heavenly messenger addresses Zostrianos as the one who should save those who are worthy (4.7–18). Is Zostrianos to be understood as an incarnation of Seth? A similar question is posed in Melchizedek, where we find the elect referred to as both “the children of Seth” (5.20) and “the race of the High-priest,” that is, Melchizedek (6.17). We shall have to return to this problem.

In patristic sources we find further evidence of Gnostic speculation on Seth as the father of a special race. Epiphanius begins his description of the Sethian Gnostics with the observation that they trace their “race” (γῆνος) back to Seth, son of Adam (Haer. 39.1.3), and to the action of the “Mother” (Sophia) in depositing in Seth the “seed of the power from above” (39.2.4–6). A “salvation history” of the race of Seth is also presented in Epiphanius’s account, resembling those we have encountered in the Coptic sources.

As has already been observed, Hippolytus’s account of Sethian Gnosticism differs remarkably from that of Epiphanius. There we find no reference to the “seed” or “race” of Seth. Seth merely functions as an allegorical symbol for the principle of Light, in contrast to Cain (Darkness) and Abel (Intermediate Spirit; see Ref. 5.20). Similarly, the Valentinians look upon Seth as an allegorical symbol of the “spiritual” (πνευματικός) class of mankind, that is, the Gnostics. Finally, in contrast, we should recall that one Gnostic system evidently looked upon Seth as the father of all mankind, not just of the Gnostic “race” (Irenaeus, Haer. 1.30.9, discussed above).

The theory of a Gnostic race of Sethian ancestry has important parallels in Jewish speculation on Seth. As an example from Jewish apocalyptic literature, the dream visions of Enoch in 1 Enoch (chaps. 85–90) could be cited. In that passage a kind of “salvation history” is narrated, telling of the history of the world from creation to the coming of the Messiah. Seth is presented symbolically as a white bull, the people of Israel as a nation of white bulls, and the Messiah as a white bull. The rest of humankind, in contrast, is presented as black oxen. This suggests that Seth is looked upon as the progenitor of the elect race, and finally of the Messiah.65

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65. Cf. discussion above, and the references in n. 15.
66. Cf. Klijn, Seth, 20–23. A number of other texts trace the generations of the righteous back to Seth with a focus on Gen. 5:1–3, according to which Seth is the bearer of the “image of God.” See, e.g., Pirqa R. El. 22 and the Samaritan Moad Moshev; cf. Klijn, Seth, 8–10, 29–30.

Especially important for our purposes, however, is Philo’s treatise On the Posternity and Exile of Cain. Commenting on Gen. 4:17–25, Philo remarks that all lovers of virtue are descendants of Seth (Post. 42), in contrast to the race of Cain. Again, commenting on the term ἐμπορίαν σωτίαν in Gen. 4:25, Philo says that Seth is the “seed of human virtue” (Post. 173), sown from God (Post. 171). For Philo, therefore, all virtuous people are the race of Seth, which means that actual human generation is irrelevant. The Gnostics look upon spiritual or Gnostic mankind in the same way, as symbolic “descendants” of Seth. In both cases this doctrine is read out of Gen. 4:25. Indeed it would appear that the Gnostic interpretation of Gen. 4:25 is influenced by a Jewish exegetical tradition similar to that encountered in Philo. In any case, no such interpretation of Gen. 4:25 is ever found in (non-Gnostic) Christian sources.

D. Seth as Recipient/Reveler of Gnosticism

A very prominent aspect of Gnostic speculation on Seth is the role that he is thought to play in the transmission of redemptive knowledge, and in that connection Seth is credited with the “authorship” of a number of books. In discussing Seth’s role in the transmission of revelation, The Apocalypse of Adam is the obvious starting point, for this document represents the earliest stage in the development of this idea in Gnostic literature.

The incipit of The Apocalypse of Adam reads, “The revelation which Adam taught his son Seth in the seven hundredth year, saying . . .” (64.2–4). The revelation is to be seen as a “testamentary” revelation, for the “seven hundredth year” is to be understood as the last year of Adam’s life. Adam tells his son Seth of his and Eve’s experience in paradise, and transmits revelation that he had received from three angelic informants regarding the future adventures of the elect race, the coming destructions by flood and fire, and the coming of a savior. It is specified that special revelation will be written by angels “on a high
mountain, upon a rock of truth" (85,10–11). The conclusion to the book informs us that Adam’s son, Seth, “taught his seed” about the revelations he had received from Adam (85,19–24).

The Apocryphon of Adam is, in a sense, part and parcel of the Jewish apocryphal Adam literature known to have circulated from at least the first century C.E., and shows special affinities with the Life of Adam and Eve. In Adam and Eve one finds important parallels to The Apocryphon of Adam, both in form and content, beginning especially at 25:1. Compare the opening passages of the revelation to Seth in The Apocryphon of Adam and Adam and Eve:

The Apocryphon of Adam
Adam taught his son Seth... saying, “Listen to my words, my son Seth. When God had created me out of the earth along with Eve your mother...” (64,2–8).

Adam and Eve
Adam said to Seth, “Listen, Seth, my son, and I will pass on to you what I heard and saw. After your mother and I had been driven out of Paradise...” (25:1). Cf. 32:1: And Adam answered and said, “Listen to me, my sons. When God made us, me and your mother...”

In Adam and Eve, as in The Apocryphon of Adam, Adam not only tells Seth of his experiences in paradise, but also prophesies the future salvation of the elect (cf. esp. 29:1–10). At the end of Adam and Eve, Eve instructs her children to write what they had heard from Adam and Eve on tables of stone and clay, stone to survive a judgment of flood, and clay to survive a judgment of fire (50:1–2). Seth thereupon makes the tables (51:3).

In this connection we recall the tradition found in Josephus (Ant. 1.69–71): the progeny of Seth inscribed their (astronomical) discoveries on two steles, one of brick and one of stone, that their lore might survive the destruction by fire and deluge predicted by Adam. The stone stele, Josephus reports, still survives “in the land of Seiris” (κόπα γῆς τῆς Σείρηδα). The reference in The Apocryphon of Adam to angelic revelations written on stone on a high mountain reflects this tradition found in Josephus.

69. The translation used here is that of M. D. Johnson in OTP, vol. 2.

and Adam and Eve. “The land of Seiris” in Josephus may be understood as the land of Egypt, but other testimonies to the tradition refer to “Mount Sir.”71 “Mount Sir” is to be identified as the mountain of the Flood story (cf. the “mountains of Ararat”, Gen. 8:4). This identification is made explicitly in The Hypostasis of the Archons 92,14; and the name may have been assimilated to the Babylonian name for the mountain of the Flood story, “Nisir.”

Seth’s role in the transmission of gnosticism in The Apocryphon of Adam consists essentially of handing on to his “seed” the revelations he had heard from Adam. In this respect The Apocryphon of Adam adheres to the pattern established in the Jewish Adam books, such as Adam and Eve. The intentionality in The Apocryphon of Adam, of course, is radically different; the Gnostic author is obviously critical of the Jewish apocryphal Adam tradition, and breathes the Gnostic spirit of defiance vis-à-vis the Creator.

Seth’s role as revealer of gnosticism is escalated in other Gnostic documents. The Gospel of the Egyptians represents such an escalation in its treatment, although at numerous points it shares common traditions with The Apocryphon of Adam, including a similar handling of “salvation history.” No mention is made of Adam’s role in the transmission of knowledge in the gospel. At the end of it we are informed that “the great Seth” (i.e., the heavenly Seth) wrote the book and placed it “in high mountains” (III 68,1–3), “in the mountain that is called Charaxio” (III 68,12–13), that it might be used as revelation for the elect of the end time.


71. E.g., the Chronology of Ps.-Malalas 6.5: ἐν τῷ Σείρηδᾳ ἐτῶς. See William Adler, “Materials Relating to Seth” (cf. n. 1). Cf. also Adler’s Notes to Text of George Synclitus and Pseudo-Malalas; but Adler overlooks the possibility that “the land of Seiris” is Egypt. Cf. n. 70, and the excursus below.

72. Cf. “The Epic of Gilgamesh,” ANET, 94 (tablet XI line 140). Unfortunately the Hellenistic author Berossos does not specify the name of the mountain; he merely reports that the flood hero Xisouthis’s boat came to rest in τὸν Κορηδῶνα ὄρος τῆς Ἀραβίδος. See fr. 34 in Paul Schnabel, Berossos and die Babylonisch-Hellenistische Literatur (Berlin: Teubner, 1923) 266. Alternatively, the name “Mount Sir” may reflect assimilation to the biblical mountain of the Edomites, Mount Seir (Συρια), which was also a mountain of divine revelation (cf., e.g., Isa. 21:11). I owe this suggestion to John Struggell of Harvard. See now also Stroumsa, Another Seed, 115–19.

The Gospel of the Egyptians is meant to reveal gnosis about the highest God, and as such is also given the title "The Holy Book of the Great Invisible Spirit" (III 69,16-19; cf. 40,12-14).

In The Three Steles of Seth the heavenly Seth is credited with three steles inscribed with praises offered up by Seth to the heavenly triad of Father, Mother, and Son. The reference to "steles" reflects the Jewish legend of revelatory steles of stone and brick (discussed above). A certain Dosithoeus is credited with reading and transmitting the contents of Seth's steles for the benefit of the elect. The occurrence of the name "Dosithoeus" may reflect Samaritan influence.47

In this context we should compare Zostrianos. At the end of that document Zostrianos reports, "I wrote three tablets (and) left them as knowledge for those who come after me, the living elect" (130,1-4). This seems to reflect the tradition concerning the Sethian "steles" discussed above, though the word translated "tablets" (τιμίας) indicates a wooden tablet rather than one of stone. The colophon at the end poses another question: "Zostrianos. Words of truth of Zostrianos. God of Truth. Words of Zoroaster" (132,6-9). Recalling that Zoroaster may have been identified with Seth in certain circles,75 and noting the redemptive role assigned to Zostrianos in the tractate, we are entitled to wonder whether Zostrianos might not have been regarded as an incarnation of Seth in the minds of the author and his circle.

The Second Treatise of the Great Seth presents an analogous problem, for it is attributed (in a probably secondary title at the end: 70,11-12) to the "great Seth." In the body of the text Jesus Christ is the revealer, but it is probable that the Treatise was used (if not composed) in circles in which Jesus Christ was venerated as an incarnation of Seth.76

This brings us to the testimony of Epiphanius regarding the Sethian Gnostics. As we have already noted, the Sethians known to Epiphanius not only had seven books in the name of Seth (Haer. 39,5,1) but also regarded Jesus Christ as a manifestation of Seth himself (39,1,3; 39,3,5). In addition, they had books called "Allogeneses" (39,5,1). The Archontics, too, had books called "Allogenesis" (40,2,2). As well as books in Seth's own name (40,7,4). Seth himself, in their system, bore the name "Allo-

genes" (40,7,1). Books in the name of Seth circulated also among the libertine "Gnostics" (Haer. 26,8,1).77

The information we have from Epiphanius regarding the use of books called "Allogenes," and the identity of "Allogenes" and Seth, allows us to inquire whether the "Allogenes" who addresses his son "Messos" in the Nag Hammadi tractate Allogenes is to be understood as a manifestation of, or incarnation of, Seth. In Allogenes the feminine revealer-angel Youel guides Allogenes on a visionary ascent to the heavenly realms; the same kind of revelatory ascent is attributed to Seth-Allogenes by the Archontics, according to Epiphanius (Haer. 40,7,1-2).78 At the end of the tractate Allogenes is commanded to write down the revelations, and to leave the book upon a mountain for the sake of those who are "worthy" (68,16-21). These details recall the end of The Gospel of the Egyptians (discussed above).79 At the very end of Allogenes, there is a possible reference to other books of Allogenes: "all [the books of] Allogenes" (69,17-19), corroborating Epiphanius's statements regarding a plurality of Allogenes books (Haer. 39,5,1; 40,2,2).

Hippolytus's information regarding a Paraphrase of Seth in use among the Sethians (Ref. 5,22), plus the similarity in content between The Paraphrase of Shem and the "Sethian" system described by the church father, poses the question whether the title given to the Nag Hammadi tractate is a mistake for the title given by Hippolytus, or vice versa. Alternatively, we might consider the possibility that the names "Shem" and "Seth" were interchangeable among some Gnostics.80 In The Paraphrase of Shem, Shem, in a state of ecstasy, receives a revelation from a redeemer figure called "Derdekeas." At one point in the text, Derdekeas says to Shem, "I shall reveal to you completely that you may reveal them to those who will be upon the earth the second time" (26,21-25). This refers

77. In the same passage we read also of "apocalypses of Adam"; it is possible, therefore, that the Nag Hammadi Apocalypse of Adam was known to them.

78. The Cologne Mani Codex (pp. 50-52) quotes from an apocalypse of Seth(en) describing a similar revelatory journey to heaven. See Albert Heimrichs and Ludwig Könen, eds., Der Kölner Mani-Kodex (P. Colon. Inv. nr. 4780 ΠΕΡΙ ΤΗΝ ΦΕΝΝΙΕ ΤΟΥ ΣΕΝΜΑΤΟΣ ΑΥΤΟΥ, Edition der Seiten 1-72, ΖΠΕ 10(1975) 50-52. The parallels between this quotation and the tradition preserved by Epiphanius suggest that the Manichaean and the "Archontics" shared a common source.

79. Perhaps this passage in Allogenes might be of help in determining the meaning of the name given to the mountain of revelation in The Gospel of the Egyptians, "Charaxos," i.e., "Mountain of the worthy," reflecting a combination of the Hebrew word for "mountain" (יהב) and the Greek word for "worthy" (μάρτυς). For criticism of this suggestion see now Stroumsa, Another Seed, 116.

80. Cf. Frederick Wissee, "The Redeemer Figure" (cit. n. 19), 138; cf. also Klijn, Seth, 88.
to the postdiluvian world, of which Shem (son of Noah) is regarded as a representative. It is therefore possible that Hippolytus's *Paraphrase of Seth* was really a secondary, Gnostizing version of a document originally having nothing to do with Seth.81 Be that as it may, "Shem" plays a largely passive role in the text; "Derdekeas" is the revealer-savior.82

As we have seen, the earliest stage in the Gnostic treatment of Seth as a transmitter of gnosis is represented by *The Apocalypse of Adam*, which, in turn, is based upon Jewish apocryphal Adam traditions. However, it should be added that there are also Jewish testimoniess to the tradition that Seth (and other antediluvian patriarchs) wrote revelations in his own name.83 On the other hand, there are no (non-Gnostic) Christian sources that ascribe any special knowledge to Seth, apart from Christian adaptations of the traditions found in *Adam and Eve* and Josephus. Thus Klijn's conclusion regarding the role of Seth as a transmitter of knowledge in Gnosticism is correct: "The Gnostics derived their ideas from Jewish sources."84

E. Seth as Savior

Seth's role as a revealer of knowledge, described above, is also to be seen as a saving role, for in Gnosticism the purpose of the Savior's descent is to reveal the salutary knowledge to the elect here below. Indeed, from the Gnostic point of view, any proclaimer of saving knowledge is performing the function of a "savior."86 Thus we have already discussed an aspect of Seth's role as "Savior" in the previous section.

Nevertheless there is more to be said. In *The Apocalypse of Adam*, part of the revelation given to Seth has to do with the coming of a Savior figure called the "Illuminator of Knowledge." The identity of this savior is not given, but MacRae's suggestion that this figure "is meant to be a (docetic) incarnation of Seth" is very plausible.87 The role of Seth as Savior is clearer in *The Gospel of the Egyptians*, but there one finds explicit identification of Seth with Jesus Christ: the great Seth is sent from above, passes through "three parousias" (flood, fire, and the judgment of the archons), and "puts on" Jesus in order to save the straying race of Seth (III 63, 24–64, 9).88

In our previous discussion of the use of the epithet "Son of the Son of Man" in *Eugnostos the Blessed* III 85, 9–14, we saw that this is a reference to Seth despite the fact that the name "Seth" does not occur in the document. We also recall that this reference to the heavenly Seth has an additional specification, "the one who is called 'Savior'" (85, 13–14). In *Eugnostos the Blessed*, however, there is no explicit reference to an earthly manifestation of the Savior, though "Eugnostos the blessed," writing "to those who are his," may plausibly be assumed to be playing this role (III 70, 1–2).

In the previous section we also noted the possibility that Zostrianos, in the tractate that bears his name, might be regarded as an incarnation of Seth, for he plays the role of a revealer of gnosis. At the beginning of the tractate Zostrianos is commanded by the heavenly messenger to "preach to a living race ... and to save those who are worthy, and to strengthen the elect" (4, 15–17). At the end, after Zostrianos's ascent and descent, he addresses the "errant multitude" with these words:

Release yourselves, and that which has bound you will be dissolved. Save yourselves so that your soul may be saved. The kind Father has sent you the Savior and given you strength. (131, 10–16)

We have already noted the numerous references in *Zostrianos* to the heavenly Seth and to the "race of Seth." Given the saving role played by Zostrianos in this tractate, we should probably regard him as an incarnation of the heavenly Seth. Thus in *Zostrianos*—using the terminology of *The Gospel of the Egyptians*—Seth has "put on" Zostrianos in order to awaken his seed to gnosis.

This leads us to take another look at the tractate *Melchizedek*, in which we have noted the use of the phrase "the children of Seth." In *Melchizedek* the Savior is the "high priest" Melchizedek himself, who is also envisaged as performing the final work of salvation in the form of

81. Cf. Wisse, "The Redeemer Figure."
82. "Derdekeas" means "child" (Arama. אפרדיאס); see Stroumsa, *Another Seed*, 79, who suggests a connection with Seth.
87. Other scholars see in the passage dealing with the Illuminator evidence of Christian influence. For discussion see, e.g., George MacRae, "The Apocalypse of Adam Reconsidered," SBLSB 1972, 575. See now Pearson, "Jewish Gnostic Literature," 26–33.
88. Language similar to that employed in *The Gospel of the Egyptians* is found in *Trimorphic Protennoia*, where the heavenly Protennoia, a Sophia-figure, says, "As for me, I put on Jesus ... and my Seed, which is mine, I shall [place] into the Holy Light within an incomprehensible Silence" (50, 12–20). Cf. Ap. John II 30,11–31,25. In the *Trimorphic Protennoia* the role of Seth has been bypassed; the heavenly Mother ("Protennoia") puts on Jesus herself, without first having become manifest as Seth. Contrast *The Apocryphon of John*, where the heavenly Mother sows (as a father!) her seed in Seth; see Ap. John II 24,34–25,16, quoted above.
crucified and risen Jesus Christ. But given the reference to the “children of Seth” (5:20), and the parallel reference to the “race of the high priest” (i.e., Melchizedek, 6:17), we should entertain the possibility that in Melchizedek the priest-savior Melchizedek is regarded as an earthly incarnation of the heavenly Seth.

As a result of these observations, it might be posited that a constitutive feature of “Sethian” Gnosticism is the notion of Seth as a heavenly redeemer who can manifest himself in a variety of earthly incarnations, such as Zostrianos, Zoroaster, Melchizedek, Jesus Christ, and so on.

The patristic testimonies add little to this picture. It is simply reported of the Sethians that they equate Christ with Seth (Ps.-Tertullian, Haer. 8; Epiphanius, Haer. 39.1.3; 39.3.5), which means that some (Christian) Sethians regarded Christ as an earthly manifestation of the heavenly Seth. One passage in Epiphanius may be of special interest, however:

But from Seth, according to the seed (κατὰ σπέρμα) and by succession of race, came the Christ, Jesus himself, not by human birth but appearing in the world miraculously. He is the one who was Seth then and is manifest now to the race of men as Christ, having been sent from the Mother above. (Haer. 39.3.5)

In this passage the identification of “the Christ” (Jesus) with Seth is tied to an interpretation of the phrase ἐτέρων σπέρμα in Gen. 4:25. In the previous context in Epiphanius’s account, the usual Sethian “salvation history” is reported. The manifestation of Seth as “the Christ” is therefore to be understood as an eschatological event. This, of course, puts us in contact with The Apocalypse of Adam and The Gospel of the Egyptians, discussed above, but also raises an additional issue of considerable interest.

As we have seen, much of the Gnostic speculation on Seth is derived from Jewish traditions. We are therefore led to inquire into the possibility that the Gnostic notions of Seth as Savior might also be based on Jewish traditions. The aforementioned passage from Epiphanius is of special interest because it may reflect some use of Jewish messianic speculation on Gen. 4:25. As an example of this, the following passage from Midrash Genesis Rabbah is relevant:

89. See chap. 7 in this book, and Pearson, Codices IX and X, 19–85.
90. As is well known, the same idea is found in Manicheanism. On “Setheth our Savior” in Manichaean literature, see Pearson, “Egyptian Seth and Gnostic Seth,” 35, and references cited there; also Pearson, “Seth in Manichaean Literature” (cit. n. 4), 153–54.

And she called his name Seth. “For God has set me an alien seed,” etc. Rabbi Tanhuma in the name of Samuel Kozit said: (She set her eyes on) that same seed who will arise from a alien place. And who is this? This is the Messianic King.

Although this passage, as indicated especially by its context, refers to the birth of the Messiah from an alien nation (the Moabitess Ruth), it is nevertheless notable that the expected Messiah is referred to in the context of speculation on the story of the birth of Seth. The association of the Messiah with Seth and his “seed” is made elsewhere in Jewish literature as well. As we have already noted, the Messiah and the elect are tied together with Seth by means of apocalyptic animal symbolism in 1 Enoch 85–90. And there are Samaritan parallels for the same basic idea.

It should also be noted that there are numerous Jewish parallels for the idea that a biblical patriarch such as Seth can appear in another incarnation. Indeed, Melchizedek, according to 2 Enoch, undergoes several incarnations and in the Dead Sea Scrolls (1QM) he emerges as an end-time redeemer. A comparable idea seems to be reflected in those passages in the New Testament where Jesus is identified with one or another of the prophets. The identification of John the Baptist with Elijah reflects the same idea. One can add to this the idea of a pre-existent heavenly redeemer who assumes human form—this is what we find in the case of the “Son of Man” in 1 Enoch 37, 71, implicit in his identification with the patriarch Enoch (chap. 71). There, too, the “Son of Man” (Enoch) is clearly identified as the Messiah of the end time (esp. chap. 46).

Thus, though no certainty can be achieved on this point, it is reasonable to suppose that the Gnostic view of Seth as eschatological Savior is ultimately based on sectarian Jewish messianic traditions. In any case, the identification of Seth with Jesus Christ seems clearly to be a secondary development of an originally non-Christian, perhaps even pre-Christian, tradition.

92. See Klijn, Seth, 31. The late date of the Samaritan sources used by Klijn poses a problem, however.
95. “Elijah...Jeremiah or one of the prophets,” Matt. 16:14.
EXCURSUS: EGYPTIAN INFLUENCES?

It is often averred that the figure of Seth in Gnosticism is identifiable with, assimilated to, or otherwise related to, the Egyptian god of the same name.87 Usually no evidence is given for this assertion, for the very good reason that there is none.88 To be sure, the Egyptian god Seth is ubiquitous in Greco-Roman magic, in such materials as the magical papyri and curse tablets; and he occurs also in the so-called Gnostic gems and amulets.89 But he is virtually absent from materials that can properly be labeled "Gnostic,"90 and in any case is never identified with Seth, son of Adam.

However, it might be useful to examine here two recent suggestions of possible influences from the Egyptian cult of Seth in the Nag Hammadi library.

In the case of The Gospel of the Egyptians A. Böhlig and F. Wisse have suggested that the reason for the use of the title ("The Gospel of the Egyptians") is the prominence of Seth in this document, and the association in the minds of Egyptian readers with the Egyptian god of the same name.91 Such an association is suggested in the document itself, they argue, in a passage where it is said that the number of the seed of Seth is "the amount of Sodom" (ποιμ προκομιν, III 60,11–12).92 In the same passage, it is also said that Sodom is the "dwelling place" or "place of pasture" (τμα ροινε) of the great Seth, which is Gomorrah (III 60,13–14). Since the Egyptian Seth had been accused of sodomy (i.e., homosexual intercourse with Horus), and Gnostics can be expected to interpret as good what traditionally is considered evil, we have here an indication of an Egyptian Gnostic attempt to "rehabilitate" the Egyptian god by interpreting him in terms of Seth, son of Adam. Of course, nothing in the text of The Gospel of the Egyptians suggests any "sodomite" tendencies on the part of the "great Seth," nor, indeed, does the use of the names "Sodom" and "Gomorrah" indicate any connection with homosexuality, much less a justification of, or denial of, the Egyptian god's rape of his brother! The symbolic use of "Sodom" and "Gomorrah" has biblical precedents (Isa. 1:10 and Rev. 11:8, meaning Jerusalem), though, to be sure, "Sodom" and "Gomorrah" are given reverse evaluations in The Gospel of the Egyptians, as cities destroyed by the evil Demiurge; this is a typical feature of Gnosticism.93

Another suggestion associating the Gnostic Seth with the Egyptian god Seth has been advanced by Konrad Wekel and the Berliner Arbeitskreis für koptisch-gnostische Schriften, in an attempt to arrive at an Egyptian etymology for the name "Emmacha" (cf. "Emmacha Seth," Steles Seth 118,28).94 It is proposed that "Emmacha" is derived from an epithet of the Egyptian god Seth attested from the Ptolemaic period, ḫm-mḥ.95 But this is linguistically improbable, for a word beginning with ḫ would normally come into Greek either with an initial σ or an initial Χ (Coptic θα).96 As has already been noted in the case of this epithet,97 it seems fruitless to attempt any etymology at all for such a nomen barbarum.

If we are to look for Egyptian influence in the development of the Gnostic figure of Seth, we might do better to relate the Gnostic Seth to a god in the Egyptian pantheon other than the wicked Seth-Typhon, namely, Thoth, the Egyptian Hermes.98 Manetho is credited by Syneculus with composing his history of Egypt on the basis of hieroglyphic inscriptions written by the god Thoth "in the Serapidic land" (ἔν τῷ Ἑρωῖτῳ θιν), that is, Egypt,99 and it is probable that the temples of Egypt had in their archives, from ancient times, hieroglyphic tablets ascribed to Thoth, the divine scribe.100 In The Discourse on the Eighth and Ninth (NHC VI,6) Hermes Trismegistus commands his "son" to write his revelation in hieroglyphic characters on turquoise steles for the temple at Diospolis (61,18–30), presumably commanding the son to follow a venerable precedent established by himself. We might therefore look to the lore associated with the god Thoth in Egypt for the origins of the tradition, discussed above, that Seth wrote revelations on stone steles.

However, it is clear that the Gnostic traditions pertaining to Seth's steles cannot be derived directly from Egyptian sources, for the Gnostic traditions reflect details that have no parallel in Egyptian sources. They are derived, instead, from Jewish sources, such as the apocryphal Adam literature and the tradition preserved by Josephus to the effect that the Sethites had antediluvian

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98. I have come to this conclusion in my previous study where I examined this question; see "Egyptian Seth and Gnostic Seth."
100. Egyptian Seth occurs in a fragmentary writing in the Bruce Codex and in Petrus Sophia under his Greek name "Typhon," and also influences the Gnostic descriptions of Iao. For discussion see Pearson, "Egyptian Seth and Gnostic Seth," 34, 32. Cf. also Wolfgang Fauth, "Seth-Typhon, Onoele und der eselsköpfige Sabaoth: Zur Theriomorphie der ophitisch-barbelnognostischen Archonten," OrChr 57 (1973) 79–120; this important article was not available to me when I wrote "Egyptian Seth and Gnostic Seth."
102. This passage is quoted above, p. 67.
revelations on steles of brick and stone.\textsuperscript{111} Josephus, possibly our earliest witness to this tradition, may have gotten his information from a source in which a function of the Egyptian god Thoth-Hermes had been transferred to the pre-Flood patriarch Seth, son of Adam. The Gnostic tradition is based on Jewish sources, and only indirectly—via the Jewish sources, if at all—on Egyptian lore pertaining to the god Thoth.

CONCLUSIONS

As we have seen, the Gnostic figure of Seth is largely defined on the basis of scripture interpretation, especially of the key passages, Gen. 4:25 and 5:1–3. We have also noted that the Hebrew text of Genesis is sometimes utilized as well as the Greek. The Gnostic narratives of the birth of Seth—as well as those of Cain and Abel—are presented in the form of midrashim on the key texts in Genesis, showing parallels in form and content with Jewish haggadic traditions. The notion of a heavenly Seth represents a specifically Gnostic interpretation of the Genesis accounts whereby the earthly figures of Adam and Seth are projected onto the precosmic transmundane plane. The Gnostic traditions pertaining to a special race of Seth show clear influence from Jewish traditions regarding the righteous lineage of Seth. The development of the idea of Seth as a transmitter of gnosis is based on such Jewish sources as the apocryphal Adam literature. The "salvation history" of the Gnostic (Sethian) race is derived from Jewish apocryphal sources, and the notion of Seth as an eschatological savior seems also to reflect Jewish Messianic speculation on the future Messiah as a scion of Seth. In short, virtually every aspect of the typology of Seth discussed above reflects the influence of Jewish scripture and tradition. The sole Christian component of our typology, the identification of Seth with Jesus Christ, is obviously secondary, reflecting a Christianizing stage in the development of the Gnostic interpretation of Seth.

I have not attempted here to define the constitutive elements of the "Sethian" Gnostic system,\textsuperscript{112} but it does seem clear that the items we have discussed would constitute important elements in the evolution and development of "Sethian" Gnosticism.\textsuperscript{113} Inasmuch as the Gnostic traditions pertaining to Seth derive from Jewish sources, we are led to posit that the very phenomenon of Sethian Gnosticism per se is of Jewish, perhaps pre-Christian, origin.\textsuperscript{114}

the term "Sethian" is a self-designation of one or more Gnostic groups, for, in fact, that particular adjective does not occur in any of our primary texts, and may be an invention of the heresiologists. The heresiologists, nevertheless, would presumably have had some reasons for coming up with this epithet. The material in this paper has hopefully shed some light on their bases for coining the designation "Sethian," if that is what they did.

\textsuperscript{111} For all the material he has presented in his book, Klijn seems to me to arrive at very weak conclusions. He notices the Gnostic use of Jewish material but does not want to jump to conclusions about historical relationships; see esp. Seth, 119. But what conclusions can we draw, on the basis of the evidence, other than those posted here?