the author of *Judas* reasoned that the Twelve were so ignorant and faithless that even the demons—including Judas—were more knowledgeable than they were. So the author's purpose was to challenge the Apostolic Church's doctrines and practices, which were claimed by its leaders to be passed down as the authoritative teachings from the apostles to the current bishops in an unbroken chain of transmission.

For the author of the *Gospel of Judas*, the foundational link in this chain was corrupt. Because the disciples were ignorant and faithless, whatever information they passed on was bogus. Following their teachings leads Christians astray, and joining in their rituals tricks them into worshipping the wrong god! The consequence of this horrible situation was the annihilation rather than salvation of countless Christians. It was the weight of this hidden tragic knowledge that likely seeded the idea to retell Judas' story so that the Apostolic Christians would be critiqued, corrected, and hopefully brought into the Gnostic fold. The author clearly sees his Sethian community as a separatist movement, a non-conformist Christianity that alone knows the secrets of salvation.

Thus, the astrological correspondences in the *Gospel of Judas* connect Judas with the ruling archon, Ialdabaoth, while the other twelve disciples with the twelve subordinate archons who occupied the twelve realms below him. These correspondences were understood to be counterpart associations, where Judas and the twelve disciples function as the earthly doubles of these specific archons. A sympathy exists between them, so that they carry out on earth the brutal will of their ruling stars.

This negative correspondence works to severely critique the Apostolic Church whose doctrines and practices relied on the authenticity and authority of the twelve apostles and whose central feature was the sacrifice of Jesus brought about by Judas. If the Apostolic Church was ruled by Judas the apostate archon and the other disciples were subordinate archons, how much could the bishops and priests of the Apostolic Church really know? Evidently the Sethian Christians who wrote this gospel saw themselves as the only Christian church that possessed the Truth. As such, they identified themselves as a separate non-conformist church competing with the Apostolic Church, which they believed was defunct.

Identification of the apostles with archons is not a unique feature of the *Gospel of Judas*. In fact, this identification appears to be fairly standard in the early Christian literature. But, just because it is standard, it does not mean that the correspondences were consistently understood to be counterpart relationships as the *Gospel of Judas* has them. As we will see, in some cases, the correspondence was friendlier to the apostles. An examination of the correspondence maps across the Gnostic sources reveals a varied relationship between Apostolic Christians and Gnostic Christians within different communities and eras, revealing precious information about the origins, growth and development of Gnosticism.

THEODOTUS THE VALENTINIAN

The correspondence between the stars and the twelve Apostles was also known to Theodotus, a famous eastern Valentinian who taught in the mid- to late second century. He said that “the Apostles were substituted for the twelve signs of the Zodiac, for, just as birth is directed by them, so is rebirth by the Apostles (οἱ ἀπόστολοι μετετέθησαν τοῖς δεκαδύο ζῳδίοις, ὡς γὰρ ὑπ’ ἐκείνων ἡ γένεσις διοικεῖται, οὕτως ὑπὸ τῶν ἀποστόλων ἡ ἀναγέννησις).”¹⁰⁰ Here we encounter the exact teaching that the author of the *Gospel of Judas* was trying to eradicate. Each Apostle was a *counterpoint* for the stars that controlled Fate. Once baptized, the initiate was no longer dominated by the negative rule of the stars. Instead the positive Apostles controlled his or her fate.

¹⁰⁰ Clem. Alex., *Exc.* 25.2. Greek: Casey 1934, 58; translation mine.

A Restructured Universe

Theodotus expounds on this, noting that Fate is the coming together of many opposing forces, which cannot be seen. It guides the course of the stars and even governs through them. In this way, the Zodiac and the planets have power over human beings and direct human births. The twelve signs of the Zodiac and the seven wandering stars sometimes rise in conjunction and sometimes in opposition. The human being shares in the qualities of the stars wrestling with each other in the skies.¹⁰¹ It is from this “battle of the Powers” that the Lord frees the newly converted Christian. The Lord gives the Christian peace from the Powers and Angels who are like “soldiers” and “brigands” fighting for and against God.¹⁰²

How was this accomplished? A new strange star arose in the sky, which destroyed “the old astrological arrangement (τὴν παλαιὰν ἀστροθεσίαν)” of the stars and the planets. This new star “revolved on a new path of redemption (ὁ καινὰς ὁδοὺς καὶ σωτηρίου τρεπόμενος)” and corresponded to the Lord himself who “came down to earth to transfer from Fate to his providence those who believed in Christ.”¹⁰³ This means that Fate through the stars continues to control unbelievers, but for those who realize that the birth of the Savior released them from Fate, baptism is in order.¹⁰⁴ Baptism is called “death” because Christians are no longer under the rule of “evil archons (πονηροῖς ἀρχαῖς)” and it is called “life” because Christ is now the sole Lord.¹⁰⁵ This is the context of the oft-quoted but misunderstood phrase: “Until baptism Fate is real, but after it the astrologists are no longer correct. It is not the washing alone that is liberating, but the knowledge of who we were, what we have become, where we were or where we have been put, where we hasten to go, from what we are redeemed, what birth is, what rebirth is.”¹⁰⁶

Such language is reminiscent of Ignatius of Antioch who writes to the Ephesians about this same cosmic restructuring. He states that at Jesus’ birth “a star in the heaven shone more brightly than all the others.” This new star is described as the cosmic pole. Thus Ignatius goes

¹⁰¹ Clem. Alex., *Exc.* 69.1–71.2.

¹⁰² Clem. Alex., *Exc.* 72.1–2. Greek: Casey 1934, 84; translation mine.

¹⁰³ Clem. Alex., *Exc.* 74.2. Greek: Casey 1934, 86; translation mine.

¹⁰⁴ Clem. Alex., *Exc.* 75.1.

¹⁰⁵ Clem. Alex., *Exc.* 76.1–77.1. Greek: Casey 1934, 86; translation mine.

¹⁰⁶ Clem. Alex., *Exc.* 78.1–2. Greek: Casey 1934, 88; translation mine.

on to say that "all the other stars with the sun and the moon gathered around that star in chorus." So bright was the star that it left astrologers bewildered. So great was their bewilderment that they asked, "Where could this newcomer have come from, so different from the others?" The old "empire of evil" was overthrown, for God was now appearing in human form to bring a new order, life eternal. All creation, Ignatius explains, was thrown into chaos over this restructuring, which God put into place in order to destroy death.¹⁰⁷

What we have here is a commonly held Christian belief that the Christ event broke down the old cosmic structures and replaced them with new structures that allow for liberation. Quite literally, Jesus is a new star that the cosmos now revolves around. The Zodiacal signs are the twelve Apostles arrayed around him, replacing the evil Archons who have up until that time controlled human Fate. As such, Jesus replaces the old cosmic pole, becoming the new route for the soul and spirit to escape this world. The new pole corresponds to the Cross which Jesus uses to carry the saved "on his shoulders" into the Pleroma.¹⁰⁸ Once the initiate undergoes baptism, Christ becomes their new path of salvation, saving both the Elect (the Valentinians) and the Called (the members of the Apostolic Church) by bearing them aloft.¹⁰⁹ Christians literally are transferred from the lower regions of the earth up the cosmic pole to the Pleroma. Thus Ephesians 4:9-10 is quoted, "He who ascended also descended. That he ascended, what does it imply but that he descended? He it is who descended into the lower parts of the earth and ascended above the heavens."¹¹⁰

An Esoteric Lodge

Why did Theodotus make a *counterpoint* correspondence rather than a *counterpart* one such as we saw the Gnostic author of the *Gospel of Judas* make? Why did Theodotus teach that, for Christians at least, the evil Zodiacal Powers have been overcome and replaced with the good Apostles? The answer is simple. The Valentinians were not opposed to Apostolic Christianity, like the Sethian Christians appear to have been. In fact, the Valentinians attended Apostolic churches on Sundays,

¹⁰⁷ Ign., *Eph.* 19. Greek: Ehrman 2003, 238; translation mine.

¹⁰⁸ Clem. Alex., *Exc.* 42.1-3.

¹⁰⁹ Clem. Alex., *Exc.* 53.1-2.

¹¹⁰ Clem. Alex., *Exc.* 43.5.

while also enjoying esoteric gatherings where they hoped to learn more about the mysteries of God and his Kingdom. As Zeno's writings in the fourth century reflect, Apostolic Christians likely thought as Theodotus had, that the apostles replaced the Zodiac signs at their own baptisms, birthing them under a new fate, with Christ as their cosmic savior.

In the east at this time the Valentinians appear to be an esoteric lodge movement on the verge of becoming a reform movement, teaching some alternative esoteric traditions while maintaining the exoteric teachings of the Apostolic Church. They held onto their membership in the Apostolic Church and their allegiance to it. Thus the early Valentinian systems reflect an acceptance of the Apostles and their doctrines, while additionally relying on esoteric traditions passed down along a separate line of transmission, perhaps through Theodas and his teacher Paul or through a figure outside the twelve, like James Jesus' brother or Mary of Magdala.¹¹¹

PTOLEMAEUS AND MARCUS

When Irenaeus talks about the western Valentinians attached to Ptolemy's teaching, he does not present us with the same correspondences that Theodotus has. Instead of the good twelve Apostles replacing the evil cosmic Zodiac, Irenaeus says that he knows of Valentinians who follow both Ptolemaeus' and Marcus' systems. They all align the Apostles with the twelve last emanations in the Pleroma, the Duodecad.

Judas as the Twelfth Emanation

According to Irenaeus, the Valentinians say that the production of the Duodecad of aeons corresponds to the election of the twelve apostles.¹¹² The twelfth emanation, the suffering Sophia, corresponds with Judas the twelfth apostle, as does the woman who suffered from the twelve-year flow of blood, but for different reasons. That is, the correspondence with Judas has a different meaning from the correspondence with the hemorrhaging woman. The Valentinians used Judas

¹¹¹ Clem. Alex., *Misc.* 7.106; i.e., *1 Apoc. James* and the *Gos. Mary*.

¹¹² Iren., *Adv. haer.* 1.3.2.

specifically to indicate the correspondence between his "apostasy" and that of the twelfth Aeon. Thus Irenaeus writes that they think that Sophia's suffering points to Judas' apostasy because both were associated with the number twelve. He reiterates this by saying that the Valentinians relate the suffering Sophia to the betrayal of Judas. Thus her suffering was her error, when she did what was forbidden. It is Sophia's betrayal that results in her suffering which the Valentinians said corresponded to Judas' betrayal of Jesus, a correspondence which Irenaeus cannot accept.¹¹³

Why does this correspondence bother him? Because, he explains, the rest of stories about Sophia and Judas do not match. Sophia repents while Judas does not. So, Irenaeus concludes, Judas cannot be a type of Sophia. But the lack of correspondence on the issue of repentance did not appear to bother the Valentinians who thought another story corresponded to Sophia's repentance. It was the woman who suffered with the flow of blood for twelve years, *not Judas*, who was used by the Valentinians as a correspondence of repentance, a correspondence that Origen confirms when he says that the Valentinians thought the hemorrhaging woman symbolized Prounicos, while never mentioning Judas.¹¹⁴ This point appears to have been well-known since Celsus speaks of it as well.¹¹⁵ The repentance of the wanton Sophia was correlated with the woman's turn to touch Jesus' garment and receive healing. Irenaeus explains that the Valentinians think that the woman who was sick for twelve years corresponds with Sophia who was stretching to touch the garment of the Son, the hem, to stay her dissolution. She was stopped by Horos, the power that went forth from the Son, healed by him and so she ceased to suffer any more.¹¹⁶

Irenaeus goes on to critique further the correspondence between Judas and Sophia. His words put me in mind of the tradition about Judas as the "thirteenth" apostle in the *Gospel of Judas*. In order to argue against the Valentinian teaching, he says that Judas is not the twelfth apostle, but was cast out of that seat and replaced by Matthias. Because he was expelled from the twelfth number, he cannot correspond with the twelfth Aeon Sophia, but is an extra apostle outside of the Pleroma. Although Irenaeus does not use the number thirteen

¹¹³ Iren., *Adv. haer.* 2.20.2.

¹¹⁴ Origen, *c. Cel.* 2.35.

¹¹⁵ Origen, *c. Cel.* 2.35.

¹¹⁶ Iren., *Adv. haer.* 1.3.3; 2.20.1–2.21.1.

to describe Judas, knowledge of this tradition appears to me to be the basis for his correction of this Valentinian doctrine. He goes on to argue that Sophia is the thirtieth aeon, not the twelfth, humoring himself further with the numbers game. He even goes so far as to suggest that Matthias and Judas might align with the upper and lower Sophias, but he disregards this idea because he says that Sophia is in actuality three: the restored aeon, her reasonable self, and her suffering self.¹¹⁷

The Twelve Apostles and the Body of Truth

The Marcosians appear to have had a peculiar form of the Valentinian teaching about these correspondences according to the records of Irenaeus. Their teaching shows an awareness of both Valentinian traditions about the twelve apostles that I have already discussed in this paper: Theodotus' catechism and the Ptolemaic catechism that Irenaeus knew. The Marcosians taught that the celestial Zodiac is the shadow of the Duodecad, that the twelve signs are images of the last twelve aeons produced in the Pleroma.¹¹⁸ Furthermore, the Duodecad represents the twelve members of the Body of Truth. Each member consists of two letter sounds out of the twenty-four letters in the Greek alphabet. Their intonation is creative, resulting in the formation of the Pleromic world which is envisioned as a series of great angels of the Presence.¹¹⁹

Who do these twelve angels or aeons correspond to? The twelve apostles. Thus the Marcosians said that the Duodecad, as it is connected to the mystery of suffering, is found in many traditions of the twelve, but most importantly for us, in the selection of the twelve apostles.¹²⁰ The Marcosian teaching has the twelve apostles function as *counterparts* of the Aeons. They make up the Body of Truth or the Duodecad, which is to be associated with Sophia's suffering. In fact, they even call the Duodecad, "the suffering," because an error occurred in connection with the twelfth aeon. This Marcosian teaching

¹¹⁷ Iren., *Adv. haer.* 2.20.4–5.

¹¹⁸ Iren., *Adv. haer.* 1.17.1.

¹¹⁹ Iren., *Adv. haer.* 1.14.1,4, 9; 1.18.1.

¹²⁰ Iren., *Adv. haer.* 1.18. 4. Also twelve sons of Jacob (Gen 35:22, 49:28), the twelve tribes of Israel, twelve stones on the breastplate of the High Priest and the twelve bells (Exod 28:2), twelve stones at the foot of Moses' mountain (Exod 24:4) and in Joshua's river (Josh 4:3), the twelve bearers of the ark of the covenant (Josh 3:12), and the number of stones set up by Elijah (1 K^x 18:31).

about the Duodecad is then connected to the Zodiac, where the twelve Zodial signs below the Pleroma are understood to be shadows of the aeons of the Duodecad. This means that the Zodial signs have an apostolic association. They are shadow reflections of the apostles as angels or aeons.

A Reform Movement

The Ptolemaic and Marcosian alignment of the twelve apostles with the Duodecad that Irenaeus recounts is more evidence of the positive regard for the Apostolic tradition within Valentinianism in the mid- to late second century. But Apostolic Christians like Irenaeus did not agree with the exegetical arguments that the western Valentinians were making in regard to the Duodecad, that Judas' earthly betrayal was an expression of Sophia's error when she was cast out of the Pleroma into suffering.

What might this mean in terms of the kind of social relationship that the western Valentinians had with the Apostolic Christians at this time? They still consider themselves to be part of the Apostolic church and heirs of its traditions, but have begun to move farther away from the Apostolic church in terms of exegesis. Thus Ptolemaeus writes to Flora in his letter about how he considers himself an heir of the apostles. He says, "You will learn in the future, if God grants it, about their origin and genesis, when you are worthy of the apostolic tradition which we have received through succession, because we can prove all our statements based on the teaching of the Savior."¹²¹ Irenaeus confirms this, pointing out that the western Valentinians use the writings of the evangelists, the apostles, and the prophets to prove their opinions, although he disagrees vehemently with their interpretations and does not consider their opinions valid Christian exegesis.¹²²

Thus, it seems to me that the western Valentinians are further along in the shift from a lodge movement to a reform movement. Irenaeus confirms this. He hints at this type of relationship when he describes the Marcosians and his concern that many women in his own district

¹²¹ Ptolemy to Flora in Epiph., *Pan.* 33.7.9. Greek: Koll 1915, 457. Translation mine.

¹²² Iren., *Adv. haer.* 1.2.6.

in the Rhône valley have left his church to attend Marcosian gatherings instead.¹²³

FIRST APOCALYPSE OF JAMES

The *First Apocalypse of James* contains within it some striking traditions about correspondences between the heavens and the earth. The main point of the text is to reveal, through James the brother of Jesus, a secret death liturgy, a liturgy which both Irenaeus and Epiphanius record was used by various groups of Valentinians to ensure that the soul would escape the grasp of the archons and properly ascend.¹²⁴ I understand this document to be Valentinian, mainly because the point of the text is to reveal, through a secret teaching to James, this Valentinian death liturgy. But in addition, the text assumes a Valentinian discussion of the nature of the primal Monad and its male and female polarities.¹²⁵ It also uses Valentinian terminology such as "Achamoth" when referencing the fallen Sophia, and assumes distinct Valentinian doctrines such as the view that the ignorant demiurge treated the descending Son well, like his own son.¹²⁶ Even the reference to the demiurge as "the Just God" is a Valentinian attribute.¹²⁷ The text encourages the believer to endure persecution (likely at the hands of other Christians) and even martyrdom. The one Valentinian who appears to have addressed the issue of martyrdom was Heracleon, and he writes that confession can happen either "in faith and conduct" or "with the mouth." Since not everyone is brought "before authorities" to confess "with the mouth," it is not a universal route to salvation like "works and action." Heracleon's teaching does not appear to me to condemn martyrdom, but to support it. So I think *James* tells us what Valentinianism looked like in the third century as it became more eclectic while still retaining distinctive Valentinian features.

¹²³ Iren., *Adv. haer.* 1.5, 7.

¹²⁴ *1 Apoc. James* NHC V,3 33.15-35.19; TC 20.10-22.16; Iren., *Adv. haer.* 1.21.5; Epiph., *Pan.* 36.3.1-3.

¹²⁵ *1 Apoc. James* NHC V,3 24.26-30; TC 10.19-27.

¹²⁶ *1 Apoc. James* NHC V,3 34.3; TC 21.4; *1 Apoc. James* NHC V 39.8-18; TC 26.11-18.

¹²⁷ *1 Apoc. James* NHC V,3 34.3; TC 21.4.

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. In order to endure the suffering and overcome the powers, there are heaven-earth correspondences that need to be learned, in addition to the liturgy itself. The adage “know thy enemy” is *apropos* for these Gnostics. So surrounding the revelation of the liturgy are teachings about the archons—who they are and what to expect from them. This information is revealed to embolden James, and other Gnostic Christians who face persecution and martyrdom, so that they will know that their real enemies are not the human beings who arrest them but the celestial powers who seek to destroy them. In fact, Jesus tells James not to worry about the human enemies and the suffering he will face. What he must save himself from are not these, but the archons who will pursue him mightily. He must learn exactly who they are and how many there are.¹²⁸

The Twelve and Seventy-Two

So *James* makes it immediately clear that the issues of astrological correspondences are of particular relevance to the Gnostic Christian. In the opening pages of the text, we learn that Jesus is going to be arrested very soon, and that James’ arrest and stoning will follow this. Jesus warns him away from Jerusalem. Why? Because Jerusalem is the dwelling place of numerous archons.¹²⁹ The archons that Jesus wants him to be most familiar with are the twelve archons who rule the twelve heavens, each consisting of a hebdomad. So Jesus tells James that he wants him to concentrate “not all of them, but the twelve Archons (ἄνωγ [τηρυ] ἀν ἀλλὰ ἑβδωμάδων) πῆντ[ε] [ν]φου[ε].”¹³⁰

The beginning of his revelation teaches James that there are twelve heavens of hebdomads rather than seven as scripture purports. Jesus explains that whoever wrote the scriptures only understood so much, and not this mystery. Thankfully, Jesus has come to reveal the truth.¹³¹

¹²⁸ 1 *Apoc. James* NHC V,3 25.20–23; TC 12.3–6.

¹²⁹ 1 *Apoc. James* NHC V,3 25.7–19; TC 11.9–12.3.

¹³⁰ 1 *Apoc. James* NHC V,3 25.24–25. Reconstruction of Coptic is mine, based on the TC 12.7.

¹³¹ 1 *Apoc. James* NHC V,3 26.2–9; TC 12.13–24.

The twelve hebdomads, he says, correlate with seventy-two “twin partners (κοει[ε]).”¹³² Later both versions of *James* employ κοει[ε] when Jesus gives a quick review of his teaching.¹³³ It should be noted that the lacuna in the Nag Hammadi version was wrongly reconstructed to read “twelve (πῆντ[ε])” when in fact the Tchacos Codex version now shows us the correct reading is “seventy-two (πῆντ[ε]).”¹³⁴

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| NHC V 35.28–36.6 | | TC 22.23–23.4 |
| 35.28 [...] | | 22.23 εἰς ἑβδωμάδων ἑβδωμάδων Look James, |
| 35.29 [...] | | 22.24 βε ἀειδωλῶν ἡμῶν εἰς ἑβδωμάδων I have revealed to you |
| 36.1 π[ε]τ[ρ]ῶν [ο]ρ[φ]ῶν [π]ῆντ[ε] [ν]φου[ε] [ἀ]γ[ω] ¹³⁵ | | 22.25 ἀνοκ οὐεὺ ἀγῶ π[ε]τ[ρ]ῶν who I am, and He-Who-Is- |
| | | He-Who-[Is-Preexistent], [and] |
| 36.2 [π]τ[ρ]ῶν [π]τ[ρ]ῶν [π]τ[ρ]ῶν [π]τ[ρ]ῶν [π]τ[ρ]ῶν [the] type of [the] twelve | | 22.26 οἱ π[ρ]ῶτοι ἀγῶ π[τ]ῶν Preexistent, and the type twelve |
| 36.3 ἡμῶν ἑβδωμάδων ἡμῶν [π]ῆντ[ε] [ν]φου[ε] disciples with [the] | | 23.1 ποσ ἡμῶν ἑβδωμάδων ἡμῶν of the twelve disciples, |
| 36.4 εἰς ἑβδωμάδων ἑβδωμάδων [... τ[ε]σ[σ]ε[ρ]ῶν] ¹³⁶ seventy-two twin pairs, [the female] | | 23.2 τῶν ἀγῶ π[τ]ῶν ἑβδωμάδων ἀγῶ and the seventy-two twin pairs, |
| 36.5 ἀχάμοθ τ[ε] [το]υ [π]ῆντ[ε] [ν]φου[ε] | | 23.3 ὡ ἀχάμοθ τ[ε] [το]υ [π]ῆντ[ε] [ν]φου[ε] τ[α]ἰ ἑβδωμάδων and Achamoth the female, being |
| | | Achamoth, which is |
| 36.6 ἡμῶν ἑβδωμάδων ἡμῶν ἑβδωμάδων σοφία translated, “Sophia”. | | 23.4 ἡ σοφία ἡμῶν ἑβδωμάδων σοφία translated, “Sophia”. |

¹³² 1 *Apoc. James* TC 13.4. Kasser et al. 2007, 127. I read this as a variant of κοει[ε]. The Nag Hammadi version uses φου[ε]: NHC V,3 26.15. I am dependent on the thorough discussion of these words found in Funk’s contribution to this volume.

¹³³ 1 *Apoc. James* NHC V,3 36.4; TC 23.2.

¹³⁴ This case is made by Funk in his contribution to this volume. Coptic: Schoedel in Parrott 1979, 90; Kasser et al. 2007, 145.

¹³⁵ A possible reconstruction based on TC manuscript.

¹³⁶ A possible reconstruction based on TC manuscript.

The meaning of Jesus' esoteric teaching is clear. The twelve disciples are "types" of the twelve archons and their heavens, while the seventy-two twin partners refer to the seventy(-two) lesser disciples sent out two-by-two according to Luke 10:1.¹³⁷ These lesser disciples of the church correspond astrologically to the seventy-two lesser heavens.

So in the end, the secret teaching of *James* is that there are twelve archons who correspond to the twelve Zodial signs of the Zodiac, in which seventy-two powers—the ruling decans and horoscopes—reside. These powers are armed forces, who pursue Jesus and fight against him.¹³⁸ This multitude of powers is further aligned with the people in Jerusalem who plot against Jesus and arrest him, a fate and enemy that James also will face.¹³⁹ Among them are the twelve archons who correspond with the twelve disciples, whose forgetfulness and ignorance Jesus came to rebuke, and the seventy-two lesser disciples who were sent out to preach.¹⁴⁰ For the salvation of the faithful, Jesus came to rebuke the archons and to overpower each of them.¹⁴¹ And this is exactly what Jesus does. After he has revealed his full teaching to James, Jesus immediately rebukes the twelve disciples who are with him.¹⁴²

James as Addon(aios)

James' own relationship with the archons is difficult to determine. The Tchacos Codex version allows us to reconstruct a damaged portion of the Nag Hammadi Codex where Jesus tells James that he has been a "servant" of the demiurge, the "just god (ΠΝΟΥΤΕ ΝΑΙΚΑΙΟΣ)." This is why James has received the name, "James the Just (ΙΑΚΚΩΒΟΣ ΠΑΙΚΑΙΟΣ)."¹⁴³ Does this correlation suggest that James the Just, the leader of the twelve disciples after Jesus' death, is the earthly corre-

¹³⁷ Manuscript of Luke and patristic literature show a widespread variant that read "seventy-two" instead of "seventy." On this, see Funk's article in this volume.

¹³⁸ *1 Apoc. James* NHC V,3 27.18–24.

¹³⁹ *1 Apoc. James* NHC V,3 25.10–19; TC 11.11–12.3; *1 Apoc. James* NHC V,3 32.28–33.14; TC 19.24–28.

¹⁴⁰ *1 Apoc. James* NHC V,3 28.8–10; TC 14.22–25.

¹⁴¹ *1 Apoc. James* NHC V,3 30.2; TC 16.17; *1 Apoc. James* NHC V,3 30.5–6.

¹⁴² *1 Apoc. James* NHC V,3 42.21–22.

¹⁴³ *1 Apoc. James* NHC V,3 31.31–32.3; TC 18.16–20. Coptic: Schoedel in Parrott 1979, 82; Kasser et al. 2007, 137; translation mine.

spondence of the Just God, the leader of the twelve archons?¹⁴⁴ James is reported in the Tchacos Codex version only to ask Jesus who the seventy-two powers correspond to now that James has "removed" himself "from the archons' number" (†ΝΑΚΑΖΩΪ ΕΒΑΛ ΝΤΗΠΙΟ ΝΝΑΡΧΩΝ).¹⁴⁵ This apocalypse goes on to report that once James receives Jesus' revelation, James chooses to cease his worship of the Just God, stopping his prayers to him. Jesus tells James that this has stirred up the Demiurge's wrath and anger, which soon will be waged against James.¹⁴⁶ James is warned not to allow the archons to become jealous of the fact that he now knows more than they.¹⁴⁷ Nevertheless, James' defection will result in James' arrest orchestrated by the archons, and a face off with the Demiurge's army of powers. Ultimately, James will die at their hand, just as Jesus did.

Seven Women as Sophia's Pillars

The final heaven-earth correspondence to examine is the doctrine of the seven wise women, the prophetesses. The names of these women are Salome, Mariam, the other Mary (?), Arsinoe, Sapphira, Susanna, and Joanna.¹⁴⁸ The presence of these women among Jesus' disciples is not unique to this apocalypse. References to them appear also in the *Sophia of Jesus Christ* and the Manichaean literature.¹⁴⁹ Individual revelations to several of these named women are too numerous in the literature to list here. These references allude to an alternative tradition of the transmission of Jesus' teaching, albeit a transmission of esoteric teaching that existed alongside the exoteric teaching.

James wants to know what correspondences exist between the heavens and Jesus' seven female disciples. Jesus tells him that they correlate with the seven spirits who live in the Demiurge's heavens. These are

¹⁴⁴ The apocalypse actually refers to the twelve disciples as belonging to James: "his disciples" (*1 Apoc. James* NHC V,3 30.21; TC 17.11).

¹⁴⁵ *1 Apoc. James* TC 13.1–4. Coptic: Kasser et al. 2007, 127; translation mine.

¹⁴⁶ *1 Apoc. James* NHC V,3 31.23–32.11; TC 18.12–19.5.

¹⁴⁷ *1 Apoc. James* NHC V,3 40.12–13; TC 27.21–23.

¹⁴⁸ The lacunae in the *1 Apoc. James* NHC V,3 40.25–26 has traditionally been filled with the name "Martha" based on the list of the women's names in the Manichaean Psalms. The TC version, however, only has three women's names preserved. Brankaer-Bethge (2007, 242–244) have suggested a viable solution. Originally there were four names, including "the other Mary" (ΤΚΕΜΑΡΙΑ), as NHC suggests. This name dropped out of the TC version, probably due to scribal error.

¹⁴⁹ *Soph. Jes. Chr.* BG,3 77.9–15; NHC III,4 90.15–18). Veilleux 1986, 94–95.

prophetic spirits who resided in these spheres long before Jesus himself descended through them to earth. What prophets did they inspire? The Jewish prophets recorded in the scriptures. They were the spirits who spoke through the mouths of the prophets, proclaiming the little that they knew about Jesus' advent, whatever they were capable to tell since they did not know about the supreme God.¹⁵⁰

Although the apocalypse links these seven women to the "spirits" mentioned in Isaiah 11:2, the spirits of wisdom, insight, counsel, strength, understanding, knowledge, and fear, this interpretation of the seven women must be dependent on a well-known verse from Proverbs: "Sophia has built her house. She has hewn her seven pillars."¹⁵¹ It is quite possible, as Ulrich Wilckens argued long ago, that Sophia's seven-pillared house is dependent upon Ishtar's seven-pillared house, which was thought to be the cosmos with its seven planets encircling the earth.¹⁵² The concept takes root in both Judaism and Christianity that the world, in fact, depends on these pillars who were made to correspond to certain ideal figures, righteous men or prophets.¹⁵³

The number of the pillars varies between seven and twelve, a variation that should not be surprising given the planetary and Zodiacal systems. In Christian literature, the most developed usage of the seven pillars is found in the *Pseudo-Clementine* corpus where a cycle of male prophets and ideal men who are called "the seven pillars of the world... who were superior to everyone deemed worthy to know him (God)."¹⁵⁴ The seven are listed with slight variations as Adam, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Moses.¹⁵⁵ They are righteous men and prophets who are inspired by God to teach the truth about the Law and the scriptures and to reveal God's will.¹⁵⁶ Irenaeus, however, knows of the pattern of the twelve, suggesting that the twelve apostles are the pillars. He says that the twelve tribes of Israel were replaced with the twelve-pillared foundation of the Church.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁰ 1 Apoc. James TC 26.19-27.2.

¹⁵¹ Prov 9:1.

¹⁵² Wilckens 1971, 733-734.

¹⁵³ Wilckens 1971, 732-736; Gieschen 1994, 47-82.

¹⁵⁴ Ps.-Clem. Hom. 18.13-14.

¹⁵⁵ Ps.-Clem. Hom. 2.16-17, 2.52, 17.4, 18.13; Rec. 2.47, 3.61.

¹⁵⁶ Gieschen 1994, 47-82.

¹⁵⁷ Iren., Adv. haer. 4.21.3.

The correlation of the prophets with realms of the archons is a popular Gnostic doctrine, although whether or not the correlation is positive or negative varies across the Gnostic systems. Irenaeus, for instance, tells of the Sethians who had a negative correspondence. He correlates twenty-two prophets with specific archons. Each archon had for himself several prophets whose sole purpose was to be a herald for that particular archon. Each prophet was supposed to extol the Archon and proclaim him god. The purpose of this was to convince humans that they should worship the Archons. But Sophia worked behind the scenes, whispering to the prophets about the imperishable Aeon and Christ. So when the archons hear their prophets teaching about these things, they are utterly terrified and wonder what is going on.¹⁵⁸

Hippolytus knows of Valentinians who teach similarly about the prophets. These Valentinians think that the Demiurge is not just ignorant but a silly god whose prophets were foolish and knew nothing. To support this position, they quote John 10:18, "All who have come before me are thieves and robbers" and Ephesians 3:4, "The mystery which was not made known to former generations." None of his prophets spoke about the Gnostic teachings, because these were unknown to the Demiurge.¹⁵⁹

But this teaching was not universal among the Valentinians. According to Irenaeus, the Valentinians he knows declare that those souls which contain a spiritual seed that is better than all others are destined to be prophets, kings and priests. Thus they are able to reveal higher knowledge to the rest of humankind. In fact, the Demiurge loves these souls more than all others, although he does not know why.¹⁶⁰ Similarly, Clement of Alexandria tells us that the Valentinians thought that the prophets were inspired by the spirit, even though they did not know that it was the same "paraclete" which was later poured out on the Christian Church.¹⁶¹ In fact, when Jesus descends into the Demiurge's realm, he finds there Christ "whom it was foretold that he would put on, whom the Prophets and the Law announced as an

¹⁵⁸ Iren., Adv. haer. 1.30.10-11.

¹⁵⁹ Hipp., Ref. 6.35.1.

¹⁶⁰ Iren., Adv. haer. 1.7.3.

¹⁶¹ Clem. Alex., Exc. 24.1-2.

image of the Savior.¹⁶² The belief that certain truths were revealed by the Prophets also is assumed by Marcus and his scriptural exegesis.¹⁶³

A Separatist Movement

What might these correspondences tell us about the Valentinians who authored the *First Apocalypse of James*? The pattern of *James* is a *counterpart* pattern very similar to the Sethian one developed in the *Gospel of Judas*. Unlike other Valentinian traditions discussed previously, the apostles in *James* are ignorant and are mapped directly onto the twelve dominant Archons in the heavens. In the Tchacos Codex at least, James himself appears to be correlated with their leader, the Demiurge Addon(aios). James is able to break this correlation when he receives esoteric teaching from Jesus, and on this basis, stops worshipping Addon(aios). Since we are in a Valentinian context, this should not be surprising because the Demiurge is a psychic figure who is saved by Jesus' direct teaching after the resurrection.

These correspondences suggest to me that the Valentinians who wrote this text are no longer considering themselves to be part of the Apostolic Church. Like the Sethians who made this break earlier, the Valentinians begin to turn against the teaching of the apostolic twelve, understanding it to be ignorant, so much so that Jesus rebukes it. In place of the "rebuked" apostolic tradition, these Valentinians have cornered a non-apostle as the recipient of the truth, James the brother of Jesus. They develop a lengthy chain of transmission for this tradition from James to Addai to Manaël-Masphel to Levi to Levi's seventeen year old son, who may be the author of this text.¹⁶⁴ This suggests to me that *James* is a text reflecting Valentinian experience in Syria in the mid-third century, when they were less and less welcome in Apostolic churches, even actively persecuted by the Apostolic Christians, and likely had begun to worship separately outside those doors. The selection of Addai as a tradent suggests that these Valentinians at one time had been part of the mainline church in Syria, and were claiming as their own a piece of a well-known mission story about how Christianity first came to this part of the world.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶² Clem. Alex., *Exc.* 59.2.

¹⁶³ Cf. Iren., *Adv. haer.* 1.19.1-2.

¹⁶⁴ *1 Apoc. James* NHC V,3 36.13-38.11; TC 23.10-25.14.

¹⁶⁵ Eus., *Eccl. Hist.* 1.13.1-5.

It is also fascinating to find in the same text, seven female prophetesses who inspire the biblical prophets. The seven male pillars have become female. This is a *counterpart* correspondence, and a negative one at that because the female has replaced the male. Such a correspondence certainly provides a critique of Christian systems that uphold the traditional male pillars of the Jewish scripture as "righteous." I think the substitution is intended to point out that the Jewish prophets, the righteous pillars, were not male spirits or male prophets as tradition says, but deficient female ones, who did not understand completely what was going on. Since the Apostolic Church was putting so much emphasis on the "truth" of their doctrines because they had been foreshadowed or predicted by the Jewish prophets, I think we are again seeing a strong critique of that Apostolic teaching.

What is even more amazing, though, is the turn in the text to then say that Jesus' seven female disciples are *counterpoints* to the seven deficient female spirits who inspired the prophets. In other words, once the seven female disciples heard Jesus' message when he preached on earth, they immediately recognized who he was. Because of this, Sapphira, Susanna and Joanna have been "set apart for a place of faith (†ϞΩΜΗΝΤΕ ΕΤΕ ΝΕΪ ΝΕ [C]ΕΠΟΡ[Χ Ε]ΒΟΛ ΕΥΜΑ ΠΡΙCΤΙC)." ¹⁶⁶ Salome, Mary, the other Mary(?), and Arsinoe are "worthy of He-Who-Is."¹⁶⁷ They have been saved from "the blindness that was in their hearts" because they "recognized (P-NOI)" who Jesus was.¹⁶⁸ The Valentinian redemptive process, which is imagined as a transformation from the deficient female state to the perfect male state, coincides with the fact that these "historical" women recognized Jesus as the one whom the prophets forecasted.¹⁶⁹ In Valentinian lingo, the text says, "the female has attained the male."¹⁷⁰

So here is a *counterpoint* correspondence that is developed to support the Valentinian need for a transmission of tradition separate

¹⁶⁶ *1 Apoc. James* TC 29.1-6. Based on the Coptic parallel with Rom 1:1, the verbal unit ΠΟΡΧ ΕΒΟΛ Ε- can have the meaning "to set apart for," which must be the meaning here given the context, rather than "separate from" which the *Critical Edition* has. See Kasser, et al. 2007, 159.

¹⁶⁷ *1 Apoc. James* NHC V,3 40.2-6; TC 27.25-2. Coptic: Schoedel in Parrott 1979, 96; Kasser et al. 2007, 155.

¹⁶⁸ *1 Apoc. James* TC 28.2-5. Kasser et al. 2007, 157.

¹⁶⁹ *1 Apoc. James* NHC V,3 41.15-18; TC 28.14-21.

¹⁷⁰ *1 Apoc. James* NHC V,3 41.15-18; TC 28.18-21. Coptic: Schoedel in Parrott 1979, 98; Kasser et al. 2007, 157.

from the Apostolic tradition, seven women disciples who are blessed with esoteric teaching become the new seven pillars of Sophia's house. This provides yet more evidence for a later dating of this important Valentinian document, a date that reflects a time in Christian relations when the Valentinians were no longer considered members of the Apostolic church and had to worship as a completely separate group. The pattern that they develop by this time in history is that of separatists—religionists who under persecution, leave a church they once loved, taking along many of its traditions, while, at the same time, criticizing it severely.

PISTIS SOPHIA

A fourth century text, the *Pistis Sophia*, represents the height of Gnostic speculation about cosmic correspondences. The text is dependent on the late third century *Books of Jeu*, and together they appear to comprise a formulaic compendium of Gnosis. The cosmology assumed by these books is not that of a single school of Gnosis, but rather an eclectic blend of Sethian, Valentinian, and Manichaean teachings. The result is a homogenized Gnosis, bland and technical, that appears to represent a sort of standardization of Gnostic thought in the fourth century.

The Thirteenth Aeon

The God-world in *Pistis Sophia* is called the "Treasury of Light." Below this is the thirteenth Aeon, a divine world of twenty-four invisible emanations, with Authades, a disobedient Aeon, in charge. Pistis Sophia is one of these emanations. At some point, she decides to cease performing the "mystery of the thirteenth Aeon," and instead turns to worship the light shining from the Treasury above the thirteenth Aeon. Authades and all of his Archons in the thirteenth Aeon hate her for ceasing to honor him, since he is the Lord over this particular divine realm.

In order to stop Pistis Sophia, Authades decides on a plan to steal her power and shut her down. First, he emanates a great lion-faced archon whom he sends out of the thirteenth realm into Chaos. Second, he persecutes Pistis Sophia so that she will want to leave his kingdom. In this way he tricks her into running away from his kingdom and taking shelter in Chaos. But once she does this, the lion-faced archon

Ialdabaoth-Adamas, captures her, assaults her, and steals her power. This archon, son of Authades, is called the Tyrant and great demon ruler over Chaos.¹⁷¹

With this, Pistis Sophia finds herself trapped in the twelfth realm of the cosmos. With no power, she cannot reenter her realm of origin, a place of "correction (ΔΙΚΑΙΟΓΥΝΗ)," nor can she ascend to the Treasury of Light.¹⁷² Devoid of the light she once had, she is now said to be like a "demon." She exclaims in her misery, "I have become like a distinct demon who lives in matter and in whom there is no light (ΑΪΩΩΠΕ ΝΘΕ ΝΟΥΣΙΑΙΟC ΝΑΔΙΜΩΝ ΕCΟΥΗΖ ΞΝ ΟΥΣΥΛΗ ΕΝΝΟΥΟΪΝ ΝΖΗΤC). And I have become like a counterpart of the spirit who is in a material body in which there is no power of light (ΑΥΩ ΑΪΩΩΠΕ ΝΘΕ ΝΟΥΑΝΤΙΜΙΜΟΝ ΜΠΝΑ ΕCΞΝ ΟΥCΩΜΑ ΝΖΥΛΙΚΟΝ ΕΝΝΟΣΟΜ ΝΟΥΘΕΙΝ ΝΖΗΤC). And I have become like a decan, which is alone upon the air (ΑΥΩ ΑΪΩΩΠΕ ΝΘΕ ΝΟΥΔΕΚΑΝΟC ΕCΞΙΞΝ ΠΑΗΡ ΜΑΥΑΔC)." Below her are the eleven other realms of the cosmos with forty-nine Archons ruling the total twelve. This is the sphere of *heimarmene*.¹⁷⁴

Pistis Sophia directs a series of repentant prayers to the Treasury of Light, and eventually Jesus emerges to save her and other souls trapped in Ialdabaoth-Adamas' cosmic system. He does this by physically moving Pistis Sophia to a place at the top of the twelfth cosmic realm, but below the thirteenth middle or in-between aeon. This upper edge of the twelfth realm is identified as the place where the decans are located. She is safe here from further assault by the archons who reside spatially below her. Jesus leaves her in this upper region until he can take her to her place in the height at the end of time.¹⁷⁵

Twelve Powers as Souls of the Apostles

Jesus' own movement down into Chaos, and his subsequent death and resurrection, completely restructure the cosmos. As he descends, he brings with him twelve powers that he took from the twelve Saviors in the Treasury of Light. Jesus, as the angel Gabriel, cast these powers into the wombs of the apostles' mothers. This means that his twelve

¹⁷¹ PS 2.66.

¹⁷² PS 1.50. Coptic: Schmidt-MacDermot 1978b, 94; translation mine.

¹⁷³ PS 1.39. Coptic: Schmidt-MacDermot 1978b, 63; translation mine.

¹⁷⁴ PS 1.10.

¹⁷⁵ PS 2.75.

apostles do not have souls created by the archons, but instead have powers from the Light Treasury.¹⁷⁶ He claims to have done this so that the twelve can serve the entire world and are able to withstand the threat of the Archons, the sufferings and dangers of the world, and the persecutions which the Archons will bring upon them.¹⁷⁷ As part of the cosmic restructuring, Jesus says that the twelve disciples will be installed as the new Zodiac. He explains that they will sit on twelve powers of light until all the ranks of the twelve saviors have been set up at their places of inheritance.¹⁷⁸ This Zodiac installation appears to be temporary, until the end of time when Jesus will take the apostles to the place of their inheritance, where they will be set up as rulers over their own emanations in Jesus' Kingdom.¹⁷⁹ James is singled out. He corresponds with the "first" in this new Kingdom. Because he will be called "first" among all the invisible ones and gods in the twelfth and thirteenth realms, he appears to correlate with the evil Authades, but as his positive replacement, or *counterpoint* correspondence.¹⁸⁰

Jesus' death is understood as the moment when the old *axis mundi* was replaced. Jesus is installed as the new cosmic pole, a great beam of light that reaches from the very depth of the earth up through the heavens. As he was dying on the cross, he ascends the pole and shakes up all the Powers, shaking even the earth.¹⁸¹ Then Jesus turns the Zodiac and the planets into new positions so that the Archons are disoriented and the astrologers cannot read the skies.¹⁸² The Archons become confused, wandering around the skies in error, unable to understand the new cosmic orientation or their own paths in the sphere.¹⁸³ Why has Jesus done this? "I have turned their paths," he says, "for the salvation of all souls. Really truly I say to you, unless I had turned their paths, a multitude of souls would have been destroyed... Because of this, I have turned their paths so that they are confused and agitated, and give up the power which is in cosmic matter, which they make into souls, so that those who will be saved with all the power are purified

¹⁷⁶ PS 1.8.

¹⁷⁷ PS 1.7.

¹⁷⁸ PS 1.50.

¹⁷⁹ PS 2.86.

¹⁸⁰ PS 1.52.

¹⁸¹ PS 1.3.

¹⁸² PS 1.18.

¹⁸³ PS 1.21.

quickly and ascend, and those who will not be saved are quickly dissolved."¹⁸⁴

A New Religious Movement

In *Pistis Sophia* and the *Books of Jeu* upon which *Pistis Sophia* is dependent, we are witnessing the twelve apostles become transmitters of the esoteric tradition. The Gnostics, according to *Pistis Sophia*, are saved through the replacement of the Zodiac Archons with the twelve disciples whose souls were powers from the Treasury of Light. Eventually they would be exalted to their places of inheritance as "Saviors" in the Treasury of Light.

Why are the twelve apostles reappropriated in this fashion by these Gnostics? This shift seems to be part of a broader agenda of the author of *Pistis Sophia* who similarly reappropriates Jewish scripture through a programmatic reinterpretation of the prophets to forecast the Gnostic story and confirm esoteric truths about Sophia and Jesus. These Gnostics are adopting the basic teachings of the Apostolic Church—the authority of the twelve apostles and the prophetic significance of the Jewish scripture—for their own agenda.

Can we discern what this agenda might have been? From the evidence in *Pistis Sophia*, the *Books of Jeu*, and other late third and early fourth century Gnostic texts, it appears to me that the earlier distinct varieties of Gnosis, such as Sethianism and Valentinianism, are in the process of consolidation, harmonization, and standardization. This process parallels what is happening within the Apostolic Church. At this time the Apostolic Church is consolidating its power, choosing its scriptures, shoring up its hierarchy and clergy, and creating homogeneous creeds, theology, and practices. All this the Apostolic Church claims has been handed to them along a direct line that it can trace back to the twelve apostles.

When it comes to late third and early fourth century Gnosticism, to a large extent we are dealing with mimicry. Some of the Gnostics are imitating the success of the Apostolic Church in order to compete successfully with it. As the earlier Gnostic movements consolidate into a new eclectic religious movement that we can call "Gnosticism," some of the Gnostic communities imitate apostolic scriptures with their own

¹⁸⁴ PS 1.23. Translation: MacDermot in Schmidt-MacDermot 1978b, 65, 67.

Gnostic versions of them. They focus on simplifications of their complex myths into condensed formulaic formats, such as can be seen in the *Letter of Peter to Philip*, which subverts the apostolic kerygma. As independent Gnostic fellowships emerge on the scene, so does a need for handbooks such as the *Books of Jeu* and *Pistis Sophia*. Some of the Gnostic communities go so far as to legitimize their teachings by reappropriating the Twelve as their own authorities on all things esoteric.

This program of mimicry combined with a bold eclecticism, to a certain extent was successful, producing powerful synthetic Gnostic religions like Manichaeism and Mandaeism. But the success of Gnosticism beyond the fourth century runs amok of the newly-fledged Orthodoxy backed by imperial Rome. From the Apostolic traditions, Orthodoxy emerged as the establishment religion. As such, it took legal actions against the Gnostics, excommunicating, exiling and defrocking them, burning their books and churches, forbidding them to meet as churches, hold services, or perform their own liturgies.¹⁸⁵ Under such heavy persecution, Gnosticism had a very difficult time surviving. As so many of our later sources tell us, the Gnostics were forced to hide within the Church again or meet clandestinely without.

FATE AND THE WANDERING STARS

The Jewish Apocalyptic Roots of the *Gospel of Judas*

Nicola Denzey Lewis

“Judas, your star has led you astray.” So says Jesus to his disciple Judas in the *Gospel of Judas*.¹ The words seem to be a clear rebuke. Yet what is meant? The word ‘star’ or ‘stars’ is used on numerous occasions within the extant manuscript of the *Gospel of Judas*. Central to my investigation of this passage will be Jesus’ claim in 42:7–9 that each person follows his astral destiny. Is this a general statement, or does Jesus simply mean that each *disciple* has his own star? Given that the twelve disciples are probably types of the twelve signs of the zodiac, how do we contend with Judas’ role as the ‘thirteenth,’ and his connection to astral destiny? Does Jesus have an astral destiny? Finally, is there a seminal relationship between the cosmological sections of the text and the dialogical sections in which Jesus teaches Judas about the “error of the stars”?

To approach these questions, I will compare the *Gospel of Judas*’ cosmological scheme and its system of fate with Jewish apocalyptic writings from the late Second Temple Period. I will argue that this gospel reflects a Jewish cosmological system, which is deeply concerned with apocalyptic speculation reminiscent of other Jewish apocalyptic texts. I will endeavor to uncover the cosmological system alluded to in the *Gospel of Judas* by placing it within the intellectual horizons of Jewish teachings on the nature and influence of the stars—particularly on the confluence between cosmology and systems of astral fatalism.

STARS IN THE GOSPEL OF JUDAS

The word ‘star’ (CICY) appears fifteen times in our extant manuscript—more often than in any other Christian text from this period of

¹⁸⁵ Layton 1995, 345–347.

¹ *Gos. Jud.* 45,13–14.