reflected in the water and according to their own likeness, a compact conflation in which the light on the waters of darkness (Gen 1:1–3) instigates the creation of the first human (Gen 1:22–23). Here, however, in contrast to the Genesis narrative, only “image” refers to the divine (the image of the First Human), while “likeness” refers to the flawed mimicry of the lower gods (Yaldaboath and his authorities).8

The account in the Secret Revelation of John also conflates Genesis 1:26–27 with Genesis 2.7 where the first human is formed out of the earth; in this case the first human is formed out of the lower gods’ psychic substance.9 Their creation of a human results only in a grotesque mimicry of the divine image of the First Human who appeared in the waters, not only because of their malicious motives, but because they are incapable of shaping a true likeness of the image they had seen. Although the image was perfect, the form they modeled was created from their own psychic (“soul”) substance and by means of their own limited powers (SRev John 15.14–15). Their impotence is immediately apparent in that they are unable to awaken into life the form they molded (SRev John 18.1–2). A related Sethian work, the Hypostasis of the Archons, turns this into a scene of comic ridicule worthy of Aristophanes:

(The world creator) breathed into (Adam’s) face; and the human came to have a soul (but it remained) upon the ground many days. But they could not make him arise because of their powerlessness. Like storm winds they persisted (in blowing), that they might try to capture that image, which had appeared to them in the waters. But they did not know the identity of its power.10

We can imagine a raucous staging of this scene: false gods standing over their plastic creation, huffing and puffing ludicrously to no avail. The text makes no bones about its opinion of them: their motives are wicked; they are impotent as well as ignorant.11 The Secret Revelation of John is not as overtly dramatic in its ridicule, but it makes essentially the same point by emphasizing that the psychic creation remains idle and motionless a long time despite the best efforts of the rulers to awaken it (SRev John 18.1–2).12 It seems that Adam can be enlivened only through the intervention of a higher power. Although Adam has the form of the divine image, he becomes a truly divine, living being only when he receives the Spirit-breath of Sophia.

The narrative is a bit convoluted in describing exactly how this actually occurs (SRev John 18.3–11). It seems that Sophia wishes “to retrieve the power which she had given to the Chief Ruler,” so she petitions the true Father (Mother-Father) for aid. Autogenes-Christ and the four Lights are sent down to Yaldaboath, whom they find in distress because the creature he and his authorities have formed isn’t moving. The Lights surreptitiously advise the Chief Ruler to blow his breath (Sophia’s Spirit) onto the face of the human they have modeled. He does so, and the human becomes a living, moving being. According to Codex II, Adam’s body not only stands up,13 it becomes luminous (SRev John II 18.11). The light proves that there is a natural affinity between the image of the divine Human, in which Adam was created, and the Spirit of the Mother. The Rulers’ modeled human form now possesses the divine Spirit of Sophia and is superior to them because he has “entered into the light” through the possession of Sophia’s light (SRev John BG 18.17).

In this account, the Secret Revelation of John is elaborating extensively upon the Genesis narrative, which states simply that “the Lord God formed man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being” (Gen 2.7). The Secret Revelation of John has transformed this simple narrative sequence into a complex drama with mixed motivations and multiple actors. In Genesis, the point seems simply to connect Adam to the earthly creation by forming him from “the dust of the ground” and to emphasize that God’s breath is the source of Adam’s life. In the Secret Revelation of John, however, this scene explains how humanity came both to be formed of inferior substance and to possess the divine Spirit. And it emphatically contrasts the effective power of the divine emissaries of Christ and his Lights with the impotence of
the lower creator God and his minions. Adam becomes a living being only by the will of the transcendent Deity.

Yet despite the intervention of Autogenes-Christ, the story moves deeper into tragedy. Sophia's Spirit has become even more deeply enmeshed in the substance of the lower world and increasingly subject to the machinations of the lower gods. Adam, who is now superior to his supposed creators through the possession of the divine Spirit of Sophia, is nonetheless still subject to them. What is superior has become dominated by what is inferior, thereby effecting a reversal of proper hierarchical rule which can result only in calamity.

When the lower world rulers perceive that their own creation has become superior to them, they immediately become jealous. The Secret Revelation of John says that they initially molded the human form in order that Adam's "name and its power might illumine us" (SRev/John BG 15.19). Here again we see the pun on "light" and "human"—words spelled with the same Greek letters but with different accents—but now combined with the name of Adam, which in Hebrew also means "human." Hence it would seem that the world rulers name their creature Adam ("human") as a way to possess the light-man whose image appeared from above; by naming him, they seek to control his spiritual power. Yet unwittingly, their own words mock them. They say that his name and power will be a light for them—which should indicate that Adam will bring them understanding. But as it turns out the illumination of Adam does not empower them; rather it reveals their impotence, another and less welcome kind of truth. This outcome is partly their own fault because their jealousy of Adam's superiority is why they fail to be illumined. Christ says that after Adam receives the spiritual breath, the world rulers "became jealous for it was because of them all that he had come into being and they had given their power to the human. Yet his understanding was stronger than those who had made him and greater even than the Chief Ruler." Now they understood that he was luminous, thought more than they did, and was naked of wickedness" (SRev/John II 18.12–17). Their response to Adam's superiority is not to seek instruction from him, but to imprison him. Ultimately they don't really want to be illuminated; they desire only to dominate and possess.

Recognizing that their creation is now superior to them, the rulers cast Adam down into "the lowest region of matter" (SRev/John 18.18), immersing his light in the darkness of matter. This move is again countered by the Father (Pronoia, the Father-Mother), who sends a "helper" named Epinoia to Adam to instruct and enlighten him. In the form of the Spirit, the Epinoia of Light aids humanity by keeping the world rulers from gaining power over the psychic body of Adam. She toils with Adam as his "helper" (Gen 2.18), teaching him about the descent of the deficiency (or seed) and about its ascent. Epinoia attempts to conceal herself from the world rulers by hiding within Adam, but her presence causes Adam to shine, and they realize that their attempt to overcome the light within Adam has failed.

They now respond by enclosing Adam in the prison of the material body. Earlier they formed the human creation solely out of soul substance, but now they bind Adam with the fetters of matter, bringing all of humanity under the sway of carnal suffering, passion, and death: "They brought him down into the shadow of death. Yet again they made another form from earth, water, fire, and spirit which is from matter, darkness, desire, and the adversarial spirit. This is the chain. This is the tomb of the molded body with which they clothed the human, the fetter of the flesh" (SRev/John BG 19.9–12). Thus while creation in the image of the true Deity brings light and life, suffering and death are the legacy of creation in the likeness of Yaldabaoth and his creatures.

But Epinoia (Ennoia) is still present and she is able to "awaken his thinking" even in the material body. As a result of her activity, the rulers place Adam in paradise, not in order to care for him as the Genesis account says, but in order to bind him further with bodily fetters through the temptations of food, beauty, and pleasure. "The Chief Ruler took him and placed him in paradise, of which he said, 'It is a delight for him' but really
so that he might deceive him. For their delight (or food) is bitter and their beauty is licentious. Their delight is a deception and their tree is iniquity. Their fruit is an incurable poison and their promise is death” (SRevJohn BG 20.1-5). Here the text again makes a wordplay on the Greek words for “food” (τρόφη) and “delight” (τρόφη). Because τρόφη was often used in antiquity to refer to the “nourishment” that education brought to the soul and because “delight” was considered to be a passion of pleasure which led humanity astray, the wordplay strongly suggests that the world rulers’ instruction of humanity in the pleasures of gluttony and sexual desire brings only deception and death. Similarly, the Secret Revelation of John interprets the so-called “Tree of Life” (Gen 2:9) as “their life,” that is, as the source of bitterness, death, hatred, deception, evil desire, and darkness. “The dwelling place of those who taste it is Hades” (SRevJohn 20.16). The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil (Gen 2:9), on the other hand, is associated with the teaching of Epinoa (and Christ).19

Adam, however, does not succumb to the temptations of paradise. Indeed, it is because he is “disobedient” that the Chief Ruler realizes that Epinoa is still at work within Adam. Perceiving that their ruse has again failed, the world rulers try something new. They seek to surgically remove the power of the Mother that Yaldaboath breathed into Adam. They cast Adam into a trance in order to extract “a rib” from him and create a woman.20 Christ emphasizes the wickedness of their motivation in putting Adam into a trance when he interprets the story for John:

It is not like Moses said that he caused him to sleep but it was his sensibility that he covered with a shroud. He weighed him down with insensibility. For indeed it is said by the prophet, “I will make the ears of their hearts heavy so that they might not understand and might not see” (SRevJohn BG 21.4–7).

The citation is from the prophet Isaiah 6:10. Note how Christ uses Scripture to correct the misreading of Scripture.

The world creator then tries to “grasp” the Epinoa of Light hidden within Adam by dulling Adam’s perception and removing his power (Epinoa). The term “grasp” (ταγω, περιλαμβάνω), which is used in the Secret Revelation of John to describe the world creator’s desire to capture Epinoa, has connotations both of mental comprehension and physical encompassing. Needless to say, the world creator fails on both accounts. He misrecognizes Epinoa, and mistakenly thinks he has accomplished his purpose by the violent physical “grasping” of Eve in the rape which follows.21 But the true Epinoa, we are told, is “ungraspable.”

Although the rulers fail to “grasp” Epinoa, they do succeed in bringing out a portion of the Mother’s power, which they place in a female form they have shaped. Christ points out to John that it is this power not a “rib,” which was extracted from Adam. Now both the man and the woman possess something of the spiritual power of Sophia, but they also lack the Epinoa-Spirit who had been sent from on high. Epinoa, however, has not left entirely, but only moved on to the Tree of Knowledge.22 She awakens Adam from his stupor by “uncovering the veil which had been on his mind” so that he recognizes the power of Sophia within Eve and acknowledges that she is his true spiritual essence and likeness (SRevJohn 21:19). Adam acknowledges this when he says, “This is indeed bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh.” The text continues, “Because of this man will leave his father and his mother and he will cling to his wife and from two they will become a single flesh” (SRevJohn BG 21:20; Gen 2:23), probably meaning that he will leave his father Yaldaboath and his mother Chaos and cling to the true Spirit of Light. He calls her “the mother of the living” (Gen 3:20)—a title previously associated with the Spirit of Life in the Divine Realm (SRevJohn 10.17).

When the rulers perceive Epinoa’s presence, however, they command Adam not to eat of the Tree of Knowledge (Gen 2:17), that is, not to listen to her counsels because she teaches Adam and Eve “to eat of knowledge so that he might remember his perfection” (SRevJohn BG 21:29–30; Gen 2:15–16).23 This knowledge makes them realize that they are “naked” because of their ignorance, and they now try to withdraw from Yaldaboath (Gen 3:8–10).

In an aside to John, Christ takes personal responsibility for the instruc-
 tion the two humans received from the Tree of Knowledge. John is surprised at this revelation, objecting "Lord, was it not the serpent that taught Adam to eat?" (SRev John II 20:23; cp. Gen 3:1-5). Christ's attempt to clarify this point to John succeeds mostly in adding to the confusion. He says that the snake attempted to entice "her/them" (NHC II and III include both Adam and Eve, while BG confines the serpent's address to Eve) to eat by telling her/them about the destructive pollution of sexual desire, but she/they did not listen to the snake's command to eat (SRev John 20:24-27). This disobedience prompts the Chief Ruler to remove Epinoia from Adam. But of course that completely upsets the order of the narrative: how could Eve have been disobedient to the snake if she had not yet been created? The text seems to confute Eve with Epinoia here, suggesting that it was Epinoia or Epinoia and Adam who were tempted by the snake with sexual desire—although again it is a bit difficult to understand the nature of sexual desire when only one human exists (even if he is androgynous). Things only get more confusing when we learn that it is not the snake who persuaded Adam and Eve to eat from the Tree of Knowledge, but Epinoia in the form of an eagle.24 There are a number of sequential and logical infelicities in all this: making the temptation of Eve the catalyst for her own creation; Christ claiming to be the one who "brought about that they ate" from the Tree of Knowledge when the text says (also) that it was Epinoia; and numerous differences between the versions.25 The upshot, however, is that Adam and Eve have managed yet again to escape the machinations of the Chief Ruler.

Now totally frustrated, the Chief Ruler curses them by subordinating the woman to the man and throwing them out of paradise (Gen 3:23). In the strongest overt critique of patriarchy in all of ancient literature, the shorter versions BG and III declare that the subordination of woman to man (Gen 3:16) was yet another ignorant act on the part of the Chief Ruler and a direct violation of the decree of the Holy Height.26

As a kind of last resort, the Chief Ruler now deploys his most potent weapon against humanity: sexual violence.27 In the Secret Revelation of John's telling, the first act of intercourse with humans is the rape of Eve by the Chief Ruler, producing two children: Cain and Abel (Gen 4:1-2). They are theriomorphic deities representing righteousness and unrighteousness, both of which are created in order to deceive humanity (SRev John II 22:21). Their jealousy and violence shows them to be true sons of their jealous and violent father.

Subsequent to the rape, the Chief Ruler plants sexual desire in human relationships and lures humanity into intercourse; his purpose is to produce additional bodies that he can rule. The precise location and nature of sexual desire is represented differently in the shorter and longer versions of the Secret Revelation of John. BG and III say that the Chief Ruler planted a desire for seed (offspring) in Adam, while II/IV states that he planted sexual desire in Eve. In any case, his goal is to produce likenesses from the counterfeit spirit (SRev John 22:24), but again he is thwarted, for the result is that Adam begets Seth, a child in the image of the true Human (Gen 5:3). Here we get our best intimation that the perfectibility of humanity includes sexual relations. Both BG and NHC II/IV interpret Adam's reproduction as an act of true knowledge of his own essential likeness (the spiritual Eve), so that Seth "is like" his father, Adam. Seth's generation follows the pattern of the Divine Realm established when the transcendent Deity beget the Son (Autogenes-Christ) from Barbelo through his own self-reflective gaze. And even though NHC III describes Adam's act as "knowledge of lawlessness," it nonetheless affirms that the resulting child, Seth, is modeled according to the divine perfection. Reproduction here is not a matter of lust, violence, and deception, but the productive life-giving power that comes from perceiving one's true essence in the other.

With the birth of Seth, the first generation of spiritual humans is established. They are called "the immovable generation." The Mother (Pronoia) sends her Spirit to them in order to "awaken the essence that resembles it (the Spirit)" and to "awaken them from forgetfulness and the wickedness of the tomb" (that is to say, the material body) (SRev John BG 22:29-31). This holy Spirit remains in the world below, instructing her
children ("seed") until the deficiency is fully rectified and the whole divine world is restored to its perfection (SRevJohn 22.34–37). The spiritual perfecting of humanity, therefore, constitutes the rectification of Sophia’s deficiency.

Realizing that the entire immovable generation of the perfect Light is superior to them in thought and wisdom, the Chief Ruler and his authorities now make a plan to bind humanity with the bonds of Fate, "the lord over everything."

The Chief Ruler knew that they surpassed him in the excellence of their wisdom. He wanted to restrict their plan for he was ignorant. He did not understand they were wiser than he. He made a plan with his powers. They begot Fate and bound the gods of heaven and angels and demons and human beings with measures and seasons and times in order to keep them all in its fetter—for it was lord over them all (SRevJohn BG 24.4–16).

This attempt at astrological imprisonment is of course another act of ignorable malice and ultimately it fails. Codex II makes the creator’s ineffectuality explicit: "He will not be able to restrict them" (SRevJohn II 24.6). As Nicola Denzey has pointed out, despite the oft-repeated diché that Gnostics felt themselves to be enslaved by fate, in fact, the Secret Revelation of John affirms that spiritual humanity was always under the care of the true Pronoia.39 Learning that fact frees them from Fate’s illusive control.

The whole situation leads the Chief Ruler to regret that he ever attempted to create humanity (Gen 6.6), and so the rulers next try to wipe them out entirely (Gen 6.17). But when they plot to flood the earth and destroy humanity, Epinoia instructs Noah to preach and save them from destruction (SRevJohn 24.17–29). Although few heed Noah’s preaching, those who do are hidden by Epinoia in a luminous cloud (perhaps an allusion to the rainbow of Gen 9.13). The Chief Ruler is thwarted again.28

Finally he and his powers make a desperate plan to impregnate the human women and raise up offspring for themselves (SRevJohn 25.1–4). Apparently their plan is at first a failure because the women simply will not have them. So they plot together again, and this time they resort to our and our deception:

They created a despicable spirit in the likeness of the Spirit who had descended so that through it they might pollute the souls. And the angels changed their own likenesses into the likeness of each one’s mate, filling them with the spirit of darkness, which they mixed with them and with wickedness. They brought gold, silver, a gift, and copper and iron and metal and every sort of thing belonging to these classes. And they beguiled the human beings who had followed them into great troubles by leading them astray into much error (SRevJohn II 25.7–12).30

This passage has some scant basis in Gen 6.1–4, which in passing mentions primordial giants who had intercourse with the daughters of men. But by the time of the Secret Revelation of John, an entire tradition under the name of Enoch had elaborated the story at length, emphasizing the evils brought upon humanity by the descent of the fallen angels.31 The primary innovation of the Secret Revelation of John’s myth-makers appears to have been the introduction of the counterfeit/despicable spirit,32 but they also molded the story thoroughly through their oppositional logic to fit the theme of illegitimate rule. The counterfeit spirit is crafted deceptively to resemble the true spirit, in order to lead humanity into temptation and troubles. The despicable spirit not only sexually seduces women by masquerading as their true husbands, but also introduces material wealth in the form of metal and technology (gold, silver, copper, iron and so on).33 Wealth, like sexual desire, is an evil masquerading as a supposed good, and both are intended to lead people astray by deception. BG elaborates that such temptations are specifically intended to keep humanity from remembering “their immovable Pronoia” (SRevJohn BG 25.13).34

In the end, Yaldabaoth’s blind arrogance and malicious attempts to dominate humanity define the Secret Revelation of John’s understanding of
how evil is exercised in the world below. Because of humanity's moral, intellectual, and spiritual superiority, its subjection to the rule of the lower gods can only be a gross injustice. This injustice is compounded because humanity's supposed rulers are not only inferior, but actively malicious. Everything points to unjust rule as the cause and condition of evil.\textsuperscript{35}

The Body and the Self: Humanity's Dual Heritage
For the *Secret Revelation of John*, to be human means to be subject to the unjust rule and deceptions of the creator god and the passions of the psychic body, cut off from knowledge of the true Deity and the Divine Realm above. It would, however, be wrong to think that the people who accepted the text's perspective would perceive their situation to be utterly desperate or that they would take a nihilistic view of life. The *Secret Revelation of John* in fact denies that suffering and illegitimate domination are the ultimate reality of the soul's condition. The self one discovers in reading the text may initially be alienated, but ultimately it is indomitable. It is the image of divine perfection suffused with the presence of the divine Spirit.

The situation of humanity in the world appears contradictory because human beings are inscribed fully within the oppositional logic of the text. Human beings are formed according to the psychic likeness of the world rulers and enclosed in matter, lost and alienated from their true origin in the Light. But at the same time humanity is created in the image of the perfect Human and enlivened by the Spirit of Sophia-Wisdom.\textsuperscript{36} Seemingly subject to the unjust dominion of these bestial rulers, in reality humanity is superior to them and destined for the compassionate rule of the true Deity; seemingly subject to the passions and mortal death, human nature is essentially spiritual and divine, capable of perfection transcending all the constraints of time and matter. Yet in this life, humans remain vulnerable to the influence of the counterfeit spirit, even though they receive the indwelling presence of the Spirit of Life sent by the Mother Barbelo. The soul of every human is a battleground between these two spirits, each struggling for ascendancy within the self. Human salvation depends upon the outcome of that conflict.

The creation of the first humans defines the situation of all humanity. Like Adam and Eve, every person has two genealogies: one stemming from the creator God and his minions, the other from Sophia and the true Light-Human. As we saw above, the human story begins when the world rulers perceive the image on the water and determine to create a human being according to the image of God and in their likeness. Adam is made by molding their own likeness into an imitation bodily form out of psychic substance, following the divine image of the First Human (*RevJohn* 15:11–18). According to the ancient axiom that "like creates like," their imitation form resembles their character with all its limitations. Because the nature of the world rulers is psychic (soul), their contributions to human creation are not made of matter but solely of psychic substance, so that at first the body of Adam is a soul-body.\textsuperscript{37} Only later will Adam become encased in the material body.

In forming the soul-body of Adam, each of the seven powers contributes a type of soul: bone, sinew, flesh, marrow, blood, skin, and hair (*RevJohn* 15:20–27). The closest literary counterpart to the parts of this soul-body is found in Plato's *Tim 73B–76E*, although Plato's account concerns the physical body.\textsuperscript{38} The order of creation also generally follows the same principle as in the *Timaeus*, from the inner to the outer components of the human bodily makeup: marrow, bones, sinews, flesh, blood, skin, and hair. Moreover, the *Secret Revelation of John's* account of the creation of Adam's seven-fold soul of Adam belongs to a widely shared conceptuality in antiquity called a "melthesis" in which parts of the body are connected to the planets.\textsuperscript{39} Such lists belong to the sphere of astrological com-places, well-known and widespread in antiquity.\textsuperscript{40} In a recent study, Kevin Quack has argued for the origins of these views in earlier Egyptian tradition, where the Decan had become interpreted as astrological deities who played a “significant role in ruling over life and death, water, land and wind.”\textsuperscript{41} Such powers were potentially harmful, but also could be directive, and even be appealed to for healing. A good example can be found in the third century philosopher Porphyr's *Epistle to Anebo the Metropolitan*.
For as to Chaemon and the rest, they do not believe in anything else prior to the visible worlds, since they account as a ruling power the gods of the Egyptians, and no others except the so-called planets, and those stars which fill up the zodiac, and as many as rise near them: also the divisions into the "decani," and the horoscopes, and the so-called "mighty Rulers," the names of which are contained in almanacs, and their power to heal diseases, and their risings and settings, and indications of future events... And most of them made even our own free will depend upon the motion of the stars, binding all things down by indissoluble bonds, I know not how, to a necessity which they call fate, and making all things depend closely on these gods as the sole deliverers from the bonds of fate.  

According to Quack, the connection of body parts to the gods first appeared in ancient funerary texts. One particularly important pyramid text links the body parts of the king with gods in order to further his ascent to heaven. While there are no clear indications that the Egyptian texts associated the body with the Decan, the connection does appear in Greek astrological literature. Quack concludes that the Egyptian concepts of the Decan and the divinization of body parts were connected in such a way that each Decan was assigned to rule over a specific body part whose illness or healing it could affect. The second-century anti-Christian polemicist Celsus gives a particularly illustrative example of this belief and practice:

That in these matters, even including the very least, there is a being to whom authority has been given, one may learn from the teaching of the Egyptians. They say that the human body has been put under the charge of thirty-six daemons, or ethereal gods of some sort, who divide it between them, that being the number of parts into which it is divided (though some say far more). Each daemon is in charge of a different part. And they know the names of the daemons in the local dialect, such as Chnoumen, Chnachoumen, Knat, Sikat, Biou, Erou, Erebiou, Rhamanoor, and Rheianoor, and all the other names which they use in their language. And by invoking these they heal the suffering of the various parts. What is there to prevent anyone from paying honour both to these and to the others if he wishes, so that we can be in good health rather than be ill, and have good rather than bad luck, and be delivered from tortures and punishments?

Although Celsus mentions only 36 daemons, there are parallels in the magical papyri for 365 parts for human bodies. The names differ from those in the Secret Revelation of John, but the basic conceptuality is remarkably similar, and we may well suppose that the primary purpose of including the lengthy list of the names of demons and the parts of the body they rule was for purposes of healing.

By comparing the Secret Revelation of John with astrological sources from antiquity, van den Broek devised a list juxtaposing archons, powers, planets and soul substances, as shown in the table below. This list illustrates how the human body is directly connected with the archontic powers that rule the world, each part being made up of the same substance that forms the planetary rulers themselves. Note how the names of the powers all suggest positive qualities; these epithets are in fact false names, illustrating one of the strategies used by the archontic rulers to deceive humanity.

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salvation by linking humanity to the transcendent Deity through a chain of mimetic generation. It does not ensure an automatic "salvation by nature," but it does provide a basis for hope and an assurance of God's providence in the human capacity to receive the Spirit sent down by the Mother-Barbelo.

As we saw above, the Secret Revelation of John uses the terminology of Genesis 1:26–27 (LXX), where humanity is said to be created in the "image and likeness" of God, to establish a link between God and humanity. True mimesis ensures direct continuity of all humanity with the transcendent God and Father through the first Human, Adam, and Seth, and secondarily through Sophia. From the transcendent and unknowable Father, the Invisible Spirit, appeared his image, the Mother Barbelo; from her came forth the Son, Autogenes, according to his likeness. From Autogenes is derived the first Human (the heavenly Adam) who is the father of the heavenly Seth and the seed of Seth, the heavenly archetypes of all Seth's offspring. More importantly, Autogenes is the divine model of the first spiritual human, Adam, even as Adam also creates a son in his own likeness, Seth.

The descendents of Seth (the Sethians) are the offspring ("seed") of Seth, and presumably share in his likeness to the divine Human and in his possession of the spiritual power of Sophia. For when he receives Sophia's Spirit, Adam becomes superior to the world rulers in power, intelligence, purity, and goodness. Indeed we are told that despite their demonic input, "he had entered into the light" and "was naked of evil" (Rev 18.16–17). His offspring are described collectively as "the essence which is like it (the Spirit) following the model of the perfection" (Rev 22.30). Moreover, there is a likeness between humanity below and the spirits above, for the immovable race of the seed of Seth living in the lower world will find their final resting place with the heavenly seed of Seth in the third aeon, and even the late penitents will find their rest in the fourth aeon of Eleleth (Rev 9.9–14).

Thus the Secret Revelation of John provides a dual heritage for humanity, one that stresses rupture and difference, and one that stresses likeness to the true God. It would be wrong to suppose that the Secret Revelation of John envisages two types of humanity: those formed after the spiritual image of the first Human and those formed after the psychic likeness of the demigure and his minions. Rather all human beings participate in both genealogies. Each person has continuity with the Father of the All by being created in the spiritual image of the first Human, but can forget that heritage through the machinations of the counterfeit spirit. The psychic body is not one's true self; it is only a malformed counterfeit that was made according to the likeness of the false gods with all their deficiencies. Similarly, the physical body is not the true self, but only "the tomb of the molded body with which they clothed the human, the fetter of the flesh (or forgetfulness)" (Rev 19.12). Yet both the psychic and the material bodies are perfectible, by conforming to a human being's true self, which is fashioned in true imitation of the Divine Image and has received the life-giving Spirit-breath of Sophia. Human beings are tied to the material body and its passions only insofar as they remain ignorant of their true spiritual nature and mired in sin.

In the end, Sophia's disruption of the unity and order of the Divine Realm has become inscribed directly onto the human body. Humanity literally embodies the removed ontology of the Secret Revelation of John's narrative, being at once divine and mortal, bearing both the heritage of a divine, spiritual lineage and the flawed character of difference, mimicry, and parody that characterizes the psychic realm and the material world. Thus human nature is figured as a self divided against itself, at war in its very being. Every human being is a battleground between the true and counterfeit spirits, fighting the contest between reality and deception.

Yet Christ assures John that the true Spirit will ultimately succeed, and that the human capacity for spiritual enlightenment and perfection will triumph over the forces of violence and deception.
The Solution: Salvation

Despite having been created in the image of the true Human and possessing the Spirit of Sophia, all human beings remain in need of salvation because of the active malice and deception of the world rulers. Humanity has become polluted with sin and ignorance, shackled by the fetters of the body and the passions, and is subject to the torment of demons. Ignorant of the true Deity, they suffer and die without understanding who they truly are or what their real situation is. Saviors are needed to provide true knowledge of God and self and to strengthen the soul through the gift of the Spirit. The Mother-Pronoia sends the Spirit of Life to awaken the spiritual nature that people already possess and perfects them by making them truly human, spiritual people and members of the immovable race. As Hauschild puts it, “Those who are saved in the Apocryphon of John are ‘spirituals’ not because they possess a divine spirit by nature—that is the case for everyone—but because an additional salvific Spirit has come over them.” By cultivating the divine image within themselves during this life, they are able to correct the deficiency of Sophia and return to the just rule of the transcendental Deity, entering into the place of rest that have been prepared for them in the Light Aeons above. Despite all the temptations and violence to which humanity is exposed, and all the sins and impurities they commit in ignorance of the truth, all will be saved and brought back to the Light Aeons that have been prepared for them from eternity.

Salvation is focused upon the embodied self. The creation of the psychic body by ignorant and malicious beings, as well as its intimate connections to demons, may seem to ascribe an unalterably evil quality to the human body. But such an implication is not at all accurate. First of all, the Secret Revelation of John does not regard the creation of humanity solely as a demonic project. Although according to Codex II, in creating Adam the powers and angels are limited by using “the power from each of them according to the characteristics they had been given” (SRevJohn II 15.14–15), nonetheless they follow the image of the Perfect Human as the likeness toward which they are striving. So the human body in that sense mirrors the divine. Furthermore, Christ states that when the first human body received the Spirit of Sophia and moved, it became free from wickedness, wiser than the rulers, and luminous (SRevJohn 18.11, 17). That the body can be described as free from wickedness and luminous is an astonishing and compelling indication of its capacity for spiritual perfection.

The evil humanity must overcome is the counterfeit spirit of the demonic powers; the body is only their tool. That the body is not the locus of evil is shown by the fact that it can be neutralized. Complete purification and salvation can be achieved while still in the body. Christ tells John that once humans are perfected, they are not restrained by anything except the flesh alone, to which they are subject while they wait for the time when they will be admitted to imperishable life (SRevJohn 23.6–12). The flesh does not have to serve the ends of the demons; while it is not the focus of salvation, neither is it the locus of evil. Control over the demons can even be used for healing the body of its ailments. The battle for life is not fought between the Spirit and the body, but between the true Spirit of Light and the counterfeit spirit of the demons. Neither is the soul considered to be evil by nature, for even after the creation of the psychic body of Adam, we are told that “he was naked of evil” (SRevJohn 18.17). The bodily self is quite real and has quite real effects. The story of Adam’s creation shows how the human body—and materiality itself—comes into being through the interplay of forces seeking to control the Spirit. In that sense, the human body is the effect of a power struggle.
tion and a model of salvation in the figure of the disciple John. As the Secret Revelation of John opens, Christ's disciple John is going up to the temple. A Pharisee named Arimanius confronts him, asking where his master is. As we have already noted, the reader may suspect that this question is not entirely innocent, since tellingly enough the Pharisee's name is a variant of Ahriman—the Zoroastrian god of darkness and evil. Presumably, Arimanius knows of Jesus' death and is merely being sly. John replies, "He has gone again to the place from which he came," words reminiscent of Jesus' declaration in the Gospel of John: "I proceeded and came forth from God; I came not of my own accord, but he sent me. I go to prepare a place for you" (8:42; 14:3). But Arimanius apparently rejects John's explanation, even as the Jews do in GolJohn 8.42-47; he reproaches John, charging that his master had led him into apostasy: "This Nazarene deceived you with error. He filled your ears with lies, and he shut your hearts. He turned you from the traditions of your fathers" (SRevJohn 2.4-5). Although placed in the mouth of an antagonist, Arimanius' accusation accurately reflects a basic human problem: Ignorance of the truth makes a person vulnerable to lies; it makes one susceptible to hardness of heart and prone to treacherous apostasy. Just so, the deceptions of Arimanius occasion doubt and anguish in John.

Beset by grief and doubt because he has no answers to the Pharisee's questions, John wanders "away from the temple to the mountain, a desert place," a spatial setting that metaphorically suggests one must turn away from worship of the lower false gods and from the things of the world in order to comprehend the truth. Suddenly the heavens open and the whole creation below is illumined and shaken by Christ's appearance. The chasm between above and below is bridged, and the true light, Christ, shines forth into the lower world. The Savior appears in multiple forms in the light; he is the Father, the Mother, and the Son. He addresses John by name, asking rhetorically: "John, why do you doubt and why are you afraid?" (SRevJohn 3.9). Without waiting for a reply, he reassures John that he has come to bring the full revelation of the knowledge of all that is and has come into being and will come into being. In short, it is in Christ that the full mission of divine wisdom to illumine humankind and heal the defect of ignorance is fully manifest. Although later the Savior concedes that his revelation is only "the likeness of the light"—since the transcendent Deity is ultimately incomprehensible—none the less he gives as full a revelation as can be comprehended (SRevJohn BG 5.1-2).

A long discourse follows, styled as the instruction of a teacher to his student. It is this revelation that John is to inscribe in the text of the Secret Revelation of John. And ultimately the book itself takes on the role of revealer, providing instruction for those who read and study it. Christ's aim is to remove John's doubt by comforting him, answering his questions, and teaching him the full truth. At the end of the Secret Revelation of John, John himself is sent out and passes on Christ's revelation to his fellow disciples. He models for the reader the path of spiritual development—from ignorance and doubt to secure knowledge, from disturbance of heart to confidence, from student to teacher. Indeed the reader is implicitly invited to identify with John and take the position of a fellow student, moving with him through the stages of spiritual development toward complete understanding and purification. Salvation requires knowledge of the truth and purification from all wickedness. These are achieved through instruction, moral purification, and rituals of baptism and healing.

Conclusions

Because the situation of the soul in the world is one of entrapment by and subjection to the powers that unjustly rule the world, salvation means overcoming these forces and returning to the good and just rule of the transcendent Deity. For the soul, this means first of all receiving the truth of revelation through study, repentance, and moral practices. Through baptism, the initiate receives the holy Spirit and is sealed against the power of demons. Additional aid is given through the knowledge of the names of the demons and the parts of the body over which they have power, offering the possibility of healing through magical control. Accu-
rate knowledge of the true nature of the world and humanity's place in it, supplied by the Savior, allows people to distinguish between the parodic mimicry of the lower gods and the true image of the Divine. The primary aim of this revelation is the cultivation of moral insight in order to obtain freedom from the domination of the counterfeit spirit and the malicious powers that rule the world. The revelation inscribed in the *Secret Revelation of John* exposes the deceptions employed by Yaldabaoth and his cronies, and teaches the soul to resist their false domination.

Although salvation may seem to be the concern only of individuals, the *Secret Revelation of John* emphasizes the collective return of the All to the proper rule of the transcendent Deity: "And (the Spirit) remained like this for a while: it labored on behalf of her seed so that when the Spirit from the holy aeon should come, it will set right the deficiency by (establishing) the uprightness of the aeon, so that it might become a holy perfection; thus it would come to pass that there would be no deficiency in it. ("RevJohn BG 22.34–37." Salvation is thus a reflection of the collective unity of all things.

The most distinctive emphasis of the *Secret Revelation of John* is the conception of salvation lies in the centrality of the soul's struggle against the malicious powers that rule the world. It must be able to discern the illegitimate domination of the powers and resist their seductions and false claims in order to form the soul into likeness to the true Deity above. By conceiving salvation in this way, the *Secret Revelation of John* inseparably links spiritual formation, social criticism, and resistance to evil.

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**Utopian Desire, Social Critique, and Resistance**

*The Secret Revelation of John*’s insistence that the rulers of the lower world are arrogant, unjust, and malicious was a bold and subversive position to take in a world whose rulers styled themselves as servants of the gods and purveyors of justice. The Romans justified their right to rule a vast empire by asserting that the gods had favored them due to their exemplary virtue; those who opposed them stood against divine providence and justice. Widely honored as the chosen agent of the gods on earth, the emperor was worshipped in cities and provinces throughout the Empire. Direct affronts or armed revolt met with uncompromising and often violent response. Even though the *Secret Revelation of John* did not advocate overt rebellion but masked its critique in the recondite language of revelation, nonetheless to style the gods as arrogant pretenders was to take a risk. Numerous examples demonstrate that criticism alone, unaccompanied by any actual intent to overthrow Roman power, could provoke violent retribution. The Roman historian Tacitus reports that Nero pronounced a death sentence on the Stoic philosophers Seneca and Thrasea merely because they advocated that a ruler should be a model of virtue—a position that was taken as treacherous criticism of Nero’s dissolute living. Christians too were condemned to death by Nero for their “hatred of the Roman race,” as well as on trumped-up charges of arson. Although Tacitus states that Christians follow a “pernicious superstition” deserving of punishment, he says that Nero’s cruelty was so extreme that “there arose a sentiment of pity, due to the impression that they were being sacrificed.