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There Is No Soul in a Sect, Only Spirit and Flesh: Soteriological Determinism in the Tripartite Tractate (NHC I,5) and the “Vision of Hagu” (4QInstruction)

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The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Nag Hammadi Codices

*Selected Papers from the Conference
“The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Nag Hammadi Codices”
in Berlin, 20–22 July 2018*

Edited by

Dylan M. Burns
Matthew Goff



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There Is No Soul in a Sect, Only Spirit and Flesh: Soteriological Determinism in the *Tripartite Tractate* (NHC I,5) and the “Vision of Hagu” (4QInstruction)

Dylan M. Burns

1 Introduction: Gnostic Determinism?

One of the first ‘clichés’ one reads about the so-called ‘Gnostics’ is that they were determinists: they believed some people were saved by nature, others damned by nature, and still others somewhere in-between. A representative and influential testimony to this view is given by the heresiographer Irenaeus of Lyons, writing in the later second century CE.¹ According to Irenaeus, the followers of Valentinus, a Platonist teacher of the mid-second century, claim that

There are, therefore, three elements. First the material (ὕλικόν, *materiale*), which they also call the ‘left’ (ἀριστερόν, *sinistrum*), and which they say must necessarily perish, inasmuch as it is altogether incapable of receiving a breath of immortality. Second, there is the animate element (ψυχικόν, *animale*),² to which they also give the name ‘right’ (δεξιόν, *dextrum*). Inasmuch as it is between the spiritual and material, it will go over to that element to which it has an inclination. Third, the spiritual (πνευματικόν, *spirituale*), which has been sent forth that here below it might take on form, having the animate element as a consort and having

-
- 1 Where possible, I refer to the Greek of *Haer.* (preserved only fragmentarily) as given in the Sources Chrétiennes edition (Rousseau/Doutreleau), otherwise referring to the later Latin translation that survives completely. On dating *Haer.*’s sources somewhat prior to the ubiquitous date of ca. 180, see recently Chiapparini, “Irenaeus.” On the terms ‘Gnostics’ and ‘Gnosticism’ and scholarship about these issues, see Burns, “Gnosticism.”
 - 2 In this paper, I follow Dunderberg in translating “animate” rather than “psychic” (“Valentinian Theories,” 113 n. 2). In a modern context, the latter term misleadingly implies something having to do with extrasensory perception and the like.

been disciplined together with it in conduct. And this spiritual element, they say, is the salt ... and the light of the world.³

Irenaeus goes on to explain that animate persons “are made steadfast by works and bare faith, and so do not have perfect knowledge (μη̄ τὴν τελείαν γνῶσιν ἔχοντες),” and that this is the category into which “we of the Church” fall. The spirituals, meanwhile,

are spiritual, not by conduct, but by nature (μη̄ πράξεως ἀλλὰ διὰ τὸ φύσει), and so will be saved entirely and in every case. For just as the earthly element cannot partake of salvation—for they say it is incapable of receiving salvation—so, on the other hand, the spiritual, which they maintain they constitute, cannot take on corruption, regardless of what practices they may have engaged in.⁴

The Valentinian tripartition Irenaeus here describes has a scriptural basis in 1 Cor 2:14–15.⁵ Paul is not alone amongst Jews of the first century CE in making such a tripartition, a version of which is also found in Philo.⁶ As George van Kooten writes, “the triad *pneuma*, *psychē* and *sōma* is the Jewish equivalent of the Greek tripartite division of human beings in terms of *nous*, *psychē* and *sōma*, which is read from the perspective of Gen 2:7. Since this passage is explicitly quoted by Philo, Paul and Josephus, their interpretation seems to reflect a common Jewish understanding of LXX Gen 2:7 in the first century CE ... The allegedly Gnostic distinction between the pneumatic, psychic and sarkic human being is not a Gnostic invention, but rather a development of this Jewish-Hellenistic interpretation of Gen 2:7 and its consequent tripartition of humankind.”⁷ What is “allegedly Gnostic” about the distinction described by Irenaeus is its connotation of determinism: that some definitely will not be saved, while some definitely will be saved by virtue of their divine nature. The fate of the third, ‘animate’ group remains unclear.

3 *Haer.* 1.6.1, text in SC 264:90–92, tr. Unger, rev. Dillon, 36, slightly modified; italics mine.

4 1.6.2, Unger, rev. Dillon, 37.

5 Dunderberg, “Valentinian Theories,” 114.

6 *Abr.* 124.

7 See Van Kooten, “Anthropological Trichotomy,” 99–100. The philosophical organization of the categories in question is Aristotle’s, “who redefined Plato’s conception of a dichotomy in man, opposing his soul to his body when he opposed the νοῦς or ‘intellect’ to the ψυχή or ‘soul’” (Roig Lanzillotta, “Spirit,” 32)—i.e., it was Aristotle who opposed the νοῦς to the ψυχή-σῶμα (the later, ‘Gnostic’ trichotomous pattern), rather than the νοῦς-ψυχή to the σῶμα (Plato’s more ‘bipartite’ model).

Following a brief digression,⁸ Irenaeus continues, and complicates matters:

They say that there are three races (γέννη, *genera*) of people—the spiritual, the animate, and the earthly (χοϊκόν, *choicum*)—as Cain, Abel, and Seth were; and from these [one arrives at] the three natures by considering them no longer as individuals but as a race. The earthly indeed goes into corruption, but the animate, if it chooses the better things, will rest in the Middle; if, however, it chooses the worse things, it too will go to regions similar [to the worse things]. Moreover, they claim that the spiritual people whom Achamoth has planted as ‘seeds’ from then until now in just souls, and which have been disciplined and nourished here below—because they were sent forth immature—and have finally become worthy of perfection, will be given as brides to the angels of the Savior, while their souls will of necessity rest forever in the Middle, together with the Demiurge. Again, subdividing the souls, they say that some are good by nature and some evil by nature. The good are those that are capable of receiving the ‘seed,’ whereas those evil by nature are never capable of receiving that ‘seed.’⁹

Irenaeus here introduces a bipartite anthropology—people who can receive the seed and people who cannot—immediately following the tripartite one.¹⁰ The problem is compounded by the fact that other Valentinian tripartite models, differing from one another significantly, are found in a smattering of heresiographical sources—Clement of Alexandria’s report on the Valentinian Theodotus, and the anonymous author of the *Refutation of All Heresies* on

8 Irenaeus’s account here veers into accusations of ‘Gnostic libertinism’: the alleged proclivity of the elect to indulge in lascivious behavior, since they are saved anyways (1.6.3–4). Scholars today generally dismiss these charges, for good reason. It was commonplace in ancient polemics to accuse one’s opponents of sexual concupiscence (Dunderberg, *Beyond Gnosticism*, 137–38, following the useful exploration of Knust, *Abandoned*, 15–50), and Irenaeus himself admits that he knows Valentinians who live virtuous lives indeed. He then proceeds to complain that the elect are puffed up with arrogance on account of their great piety (*Haer.* 3.15.2). This means “that the Valentinians Irenaeus knew did not regard immoral acts as an automatic consequence of one’s belonging to the group of spiritual persons,” as noted by Dunderberg (“Valentinian Theories,” 116). On the arrogant gait of the Valentinian elect, see idem, *Beyond Gnosticism*, 130; Kocar, “In Heaven,” 255; idem, “Ethics,” 234–35.

9 *Haer.* 1.7.5, text in SC 264: 110–12, tr. Unger, rev. Dillon, 40, slightly modified.

10 Rightly stressed by Dunderberg (“Valentinian Theories,” 124–25, suggesting as parallel bipartite models *Ref.* 6.32.9, 6.34.6; *Clem. Alex. Exc.* 51.2–3, 56.3; see also Dunderberg, *Beyond Gnosticism*, 140); Kocar also notes *Val. Exp.* ΝΗC XI 38, while rejecting Dunderberg’s reading of *Exc.* (“In Heaven,” 239; “Ethics,” 221). See further below.

Valentinus himself.¹¹ It is also found in one Nag Hammadi treatise, the fifth tractate of Codex One (the so-called ‘Jung Codex’):¹² an untitled work we dub the *Tripartite Tractate* (henceforth *Tri. Trac.*) since the work divides itself into three parts. The first part of this work deals with protology—the origin and makeup of the heavenly realm—the second with anthropogony, and the third with salvation-history and soteriology. *Tri. Trac.* is a long and difficult text, but it is also our only extant, systematic work of Valentinian theology, and so its importance for reconstructing Valentinian teaching cannot be overstated; here, too, we also find the division of humanity into the spiritual, animate, and material races (or “kinds,” γενος)¹³ with respective fates at the eschaton.¹⁴

This evidence suggests that Valentinians probably did teach tripartite anthropological models and soteriologies that followed from them. What they

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- 11 Theodotus, *apud* Clem. Alex. *Exc.* 54–56, 63–64; Valentinus, *apud* Ref. 6.34.3–8. The tripartition appears to be presumed but is not explicitly spelled out in the surviving fragments of Heracleon, *apud* Orig. *Comm. John*. Surveys of this material include Schottroff, “*Animae naturaliter salvandae*”; Simonetti, “Eracleone”; Dunderberg, “Valentinian Theories”; Thomassen, “Saved by Nature?”; Dunning, “Tripartite Anthropologies”; Kocar, “In Heaven,” 221–78; Dubois, “Once Again.” Focusing on Ir. *Haer.* and Clem. Alex. *Exc.*, see particularly Pagels, “Conflicting Versions” (arguing that the evidence of *Exc.* shows Irenaeus to misrepresent Valentinian views on soteriology), and the response of McCue, “Conflicting Versions” (disputing Pagels’ reading of *Exc.* and defending the veracity of Irenaeus’ testimony).
- 12 On the involvement of Gilles Quispel and the Jung Institute in Zürich in the initial edition, translation, publication, and reception of NHC I, see now Given, “Nag Hammadi,” esp. 94–96.
- 13 Cf. Dubois’s recent reminder that the term γένος need not be translated as “race,” with the (biological) deterministic implications it may carry, but that simply “kinds” will do (“Once Again,” 195). At the same time, the extremely widespread use of ethnic reasoning in early Christian literature (see below) does invite rendering of the term with some kind of ethnic connotation.
- 14 While a *terminus ante quem* of roughly the mid-fourth century CE is generally held for NHC I (like the other Nag Hammadi Codices), there is considerable debate as to the date of *Tri. Trac.*’s Greek *Vorlage*, and thus in precisely what period one may place its thought. For overviews of earlier scholarship, see Attridge and Pagels, “Introduction,” 178; Thomassen, “Introduction,” 11–13, 18. Although it has been suggested that some of the work’s theology responds to the crisis of Arius, furnishing a *terminus post quem* of the early fourth century CE (Camplani, “Per la cronologia”), most scholars debate the work’s place in the third century: Dubois suggests it was known by Origen and perhaps Plotinus (“*Traité Tripartite*”), while Thomassen avers that it in fact responds to Origen and may even cite Gen 3:11 via the Hexapla (“Introduction,” 18–20; for Simonetti, “Eracleone,” 31, this reasoning invites rather a date of the early fourth century). Attridge and Pagels, *op. cit.*, favor the first half of the third century, without ruling out the later third or early fourth century. On the relationship of the text with the school of Plotinus, see now Turner, “Plotinus.” For the purposes of the present study, the dating of *Tri. Trac.* to the third or fourth century is immaterial.

meant and how they worked is a matter of dispute. Irenaeus and Clement of Alexandria condemned the Valentinian position as an abrogation of individual responsibility, much in the manner that critics of the Stoic philosophy pilloried Stoic determinism as leaving no room for praise or blame for one's actions.¹⁵ Earlier scholarship more or less repeated these charges of 'Gnostic determinism.'¹⁶ The 1945 discovery near Nag Hammadi of numerous treatises belonging to the 'Sethian' literary tradition and which called the elect the "Seed of Seth" or "the Immovable Race" gave the impression that other, non-Valentinian Gnostic texts described election in fixed, biological terms.¹⁷

Nonetheless, the cliché of Gnostic determinism was exploded in various ways by scholars over the last fifty years,¹⁸ most recently by Denise Kimber Buell, who located this ethnic jargon in the greater context of early Christian 'ethnic reasoning.' According to Buell, Christians used the rhetoric, widespread in the Roman empire, of the "races" of the "Greeks, Barbarians, and Jews" in order to carve out a new, distinct identity: the "race" of the Christians. (Hence the choice to translate *genos* as "race," rather than simply "class.") Membership in this race was not "fixed" or determined; it was "fluid."¹⁹ Buell devotes a considerable amount of her analysis to *Tri. Trac.*, particularly its teaching on the three races or kinds of people. Most scholars follow her in reading the soteriology of *Tri. Trac.* as "fluid,"²⁰ assuming that the various deterministic statements the treatise made were of virtually no importance in everyday life.²¹ However,

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- 15 So Löhr, "Gnostic Determinism," 382–84, and Kocar, "In Heaven," 203; idem, "Ethics," 226–27, regarding Ir. *Haer.* 2.29, 4.37.2; Clem. Alex. *Strom.* 2.3.11.1–2.
- 16 For a critical discussion, see Williams, *Rethinking "Gnosticism"*, 189–212, esp. 189–90. More recent invocations of this cliché include Karamanolis, *Philosophy*, 144; Scott, *Journey*, 38.
- 17 E.g. Stroumsa, *Another Seed*, 125–35, passim.
- 18 Luise Schottroff was the first to express real skepticism about the heresiographers' accounts of Gnostic determinism; Williams built on her study, in demonstrating that the 'racial' language of the Sethian treatises is not biological, but figurative. See Schottroff, "*Animae naturaliter sabvanda*"; Williams, *Immovable Race*, respectively.
- 19 "Ethnic reasoning allowed Christians not only to describe themselves as a people, but also to depict the process of becoming a Christian as one of crossing a boundary from membership in one race to another" (*Why*, 139; see also *ibid.*, 84, emphasizing the universalist dimension). Cf. also Reis's discussion of how the terms ψυχή and ψυχικός were employed by the author of the *Epistle to Diognetus*, as well as Tatian and Tertullian, to denote outsiders in articulating emergent Christian identity ("Thinking," 569–89).
- 20 Reis, "Thinking," 598–99; Brakke, *Gnostics*, 72–73; Dunderberg, "Valentinian Theories," 119; Kocar, "In Heaven," 234. Buell's work has also proven to be of great use in understanding the ethnic terminology in Sethian works as well; see Burns, *Apocalypse*, 86–89.
- 21 "There is no substance to Irenaeus's claim [that the Gnostics were determinists]; it is merely a standard critique of an opponent's theological position applied, *mutatis mutandis*, to the Valentinians" (Denzey Lewis, *Cosmology and Fate*, 27, quoted in Linjamaa, *Ethics*, 2 n. 6, along with Roig Lanzillotta, "A Way of Salvation," 72–73).

recent studies have found the matter to be more complicated, and the question of soteriological ‘fixity’ versus ‘fluidity’ merits review. Moreover, Buell devotes little attention to the eschatological element of the soteriological question in *Tri. Trac.*: while a fluid ‘ethnic reasoning’ explains how anthropological tripartitions may have functioned *in* this life, the evidence from Irenaeus considered above reminds us that what was at stake was what happens *after* this life, and that here, the picture provided by our sources about Valentinian teachings grows murky indeed.

The present contribution will examine the problem of determinism and individual responsibility in *Tri. Trac.*, beginning with its protology before proceeding to its discussion of the tripartite division of human beings and the fates of the three types of beings at the eschaton. It will be argued that *Tri. Trac.* is a compatibilist text, i.e., that it envisions individual responsibility for behavior as compatible with determinism.²² While it is clear in this work that at the ‘Restoration’ (ἀποκαταστασις)—i.e., the end of the cosmos—spirituals will rejoin the aeons in the Fullness while the materials will be destroyed, the fate of the animates is more difficult to appraise, although it is clear that there is no animate substance in the restored, primordial state. In other words, while the tripartite anthropology predominates in this world, the bipartite anthropology will predominate in the next. Why do the anthropological models shift? This question, it will be argued, may be clarified with a look at 4QInstruction, a sapiential, sectarian work with apocalyptic features that also describes a bipartite anthropology with deterministic undertones and an eschatological context. The sectarian character of 4QInstruction’s twofold anthropology illuminates for what precisely the tertiary category of animates was needed—and why *Tri. Trac.* assigns it no part in the ‘Restoration.’

2 The Word’s Free-Falling in the ‘Tripartite Tractate’ (NHC I,5)

As mentioned above, *Tri. Trac.* is so-called because it is divided into three thematic sections, addressing protology, anthropogony, and soteriology, respectively. As is typical of Valentinian and ‘Classic Gnostic’ works, the Hermetic dictum holds: “as above, so below”²³—and so the treatise has a great deal to say

22 On compatibilism with respect to ancient Greek philosophy, see Bobzien, “Inadvertent Conception,” 136–43, esp. 142–43. Representative passages include Epict. *Diss.* 2.5.10–13; Sen. *Prov.* 5.8.

23 Famously in the *Emerald Tablet*; see Ruska, *Tabula Smaragdina*.

about what the world up there is like, because that matters for us down here.²⁴ God, the ‘Father,’ is absolutely unknowable, but does possess a ‘Will’ which determines everything, who is the Son.²⁵ From the Son derives a third entity who completes a Trinity: the pre-existent “Church” of “aeons.” These aeons are heavenly intellects that contemplate the Father; they are begotten sons of the Son, who in turn beget more sons, fellow aeons, and they are called “spiritual,” i.e. made of ΠΝΕΥΜΑ.²⁶ Together, they constitute the ‘Fullness’ (ΠΛΗΡΩΜΑ).²⁷ Eventually, one of these aeons, the Word (ΛΟΓΟΣ), attempts to contemplate the Father directly, fails to do so, and falls. The treatise underlines that this aeon made this choice on its own:

The free will (ΠΟΥΘΩΕ ἸΝΑΓΥΤΕΥΖΟΥΣΙΟΣ) which was begotten with the wholes was a cause for this one, so to speak, so that it would do whatever it wanted without anyone holding it back. Therefore, the decision (ΠΡΟΑΙΡΕΣΙΣ) of the Logos was something good. When it advanced, it rendered glory to the Father—even if <it> was adding something greater

24 Similarly, Kocar, “In Heaven,” 208. Although ‘up’ and ‘down’ are misleading notions when heaven is conceived of as purely mental and therefore non-spatial (as is characteristic of Gnostic texts), *Tri. Trac.* persists in using spatial metaphors for distinguishing the divine and mortal realms, and so I employ them here. See e.g. *Tri. Trac.* NHC I 64.28–29, 85.29–30, 86 passim, 89.24–31, 91.19–25, 96.6–16, etc.

In the following, I give my own translations of *Tri. Trac.*, with reference to the following resources and concomitant abbreviations:

Attridge and Pagels, “The *Tripartite Tractate*: Text and Translation” = CGL; Thomassen and Painchaud, “Texte et traduction” = BCNH; Nagel, *Tractatus Tripartitus* = Nagel. The text used is BCNH, noting divergences in reading of the MS ad loc.

25 *Tri. Trac.* NHC I 65.4–66.29, esp. 66.12–22, text BCNH, tr. mine: “He is what I [call] the form of the formless, the body of the bodiless, the face of the invisible one, the Word of [the] inexpressible, the mind of the [unintelligible], the spring which has gushed forth from Him, the root of the planted, the god of the established ones, the illumination of the ones He illuminates, the will of the things He wills, the providential care (ΠΡΟΝΟΙΑ) for the ones for whom He providentially cares ...” On this passage, see Attridge and Pagels, “The *Tripartite Tractate*: Notes,” 269–70; Thomassen, “Commentaire,” 309–10. On the ‘will of the Father’ in *Tri. Trac.*, cf. Smith, “Irenaeus,” 105–7 (deigning to note the identification of the Father’s will with the Son).

26 See NHC I 58.29–59.8, 63.35–64.22. The latter passage emphasizes their ‘spiritual’ quality (ἐκπρωβολῆ νε ἰππῆτικῆ ... ἀγῶ ἐκπῆτικῶν νε—63.35–36, 64.6–7). The focus on ‘begotten’ and not ‘adopted’ sonship in the work’s discussion of aeonic production is a topic worthy of further study; cf. Peppard, *Son of God*.

27 An understudied term, despite its widespread usage in early Christian and especially Gnostic literature. For a discussion with focus on its Pauline background, see Bak Halvgaard, “Concept of *Fullness*.”

than (its) ability, and it wanted to bring forth something perfect from a harmony in which it had not been, and it did not have [any] directive.²⁸

But just a few lines later, we read that the Father wanted it that way:²⁹

It (i.e., the Word) approached what was established around this perfect glory; for it was not without the will of the Father that the Word was begotten—that means, not without Him would it approach; rather, it was He, the Father, who brought it forth for these things which He knows must happen. Therefore, the Father and the wholes pulled themselves back from it, so that the limit which the Father had set could be established—for it does not result from accessing the inaccessible, but by the will of the Father—and also so that these things that happened, happen for the sake of the future dispensation (ΑΥΤΩ ΧΕΚΑΧΕ ΑΝ ΕΥΝΑΦΩΠΕ Ν̄ΣΙ ΝΙΖΒΗΥΕ ΕΝΤΑΥΦΩΠΕ ΑΥΟΙΚΟΝΟΜΙΑ ΕΣΝΑΦΩΠΕ). If it³⁰ were to come about, it would not happen [by] the appearance of the Fullness.³¹ For this reason, it is not right to blame the movement—namely, the Word.³² Rather, it is fitting for us to say concerning [the] movement of the Word that it was a cause [of] dispensation ordained to be ([α]λλα πετερωσε πε ατρ̄νωεχε α[π]κιμ̄ ν̄τε πλογοσ χε ογλαεισε πε [ν̄]ογοικονομια εστω ατρεσωπε).³³

The point is that God wants a salvific plan (or “dispensation,” ΟΙΚΟΝΟΜΙΑ) and the Fullness does not suffice for that; something needs to fall to be saved. And fall the Word does, producing a cascade of sub-aeons of two orders of less-than-perfect mental states: the ‘right’ and the ‘left,’ identified in turn with the ‘animate’ and ‘material’ qualities.³⁴ Eventually, the Word (now redeemed)

28 *Tri. Trac.* NHC I 75.35–76.12, text BCNH, tr. with reference to that of Nagel.

29 Noted widely: see Thomassen, “Commentaire,” 333–34; Pleše, “Evil,” 113; Dunderberg, *Beyond Gnosticism*, 166; Kocar, “Humanity,” 202; idem, “In Heaven,” 218.

30 I.e., the future dispensation.

31 So CGL, followed by Nagel.

32 So BCNH. Cf. Nagel’s suggested emendation, “movement of the Logos” (*Tractatus*, 40 n. 113b) but I do not see this as necessary to make sense of the passage, despite 77.9.

33 *Tri. Trac.* NHC I 76.21–77.11, text BCNH, tr. mine.

34 Their production and organization ‘takes’ more than twenty pages—NHC I 78.8–98.20—but see esp. 98.14–20, text BCNH, tr. mine: “On the one hand, those belonging to the thought and those belonging to likeness are named ‘the right ones’ and ‘animate’ and ‘the fiery ones’ and ‘the middle ones.’ On the other hand, those belonging to the arrogant thought and those belonging to imitation are called ‘the left ones,’ ‘material,’ ‘the dark ones,’ and ‘the last ones.’”

appoints a creator-god, the demiurge, to rule over them.³⁵ It is very important to note that prior to the fall (“movement”) of the Word, the Fullness had a strictly spiritual quality; only after the fall do animate and material things come into being.

Ismo Dunderberg has done much to show how Valentinian protological myths and their descriptions of the emergence and eventual therapeutic treatment of negative mental states reflect ancient Stoic language of the mixture of emotions: to wit, our minds here on earth feel mixed up because the primordial minds in heaven got mixed up. But there is help! Dunderberg’s work has been successfully developed with respect to *Tri. Trac.* by Paul Linjamaa.³⁶ However, Linjamaa notes a further, key aspect of the text’s description of the Word’s fall: the terminology of ‘free will’ exercised by the Word disappears from the text at this point.³⁷ As we will see, this treatise does describe human beings as facing choices—but true freedom belongs to the Fullness, the pre-existent intellects from which the Word came and to which it will return.³⁸

3 Is the Tripartition of Humanity in the ‘Tripartite Tractate’ Deterministic?

The spiritual Word then moves the creator-God to bring the qualities of the right and left together in the first human being (who is not referred to as ‘Adam’ in this text).³⁹ “Now,” we are told, “the first human being is a form which is mixed, and a creature which is mixed, and it is a composition of the ones of the left and of the right, and a spiritual Word, for its (way of) thinking is divided into each of the two natures from which it obtained its coming to be.”⁴⁰ The primordial human partakes in all three essences—therefore, each human being today partakes in all three as well.⁴¹ Yet all this was part of God’s intention: even the Serpent’s temptation of the first human and humanity’s subsequent expulsion from paradise were part of the divine plan: “truly was it a work of providence (πρὸνοια), so that it would be found out (that) it is a short period of time until humanity will receive the enjoyment of the eternal, good

35 NHC I 100.18–103.12.

36 Dunderberg, *Beyond Gnosticism*, 95–98, 108–18; Linjamaa, *Ethics*, 71–111.

37 Linjamaa, *Ethics*, 132.

38 On the freedom of the aeons, see NHC I 69.24–27, 74.18–23.

39 NHC I 105.29–106.2.

40 *Ibid.*, 106.18–25, text BCNH, tr. mine. As Thomassen notes, the “two natures” are probably the animate and material ones (“Commentaire,” 407).

41 Attridge and Pagels, “Notes,” 412.

things ...”⁴² The complex anthropogony and concomitant ‘fall of man,’ mirroring the ‘fall’ of the Word, is in *Tri. Trac. a felix culpa*.

Following a lengthy discussion of the influence of the beings of the ‘left’ (material) and ‘right’ (animate) on the development of the “Greek and barbarian” and “Hebrew” civilizations,⁴³ respectively, *Tri. Trac.* returns to the anthropogony, this time with regards to soteriology:

Humanity came into being in three sorts with respect to nature: the spiritual, the animate, and the material, for it preserves the model of the triple disposition of the Word, from whom the material ones, the animate ones, and the spiritual ones were brought forth. Each one of the natures of the three races is known by its fruit,⁴⁴ but they were not known at first; rather, (they were known) at the advent of the Savior,⁴⁵ who illuminated the holy ones and revealed what each one of them is.⁴⁶

The text continues, emphasizing that the three natures are revealed by the reaction to the appearance of the savior:

42 *Tri. Trac.* NHC I 107.22–26, text BCNH, tr. mine. Cf. *The Treatise on the Two Spirits*, where it is God who gave humanity the Two Spirits “so that they may know good [and evil]” (IQS IV, 26). Noting the allusion to Gen 2:15 and 3:1–7, Alexander exclaims that while in Genesis it is the serpent who tricks Adam and Eve into receiving knowledge of good and evil, “here it is God who ensures that man acquires it; it is all part of his plan! This is a reading of Scripture against the grain fully worthy of the later Gnostics” (“Predestination,” 31).

43 *Tri. Trac.* NHC I 108.13–114.30. These fascinating passages are too extensive and complex to treat presently. See Attridge and Pagels, “Notes,” 417–35; Thomassen, “Commentaire,” 410–20; Dunderberg, *Beyond Gnosticism*, 176–87; Smith, *Guilt*, 108–21. Cf. also my contribution, “Philosophical Contexts.”

44 “You shall know them by their fruit”: i.e., the nature to which each person belongs is clear by their reaction to the appearance of the Savior, Jesus Christ: Dunderberg, “Valentinian Theories,” 117. Cf. Matt 7:16; Luke 6:43–45, per Kocar, “Humanity,” 208. As Kocar has noted, the identification of members of a tripartition of the elect by their reaction to preaching is not distinctly Valentinian; it also appears in *Shepherd of Hermas, Similitudes* 8.7—Kocar, op. cit., 205 n. 48. Cf. also *Teach. Silv.* NHC VII 92.15–18.

45 Taking $\omega\rho\omicron\upsilon\gamma$ (lines 26–27) as following $\rho\sigma\eta\epsilon\acute{\iota}$ $\eta\pi\omega\tau\eta\rho$ ’ (line 25), Thomassen and Painchaud do not translate it; Nagel emends unnecessarily to $\rho\alpha\rho\omicron\upsilon\gamma$. For $\epsilon\iota$... $\omega\alpha$ -, see Crum, *Coptic Dictionary*, 542a. The idea is that the natures were recognized when the Savior came to human beings.

46 NHC I 118.14–28, text BCNH, tr. mine: $\chi\epsilon$ $\tau\eta\bar{\eta}\tau\rho\omega\mu\epsilon$ · $\alpha\varsigma\omega\omega\pi\epsilon$ $\epsilon\sigma\omicron\epsilon\iota$ · $\bar{\eta}\omega\mu\eta\bar{\eta}\tau$ $\bar{\eta}\rho\eta\tau\epsilon$ $\kappa\alpha\tau\alpha$ $\omicron\upsilon\varsigma\iota\alpha$ $\Delta\epsilon$ $\tau\pi\eta\epsilon\gamma\mu\alpha\tau\iota\kappa\eta$ $\bar{\eta}\bar{\eta}$ $\tau\bar{\eta}\chi\kappa\langle\iota\kappa\rangle\bar{\eta}$ $\bar{\eta}\bar{\eta}$ $\tau\bar{\eta}\gamma\lambda\iota\kappa\eta$ · $\epsilon\sigma\tau\omicron\gamma\chi\omicron$ $\bar{\eta}\pi\tau\gamma\pi\omicron\varsigma$ $\bar{\eta}\tau\bar{\Delta}\iota\alpha\theta\epsilon\varsigma\iota\varsigma$ $\bar{\eta}\pi\omega\mu\eta\bar{\eta}\tau$ $\bar{\eta}\rho\eta\tau\eta$ $\bar{\eta}\Delta\epsilon$ $\pi\lambda\omicron\gamma\omicron\varsigma$ · { $\tau\epsilon$ ·} $\tau\epsilon\epsilon\iota$ $\epsilon\tau\epsilon$ · $\Delta\beta\alpha\lambda$ $\bar{\eta}\rho\eta\tau\varsigma$ $\lambda\gamma\epsilon\iota\eta\epsilon$ $\Delta\beta\alpha\lambda$ $\bar{\eta}\eta\gamma\lambda\iota\kappa\omicron\bar{\eta}$ $\bar{\eta}\bar{\eta}$ $\eta\bar{\eta}\chi\iota\kappa\omicron\bar{\eta}$ · $\bar{\eta}\bar{\eta}$ $\eta\bar{\eta}\bar{\eta}\Delta\tau\iota\kappa\omicron\bar{\eta}$ $\tau\omicron\gamma\epsilon\iota\epsilon$ $\tau\omicron\gamma\epsilon\iota\epsilon$ $\bar{\eta}\eta\omicron\upsilon\varsigma\iota\alpha$ $\bar{\eta}\pi\omega\mu\eta\bar{\eta}\tau$ $\bar{\eta}\gamma\epsilon\omicron\bar{\eta}\varsigma$ $\Delta\beta\alpha\lambda$ $\rho\acute{\iota}\tau\bar{\eta}$ $\pi\epsilon\varsigma\kappa\alpha\rho\pi\omicron\varsigma$ $\epsilon\gamma\varsigma\omicron\gamma\omega\bar{\eta}$ $\bar{\eta}\bar{\eta}\omicron\varsigma$ · $\lambda\gamma\omega$ $\bar{\eta}\epsilon\bar{\eta}\pi\omicron\upsilon\varsigma\omega\omega\mu\eta\omicron\gamma$ $\Delta\epsilon$ $\bar{\eta}\omega\bar{\rho}\bar{\eta}$ $\alpha\lambda\lambda\alpha$ $\rho\bar{\eta}$ $\rho\sigma\eta\epsilon\acute{\iota}$ $\eta\pi\omega\tau\eta\rho$ ’ $\pi\alpha\acute{\iota}$ $\epsilon\eta\tau\alpha\bar{\rho}$ $\omicron\gamma\lambda\epsilon\iota\eta$ $\Delta\eta\epsilon\tau\omicron\gamma\alpha\beta$ $\omega\rho\omicron\upsilon\gamma$ $\lambda\gamma\omega$ $\pi\omicron\gamma\epsilon\epsilon\iota$ $\pi\omicron\gamma\epsilon\epsilon\iota$ · $\alpha\phi\omicron\gamma\alpha\bar{\eta}\zeta\bar{\eta}$ $\Delta\beta\alpha\lambda$ · $\bar{\eta}\pi\epsilon\tau\epsilon\bar{\eta}\tau\alpha\bar{\rho}$ $\pi\epsilon$.

On the one hand, the spiritual race is like light from light, and like spirit from spirit. When its head appeared, it ran up to him immediately. It immediately became body to its head. It acquired knowledge by revelation, instantly. On the other hand, [the] animate race, as if it were a light from a fire, hesitated to accept knowledge of the one who had appeared to it—much less to run to him with faith. It is by a voice that it is taught, and so it was enough; for it is not far from the hope in accordance with the promise, since it has received—so to speak—the deposit of the confirmation of what is to be. Finally, the material race is foreign in every way, as if it were something dark that will separate itself from rays of light, for its presence nullifies it, because it did not accept his advent—and moreover, it is hatred for the Lord, because he manifested himself.⁴⁷

Finally, their fates are described:

The spiritual race shall receive complete salvation in every way, but the material shall receive destruction in every way, as befits the manner of an opponent! Finally, the animate race, since it is in the middle due to its delivery and also establishment, *is double in its orientation towards good and evil; it accepts the emanation*⁴⁸ *that was suddenly established, and the flight, certainly, to the good things* (ϥϩΑΤΡΕ ΚΑΤΑ ΠΕϩΤΩΩ ΑΠΑΓΑΘΟΝ Μ̄Ν ΠΚΑΚΟΝ ϥΧΙ ΑΡΑϩ Μ̄ΠΙϩΕΤΕ ΔΒΑΛ ΕϩΚΗ ΔϩΡΗΙ ϩ̄ΝΝ ΟΥΩΝΕ Μ̄Ν ΠΠΩΤ' ΔϩΟΥΝ ΠΑΝΤΩΣ ΔΝ ΔΝΙΠΕΤΝΑΝΟΥΟΥ). Indeed, those whom the Word brought forth in accordance with the pre-existent (substance) of his thought—when he remembered The Exalted One and prayed for salvation—<possess> salvation at once.⁴⁹ They shall be saved completely, [thanks to] the thought of salvation.⁵⁰

The treatise specifies that these who are “saved at once” and who “shall be saved completely” are on earth for a reason: they were “appointed for a service—the

47 ΝΗC I 118.28–119.16, text BCNH, tr. mine.

48 ΠΙϩΕΤΕ: Nagel suggests that this word is a mistranslation from the Greek *Vorlage* into Coptic (*Tractatus*, 75 n. 58b). The translator, he avers, mistook ῥύομαι (“to save, redeem”) for ῥέομαι (“to flow, emanate”). Thus, the author of the Greek *Vorlage* probably wrote: “the animate race, since it is in the middle when it is brought forth and also established, is double in its orientation towards good and evil; it receives *salvation* ...” Such an interpretation lends weight to the present argument.

49 ἸΔ[ΠC] ΩΝΕ: so GCL, followed by Nagel; cf. BCNH: ἸΔ[Τ]ΩΝΕ, “... le salut [sans] être rejetés.”

50 ΝΗC I 119.16–34, text BCNH, tr. mine, modifications noted. Italicized text reflects the lines introduced by *diploi* in the manuscript, which may have been inserted by the scribe for emphasis (also noted by Kocar, “In Heaven,” 218 n. 40).

proclamation of the advent of the Savior that is to be.”⁵¹ These can only be the spirituals, who are here to preach and teach. This is clearly no determinist teaching in the sense that Irenaeus or Clement would have us believe.⁵² Some kind of volition is presupposed, since the whole reason the spirituals exist is to help the animates make the right choice when presented with the Gospel (‘the Call’).⁵³ Similarly, other Valentinian texts describe prayers and ritual practices; their underlying assumption must be that people ought to choose to carry these practices out, and that the choice is significant.⁵⁴

However, it is also important to remember the message of the protology, much earlier in the text: all is determined by God’s Will. Nor is there a faculty of free will described in these passages regarding the three human natures: rather, the spiritual nature goes one way, the material the other, and the animate is in-between: “it is double, in its orientation towards good and evil.” The Coptic word τῶϩ, translated here as “orientation,” can also mean “determine, fix, allot.”⁵⁵ The animates are not ‘free’; they are determined to go both ways, i.e., to be both good and bad. “Free will” belongs in the Fullness with the aeons, who are “spiritual.” The implication is clear: only the spirituals are truly free, even though the sole decision they make is to act in perfect harmony with God’s thoughts.⁵⁶ This too is good Stoicism, which envisions true freedom as the individual’s harmonious action with the determined chain of causes.⁵⁷ In the terminology of modern philosophy, *Tri. Trac.* like Stoicism, is compatibilist.⁵⁸

51 NHC I 119.34–120.14, my tr.

52 Attridge and Pagels, “The *Tripartite Tractate*: Notes,” 446–47, followed by Buell, *Why?*, 84, 127.

53 Kocar, “In Heaven,” 255.

54 See e.g. *Interp. Know.* NHC XI 15–19, per Thomassen, “Saved by Nature?” 146; similarly regarding *Gos. Phil.* NHC II,3 Dubois, “Controverses,” 74. Injunctions to ‘do the will of the Father’ would have been pointless if all action was predetermined (this language is surveyed in Desjardins, *Sin.* 67–116; see also Kocar, “Humanity,” 210; idem, “Ethics,” 232 n. 85, regarding *Gos. Truth* NHC I 33.1–32).

55 Crum, *Coptic Dictionary*, 449–52. See also *Tri. Trac.* NHC I 77.8–11, quoted above: “it is fitting for us to say concerning [the] movement of the Logos that it was a cause [of] dispensation ordained to be” (οικονομία ἐστίνῳ ἀτρεσῶσπρε).

56 Cf. Dunderberg, *Beyond Gnosticism*, 135, on the (Stoic) sage-like quality of the Valentinian spirituals.

57 A recent, very readable account is Frede, *Free Will*, 72–80, largely with reference to Epictetus.

58 Cf. Linjamaa, *Ethics*, 144–45, 149–55, who dubs *Tri. Trac.* a “determinist” Christian text whose ethics are in line with Stoicism, and Kocar, who follows Bobzien in articulating early Stoic responsibility in terms of causality rather than freedom to do otherwise (“In Heaven,” 222, n. 6, 243–44; but cf. *ibid.*, 249; idem, “Ethics,” 223–32, esp. 225: “the anthropogenic section [of *Tri. Trac.*—ed.] has structural parallels to Stoic compatibilism and causal moral responsibility”).

What does this mean for actual people, rather than idealized ‘spirituals’ and ‘animates’? The choice of the animates for the better or worse is determined by the ‘will of the Father,’ but it is only truly ‘free’ insofar as it is in accordance with it and the will of the spirituals—at which point the animates are not really animates anymore, are they?⁵⁹ This is precisely the kind of ‘fluidity’ Buell and others have described in *Tri. Trac.*: in the realm of practice, different people make different decisions, and are understood as earning their just reward. Yet the present analysis complicates Buell’s reading somewhat. As Einar Thomassen has highlighted, *Tri. Trac.* simply states that there are three kinds of human beings, and they are as they were made.⁶⁰ In other words, Valentinian anthropology was fluid in practice, but it was fixed in theory—and perhaps that mattered, too.⁶¹ Specifically, it mattered in an eschatological context, where all spiritual substance is ‘restored’ to the Fullness: at this time, “the spiritual race shall receive complete salvation in every way, but the material shall receive destruction in every way, as befits the manner of one who fights him!” Yet *Tri. Trac.* does not tell us in straightforward terms what will happen to the animates at the eschaton.⁶² At this point, one could supply evidence from Irenaeus or Theodotus to fill in the gap,⁶³ but the work does offer us a hint that seems to me to be decisive:

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- 59 Cf. Thomassen, “Saved by Nature?” 140. Cf. Pleše, “Evil,” 130: “for the pneumatic race, in short, evil is a transient disposition; for psychics, the matter of rational choice; for material humans, an enduring and irreversible condition.” Kocar highlights rather the problem of ‘internal determinism,’ i.e. the question of the extent to which responsibility incumbent upon one’s predisposition can really be considered ‘responsibility,’ when one’s predisposition is determined by external causes (“Ethics,” 232 n. 82). As Kocar notes, *Tri. Trac.* seems either unaware of this problem or uninterested in it.
- 60 Thomassen, “Saved by Nature?” 132–33, recalling *Haer.* 6.35.3–6; also Pleše, “Evil,” 128.
- 61 Thomassen, “Commentaire,” 428–29; Linjamaa, *Ethics*, 181, *pace* Buell, *Why*, 128 (“if actions determine essence for the *Tripartite Tractate*, then it is not behavior that reveals one’s nature, but behavior that *produces* one’s nature, as a distillation of one of the three natures inherent in all humans,” italics hers; followed by Dunning, “Tripartite Anthropologies,” 182, despite his concerns at *ibid.*, 185). Both Kocar (“‘Humanity,’” 220; “Ethics,” 216–17) and Linjamaa (*op. cit.*, 182–83) have rightly observed that a deterministic anthropology need not have been mutually exclusive with social mobility in practice.
- 62 Kocar, “‘Humanity,’” 219–20.
- 63 Irenaeus unambiguously states that this Restoration to the primordial state amounts to a reintegration of the spiritual part into God with the animate part shut outside of the Fullness (*Haer.* 1.7.1, 1.7.5), but the evidence of *Clem. Alex. Exc.* 63–65 is less clear on the matter. The scenario described by Irenaeus is assigned to *Exc.* 43–65 by McCue, “Conflicting Versions,” 415; Simonetti, “Eracleone,” 12–13; Pleše, “Evil,” 129–30; Kocar, “In Heaven,” 237–38; *idem*, “Ethics,” 207–221. Others, meanwhile, have argued that *Exc.* describes an initial integration of the animate to the spiritual part, followed by the latter’s assimilation the Fullness at a unified grade (Pagels, “Conflicting Versions,” 44–53, esp.

For if we confess the kingdom that is in Christ, they have departed from the complete multiplicity of form and inequality and change. For the end shall receive once again singular existence, just as the beginning was also singular; the place where there is no man nor woman, nor slave or free, nor is there circumcised and uncircumcised, [nor] is there angel nor is there human being, but all in all is Christ!⁶⁴

As is widely recognized, this passage appears to envision a future eschaton where the animates and spirituals become one in the Fullness.⁶⁵ In the *Endzeit*, there will only be spirit and flesh, and spirit alone shall live.⁶⁶ *Tri. Trac.*'s eschatology privileges the bipartite anthropology—people who receive the seed, and people who do not—like that mentioned by Irenaeus.

The problem with this reading is obvious: if the bipartite division predominated in practice as well as eschatological theory, what, then, was the point of having the tripartite division at all? What are the animates for?

52–53; Attridge and Pagels, “Notes,” 486–87)—similar to the present reading of *Tri. Trac.* Thomassen rightly notes that *Tri. Trac.*'s position on the matter may be independent of Irenaeus and Theodotus (op. cit. 449 n. 89; more strongly on this point, Simonetti, op. cit., 29–30).

64 *Tri. Trac.* NHC I 132.16–28, text BCNH, tr. mine. Cf. Gal 3:28; Col 3:11.

65 So Attridge and Pagels, “The *Tripartite Tractate*: Introduction,” 189: “here the author recalls a common formula concerning the reconciliation of opposites used in early Christian baptism (cf. Gal 3:28). This formula was interpreted by Western Valentinian sources in a specific symbolic way, wherein the elements of the opposed pairs refer to spiritual and psychic Christians respectively. If our author follows such a tradition, he intends to show that all distinctions between psychics and pneumatics will cease when Christ becomes ‘all in all.’” See also idem, “The *Tripartite Tractate*: Notes,” 486–87; Thomassen, “Commentaire,” 448–49; Simonetti, “Eracleone,” 21; Buell, *Why?*, 127–28; Reis, “Thinking,” 600.

66 Thomassen, “Saved by Nature?” 145. Kocar argues (“In Heaven,” 240, n. 54; “Ethics,” 221–22) that NHC I 135–36 describes rather multiple grades of salvation at the eschaton, but these passages seem to me to be too lacunose and opaque to serve as persuasive evidence either way. A more intriguing suggestion of his (Kocar, “In Heaven,” 240; “Ethics,” 222) is that the diversity of the aeonic realm indicates a diversity of post-Restoration salvific states. Sure enough, *Tri. Trac.* refers to the aeons having their own distinctive manners of praising the Father: “each one of those who render glory possesses its station and [its] height, [and] its abode and its repose—which is the glory that it brings forth” (NHC I 70.14–19; see also 65.39–66.5, 68.17–28; all cited by Kocar). However, this multiplicity in unity precedes the creation of the ‘right’ and ‘left’ and concomitant animate and psychic substances and characters, which follow from the Word’s ‘fall’—precisely what the Restoration corrects, in accordance with the dispensation (οικονομία). In other words, even if the pleromatic realm allows for diversity, this diversity is entirely on the spiritual (πνευματικός) plane, for there is nothing animate (much less material) in the Fullness—nor will there be, after the Restoration.

4 4QInstruction and the “Vision of Hagu”

4QInstruction has helped me come to grasp this question more effectively, and perhaps even suggest an answer to it. 4QInstruction is not only the longest book of wisdom discovered amongst the Dead Sea Scrolls, but also one of the most interesting and difficult; its obscure, elliptical quality is compounded by the fact that it is not a product of the Dead Sea sect itself.⁶⁷ The author of the text advises its recipient (addressed as a מַבִּין—a student, or one who has begun the road to understanding)⁶⁸ to study the רִז נְהִיָה—“the mystery that is to be.” Unattested in the Hebrew Bible and found only three times elsewhere at Qumran, this noun phrase is used over 20 times in 4QInstruction.⁶⁹ As Goff argues, the “mystery that is to be” seems to denote heavenly revelation—in keeping with the Hebrew term רִז—that concerns the whole of God’s earthly creation, i.e., the cosmos, everything in it, and everything that will happen in it, as predetermined by God (hence: “the mystery *to be*”).⁷⁰ It is possession of exactly this kind of revealed knowledge which characterizes the מַבִּין as a member of the elect.⁷¹

67 Goff, *4QInstruction*, 27, recalls the text’s absence of key terms belonging to the Dead Sea sect (*Yahad*, Teacher of Righteousness, etc.), and observes that its discussion of marriage and domestic finances in no way echoes what we find in the *Damascus Document*. See also Frey, “Notion of ‘Flesh,’” 213.

68 Discussed by Goff, “Adam,” 2; idem, *4QInstruction*, 12–13.

69 Goff, “Adam,” 3; idem, *4QInstruction*, 14.

70 Goff, “Adam,” 3; idem, *4QInstruction*, 14–16; cf. Werman, who argues that this knowledge is not revealed but historical (“What is the *Book of Hagu*?” 131, 139), although these not need be mutually exclusive characteristics.

71 As Goff notes, 4QInstruction’s appeal to revealed knowledge as the source of wisdom is one of the features which distinguishes it from its fellow sapiential texts Proverbs and Ben Sira. Recalling as well the text’s depiction of divine judgment of sinners, Goff observes that “4QInstruction illustrates to an extent not evident before the emergence of the Dead Sea Scrolls that an early Jewish wisdom text could incorporate themes that accord with the apocalyptic tradition” (Goff, *4QInstruction*, 19; similarly idem, “Adam,” 3–4). Some have taken the esoteric knowledge reserved for the elect in Qumran texts as a harbinger of ‘Gnostic’ epistemology and soteriology, purportedly centered on the possession of esoteric, salvific γνῶσις—cf. Colpe, “Gnosis I: Erkenntnislehre,” 483, as well as Ringgren, “Qumran and Gnosticism,” 379–82; more recently, Alexander, “Predestination,” 30–31. Given the nature of the present volume, it is perhaps worthwhile to comment here that this comparison can be misleading but instructive. First, the comparison obscures the fact that there is no evidence that the Qumran sectarians and the *Gnōstikoi* known to Irenaeus and Porphyry had any socio-historical relationship to one another. Second, it fails to ask about the content of esoteric, saving knowledge—to wit, while the רִז נְהִיָה denotes the God of Israel’s ordering of the cosmos and the ranks of the saved, observable in the movement of the heavenly spheres, the γνῶσις ostensibly claimed by the Gnostics

There is a remarkable discussion of this revealed knowledge in 4Q417 1 I, lines 6–18:

6 ... And then you will know truth and iniquity, wisdom ⁷ [and foll]y. You ... [their] deed[s] in all their ways together with their punishment in all the everlasting ages and the punishment ⁸ of eternity. And then you will know the difference between [go]od and [evil according to their] deeds, [f]or the God of Knowledge is a foundation of truth. With the mystery that is to be ⁹ he spread out its foundation and indeed m[ade (it) with wis]dom and, regarding everything, [with cleve]rness he fashioned it ... ¹⁵ And the book of remembrance is written before him ¹⁶ for the ones who keep his word—that is, the vision of meditation of the book of remembrance. He bequeathed it to Adam together with a spiritual people (לְאֹנוֹשׁ עַם עֵי רוּחַ) be[cau]se ¹⁷ according to the likeness of the holy ones he fashioned him. But no more did he give what is meditated upon to the fleshly spirit (רוּחַ בִּשְׂרַר), for it did not distinguish between ¹⁸ [go]od and evil according to the judgment of its [sp]irit. *vacat* And you, understanding son, gaze *vacat* upon the mystery that is to be and know ¹⁹ [the path]s of all life and the manner of one's walking that is appointed over [his] deed[s] ...⁷²

As is widely recognized, the “book of remembrance can be reasonably compared to the ‘tables of heaven’ prominent in 1 *Enoch* and *Jubilees*,” as well as 1QH IX, 25–26, “in which God’s deterministic plan for creation is inscribed in creation.”⁷³ This predetermined plan is equated with the “vision of meditation” (חֲזוֹן הַהִגּוּת), a phrase which appears to refer to reflection on the “book of remembrance”: God’s plan, or the mystery that is to be.⁷⁴ As Shane Berg

denoted one’s kinship with a divine beyond, a realm superior to the present world as well as its (sub-divine) creator (rightly acknowledged by Alexander, *op. cit.*). The רַז נְהִיָּה is no ‘*gnōsis* before the Gnostics’; rather, it may serve as a potent *comparandum* in the service of deconstructing the misleading terminological category of ‘Gnosis’ i.e., religious discourse focused on salvific knowledge eclipsing the category of ‘Gnosticism.’

72 Tr. Goff, *4QInstruction*, 139–40.

73 Goff, *4QInstruction*, 159; see further *ibid.*, 159–61; Lange, *Weisheit*, 69–79; *idem*, “Wisdom,” 343; Frey, “Notion of ‘Flesh,’” 218; Tigchelaar, “‘Spiritual People,’” 114; Werman, “What is the *Book of Hagu*?” 127–28; Attridge, “Divine Sovereignty,” 192. On the deterministic understanding of history presupposed by this motif, see also Popović, “Apocalyptic Determinism,” 261–62, with regard to e.g. 1 *En.* 81:1–2, 93:2; Dan 10:21; *Jub.* 6:35; 4Q180 (Ages of Creation A).

74 On חֲזוֹן see BDB 303a. For הַהִגּוּת see Lange, *Weisheit*, 84–85; *idem*, “Wisdom,” 343; Frey, “Notion of ‘Flesh,’” 218; Werman, “What is the *Book of Hagu*?” 138; Berg, “Ben Sira,” 155 n. 68; Goff, *4QInstruction*, 161–62; Wold, “Universality,” 215–16.

writes, “the object of such meditation is not quite clear, but what is clear is that those who possess the capability to meditate are those who are able to know good and evil.”⁷⁵ This vision of meditation is “bequeathed ... to Adam (אנוש) together with a spiritual people, because according to the likeness of the holy ones he fashioned him.” However, to the “fleshly spirit,” God did not give “what is meditated upon”—which I take to be synonymous with the ‘vision of meditation’—since the fleshly spirit “did not distinguish between good and evil according to the judgment of its spirit.” Jörg Frey has identified this divide between these elect individuals and the “fleshly spirit” as a Palestinian Jewish antecedent of the second century BCE for the characteristically Pauline demarcation between πνεῦμα and σάρξ (Gal 5:7; Rom 8:5–8).⁷⁶ In turn, this demarcation is fundamental to Paul’s concomitant tripartition of humanity into πνευματικοί, ψυχικοί, and σαρκικοί (1 Cor 2:14–15, in relation to Gen 1–3)—and its adaptation by the Valentinians.

5 Who Is the ‘Spirit of Flesh’ and Who Is אנוש?

This extraordinarily rich passage offers much to interpret and contend with. For our purposes here, I will focus on the problems of the identity of the “fleshly spirit” and that of Adam (אנוש). 4QInstruction draws an explicit contrast between the “spiritual” people and the fleshly spirit in 4Q417 1 I 18, where the מברך is told that he and other spiritual people have been made separate from the “fleshly spirit.”⁷⁷ The substance of this distinction between the people of spirit and the ‘fleshly spirit’ is the ability to “distinguish between good and evil.” As Goff avers, “since the ‘fleshly spirit’ does not have knowledge of good and evil (line 17), one can infer that the ‘spiritual people’ do.”⁷⁸ It can be deduced further that this knowledge is inscribed in the heavenly book of remembrance.⁷⁹ Line 18 tells us that they are not given “what is meditated upon (*hagui*).” Thus, those who belong to the ‘fleshly spirit’ are not like the angels. They are characterized by flesh, which connotes “their mortality and lack of access to supernatural revelation,” as implied by use of the expression

75 Berg, “Ben Sira,” 155 n. 68; similarly, Goff, “Adam,” 4.

76 Frey, “Notion of ‘Flesh,’” esp. 197–200 (emphasizing the lack of symmetry between Paul’s opposition of “spirit” and ‘flesh’ with Philo’s exegesis of the double creation of humanity in Gen 1–3), 224–26; followed by Goff, *4QInstruction*, 166.

77 Frey, “Notion of ‘Flesh,’” 215–16; Goff, “Adam,” 4; idem, *4QInstruction*, 165.

78 So Frey, “Notion of ‘Flesh,’” 218–19.

79 Goff, *4QInstruction*, 164.

in the *Hodayot* (e.g., 1QH v, 19–20).⁸⁰ Indeed, 4Q416 1, 10–13—probably a fragment of the opening of 4QInstruction—states that “all the sons of his truth will be favorably accepted b[efore him ...] its end. And all those who polluted themselves in it (wickedness) will be terrified and cry out, for heaven will be afraid; [earth] wi[ll shake from its place;] [s]eas and depths are terrified. Every fleshly spirit will be laid bare but the sons of heav[en ... on the day] of its judgment. And all iniquity will come to an end forever ...”⁸¹ The group characterized by flesh is polluted, wicked, and will be destroyed at the final judgment; they are opposed to the “sons of truth.”⁸²

As Jörg Frey notes, 4QInstruction’s designation of the “fleshly spirit” as an outside group differs from texts composed within the *Yahad*, such as the *Hodayot*, where sinful flesh is in fact shared by members of the in-group, problematic though that may be.⁸³ Eibert Tigchelaar, meanwhile, has turned this argument on its head: arguing that the phrase “according to the judgment of its [sp]irit”—glossing the manner in which the fleshly spirit fails to distinguish between good and evil—may also be translated as “according to the manner of its spirit”; he suggests that the “fleshly spirit” of 4QInstruction is like that of the *Hodayot* after all, designating all humanity, including the author and audience of the text, in its opposition to God.⁸⁴ The passage, he avers, is not a precursor to the dichotomy of πνεῦμα and σάρξ, but of πνεῦμα and ψυχή, and, in turn, πνευματικοί versus ψυχικοί.⁸⁵ The point need not be settled here (although I am inclined to agree with Frey), because the eschatological thrust of 4Q416 1, 10–13 remains twofold, not threefold, regardless of one how defines its members: even if the ‘fleshly spirit’ denotes a ψυχικός rather than a σαρκικός, it is characterized by its pollution and “will be laid bare ... [on the day] of its judgment.” There can be no doubt that for 4QInstruction, on the last day in the future, the ‘fleshly spirit’ will denote an out-group.

Yet the case may be somewhat different with regards to the primordial scenario described in the pericope. Much rests on the identity of the recipient of the “vision of *hagu*”: אָדָם, translated by Goff above as “Adam.” While it has

80 Goff, “Adam” 14; idem, *4QInstruction*, 165; see also Frey, “Notion of ‘Flesh,’” 202–6 (on ‘flesh’ in the *Hodayot*).

81 Tr. Goff, *4QInstruction*, 44. On placing 4Q416 1 at the beginning of the work, see Strugnell and Harrington, DJD 34, 83; Frey, “Notion of ‘Flesh,’” 216 n. 88; Goff, *4QInstruction*, 8, 45–46.

82 So Lange, *Weisheit*, 86–87, followed by Frey, “Notion of ‘Flesh,’” 216–17; Goff, *4QInstruction*, 49–54.

83 Frey, “Notion of ‘Flesh,’” 221.

84 Tigchelaar, “Spiritual People,” 110. On the various permutations of the phrase’s meaning, see further Strugnell and Harrington, DJD 34, 166.

85 Tigchelaar, “Spiritual People,” 110–11, 116–17.

been argued by Armin Lange that the patriarch Enosh is meant,⁸⁶ he “is never proclaimed as a recipient of revelation in the Second Temple period.”⁸⁷ Goff follows John Collins’s suggestion that Enosh refers to Adam, who, on this reading, received a revelation of God’s plan in the Garden of Eden. The identification of the ‘vision of meditation’ as knowledge of good and evil speaks for this interpretation. So does the reference to the “holy ones”—that is, angels.⁸⁸ In the likeness of the “holy ones,” these angels, the “spiritual people” (עם רוח) were created. The “likeness” (תבנית) is a clear allusion to Gen 1:27, the ‘first’ creation of Adam. Adam and the elect are like the ‘angels.’ Another fragment, 4Q418 81 4–5, adds that the מַבִּין is in “the lot of the angels.”⁸⁹ As Collins has argued, all this points again to traditions regarding the double creation of humanity in exegesis of Gen 1–3—particularly Philo and Paul.⁹⁰ The difference, as Goff recognizes, is that 4QInstruction does not actually posit two different Adams that correspond to two different human types; rather, there is one Adam. (This is also true of *Tri. Trac.*) So how do the ‘spiritual people’ and the ‘fleshly spirit’ map onto the single primordial human being? Goff notes that line 17 says in passing that *hagu* was given to the fleshly spirit, “but no more,” perhaps a reference to the expulsion from Paradise.⁹¹ 4QInstruction prefers, Goff thinks, to focus on Adam as a positive figure. The evidence for this is another fragment, 4Q423 1, which likens the מַבִּין to Adam and his authority over the Garden.⁹² This is a plausible reading, but the fragment in question is very fragmentary—considerably more than 4Q417—and its context is hypothetical at best.

Benjamin Wold offers a different interpretation of this evidence. He begins by following Jéan-Sebastien Rey and others in translating אָנוֹשׁ not as “Adam,”

86 E.g., Lange, *Weisheit*, 87–90; Frey, “Notion of ‘Flesh,’” 218; discussed in Strugnell and Harrington, DJD 34, 164; Collins, “In the Likeness,” 611–12.

87 Goff, “Adam,” 14; idem, *4QInstruction*, 163; cf. also Strugnell and Harrington, DJD 34, 164. This may be so, strictly speaking, but Enosh is a recipient of revelation in the *Cologne Mani Codex* and Mandaean sources—for the *Apocalypse of Enosh*, see CMC 52.8–55.9; on Enosh as recipient of revelation, see further Reeves, *Heralds*, 37–38, 142–46, 154.

88 Collins, “In the Likeness,” 615–17, followed by Goff, “Adam,” 14–15; idem, *4QInstruction*, 163; discussed in Strugnell and Harrington, DJD 34, 164.

89 Goff, *4QInstruction*, 168. Here again, the Nag Hammadi evidence presents itself: “we resembled the great, eternal angels,” say Adam and Eve in the *Apocalypse of Adam* (NHC V 64.12–16, my tr.).

90 Goff, *4QInstruction*, 166, following Collins, “In the Likeness,” 617, regarding *De officio mundi* 1–35; *Legum Allegoriae* 1, 31–32; 1 Cor 3:1. Similarly, Berg, “Ben Sira,” 155–56.

91 Goff, “Adam,” 16–17; idem, *4QInstruction*, 166.

92 On this fragment, see Goff, “Adam,” 5–7; idem, *4QInstruction*, 290–95; cf. Wold, “Universality,” 220–24.

but simply “humanity,”⁹³ which is fair enough given that the import of the figure of Adam is his capacity of primordial archetype of humanity. However, as Goff points out, Wold’s reading goes against the most intuitive reading of the text: why would the author have written that the vision was “bequeathed to the people, and to the spiritual people”?⁹⁴ This is no problem for Wold, who argues that line 17 does not say “together with the spiritual people” at all. Rather, he follows Cana Werman, in taking the first רע as the attributive of Enosh, and the second רע as the preposition “with.” Instead of “Adam, together with the spiritual people,” one then can read “humanity, a people with spirit”—a statement that all humans were created with spirit.⁹⁵ However, some of them—particularly the Israelites—went astray, and it is these to whom the labels “fleshly spirit” and “inclination of the flesh” refer, and who receive *hagu* “no more.”⁹⁶ The upshot of Wold’s reading is obvious: 4QInstruction is then no determinist text, but offers a volitionist perspective, wherein all human beings are responsible for whether they live according to ‘spirit’ or ‘flesh,’ since all humans were originally made as creatures of spirit.⁹⁷

Space does not permit me to engage each step of Wold’s argument, but in short, such a reading of 4QInstruction appears anachronistic, given the absence of something resembling a faculty of ‘free will’ concerned with ‘freedom to do otherwise’ in ancient Greek thought prior to at least the second century CE.⁹⁸ However, Wold correctly diagnoses the problem the passage is trying to deal with, which is why some people act one way and others act another way. Perhaps 4QInstruction envisions Adam/primordial humanity as in possession of *both* the fleshly spirit and *hagu*, as suggested by Tigchelaar—even if in the end-times, the two forms of people characterized by their inclination

93 Wold, “Universality,” 217–18; idem, “Flesh’ and ‘Spirit,” 266; similarly, Werman, “What is the *Book of Hagu*?” 137; Tigchelaar, “Spiritual People,” 111–12.

94 *4QInstruction*, 163.

95 Wold, “Universality,” 219–20; idem, “Flesh’ and ‘Spirit,” 265–71, following Werman, “What is the *Book of Hagu*?” 137.

96 Wold, “Universality,” 219; idem, “Flesh’ and ‘Spirit,” 277.

97 “Humanity is spiritual and even in the case that the unrighteous form an opposing group, one that is described as no longer being given *Hagu*, they are still described as the fleshly *spirit*” (Wold, “Universality,” 220, italics his). The ‘Garden of Eden’ passage in 4Q423 is central to his development of this thesis: “all of humanity started out in the garden and each person chose to cultivate wisdom or not. The failure to do so results in this privilege being taken away, which is the description found in the vision of *Hagu*” (Wold, “Universality,” 224). Wold offers a more expansive exploration of this reading in his recent monograph *4QInstruction*.

98 See e.g. Bobzien, “Inadvertent Conception,” esp. 142–46, 173–74; for a somewhat different account, see Frede, *Free Will*, 44–48, 77, 85; see also Popović, “Apocalyptic Determinism,” 257; Kocar, “In Heaven,” 242; idem, “Ethics,” 223.

to one spirit or the other will connote an in-group and an out-group, saved and condemned. On this reading, the passage does indeed take an exegesis of the double creation of humanity in the past as its point of departure—but in order to indicate “potentialities” of human behavior, potentialities that one can see in the present and which will be judged in the future.⁹⁹ In any case, even this reading of 4QInstruction contrasts strongly with the view of a roughly contemporaneous Hellenistic wisdom text, the *Wisdom of Ben Sira*, which very explicitly states that knowledge of good and evil is available to everyone.¹⁰⁰

6 Conclusions: There Is No Soul in a Sect

Tri. Trac. offers a nuanced discussion of human responsibility in a soteriological context. In its protological myth, true freedom only exists in heaven (the ‘Fullness’), and even that is determined by God—a classic ‘compatibilist’ account of free will. Each human being is a mixture of the three different natures, one of which is dominant, as the actions of each make clear. Only the spirituals are truly free; should an animate truly act like a spiritual, it follows that this could only be because they were determined to be spiritual and free as well. Ideally, right action and self-mastery will follow from the acquisition of knowledge, namely knowledge of the true origins of the Savior, God, and the divine plan for salvation, the “dispensation” (οΙΚΟΝΟΜΙΑ).¹⁰¹ 4QInstruction does not employ the terminology of Greek philosophy, but the question of determinism is certainly present. In the Vision of Hagu, it is God who has

99 Tigheelaar, “Spiritual People,” 116. Hindy Najman goes a step further, suggesting that “as in Philo, it is not that the human being *is* the image of God; rather, the image of God is the blueprint whose implementation involves wisdom, and the human recipient of this wisdom is created *in light of* this image” (Najman, “Jewish Wisdom,” 468, with regard to *QE* 2.52, *Vit. Mos.* 2.74; italics hers). Najman observes a number of structural similarities between 4QInstruction and Philo of Alexandria’s thought, particularly 4QInstruction’s account of the creation of humanity (“Jewish Wisdom,” esp. 465–71). Cf. Wold, “Universality,” 220 n. 42.

100 Emphasized by Berg, “Ben Sira,” 156.

101 On salvific knowledge in *Tri. Trac.*, see 80.24–28, 95.31–38, 98.6–12, 107.22–108.4, 127.8–25, but esp. 117.28–36: “freedom,” on the other hand, is the knowledge of the truth that existed (†††††††††† †††††††††† †††††††††† †††††††††† ††††††††††)—even before ignorance came into being—being ruler eternal, without beginning and without end, for it is good and it is salvation of things and it is liberation from the slave-nature (†††††††††† †††††††††† †††††††††† †††††††††† ††††††††††) under which they have suffered ...” (text BCNH, tr. mine).

decided who has access to revelation, and who not. And yet, as many scholars have observed, this properly ‘determinist’ theology seems to have coexisted at Qumran with a variety of texts and everyday practices which presuppose some degree of human volition.¹⁰² Moreover, as Jonathan Klawans has argued, virtually all apocalyptic literature presupposes some degree of divine determination, given the predominant periodization of history.¹⁰³ In other words: determinism at Nag Hammadi and Qumran, but so what?

Determinism and compatibilism were controversial positions to take in an ancient context, but they were not unusual, particularly in the world of ancient Jewry. This leads me to wonder if we should rein in the impulse of scholarship today to regard heresiological charges of ‘Gnostic determinism’ to have been mere slander or at least woefully misinformed. This impulse has served as a healthy correction of a naïve acceptance of the heresiologists’ testimony and their agendas. However, perhaps this naïveté goes even deeper, by privileging Irenaeus and his ilk as representative of ‘mainstream’ Christian thought.¹⁰⁴ Put bluntly, maybe it was not the compatibilism of the Valentinian author of *Tri. Trac.* that was strange in its day; maybe it was the impulse towards volitionism in Justin and Irenaeus. A look at determinism at Qumran helps us see that compatibilism was standard stuff for Jewish intellectuals of the Second Temple period, and that the departure from it by ‘proto-orthodox’ Christian writers was extreme, even if their position has become more familiar to us.

Second, the tripartite anthropologies of the Valentinians are frustratingly vague about the social realities behind them—what an animate does and how freely s/he does it, and how they actually are to get saved. The problem is compounded by the variety of views in the sources. However, despite this variety, I think all of these sources are dealing with the same problem: what to do with people who are neither ‘in’ nor ‘out,’ regardless of whether the ‘animates’ refer to non-Valentinian fellow Christians, or to potential ‘Pagan’ converts.¹⁰⁵ Granted, in the endgame, it will come down to the spirituals and the materials,

102 Surveyed in Popović, “Apocalyptic Determinism,” 257, 264–66; cf. Attridge, “Divine Sovereignty,” 191–98.

103 Klawans, *Josephus*, 62; see also Popović, “Apocalyptic Determinism,” 258–61; along similar lines, Löhr, “Gnostic Determinism,” 387.

104 Similarly Kocar, “In Heaven,” 277.

105 The former assumption appears to govern most secondary scholarship on the matter in *Tri. Trac.*, since an inter-Christian context is clearly meant in the parallel evidence of *Ir. Haer.* and *Clem. Alex. Exc.* The latter possibility has been suggested for *Tri. Trac.* by Dunderberg, *Beyond Gnosticism*, esp. 168–73, followed by Dunning, “Tripartite Anthropologies,” 183 n. 14. Kocar surmises rather that the work has very general types in mind (“‘Humanity,’” 214–15). Dunderberg’s argument is complex, and space does not permit full engagement with it here; in any case, the claims made in this article concerning the usage of terminology

a bipartite anthropology and soteriology—but we are not at the end yet. ‘Animate’ is the word for people who are questionable—or, from a missionary perspective, who are targets.¹⁰⁶

Some of the ambiguity we face when we turn to the Valentinian ‘animates’ and their post-mortem fate is clarified—if not solved—by a look at the Vision of Hagu, which *only* envisions “people of flesh” and “people of spirit.” 4QInstruction is not a product of the Qumran sectarians, but “the separation from the rest of humankind and the addressee’s affinity with the angels, along with his access to supernatural revelation in the form of the *raz nihyeh*, suggest that the composition was written to a specific community that considered its members to have elect status. The group had some sort of sectarian mentality ...”¹⁰⁷ There was no halfway in being a member of this group, for there is no need for a category of ‘animates’ in a deeply sectarian context. The more sectarian a group is, the less interest it has in a category of ‘in-betweens’ that accommodates spiritual failings, however construed.¹⁰⁸ This confirms what scholars have been cautiously saying about the Valentinians for some time: our evidence describes people who were embedded in churches of the Jesus movement, and participated fully in a wider Christian culture beyond Valentinian circles. Valentinians were no sect; they were, in Rodney Stark’s terms, a ‘Church.’¹⁰⁹ The category of ‘animate’ presupposes considerable fluidity in practice, because the social situation of the Valentinian churches demanded such fluidity, where some animates revealed themselves to be spirituals, others revealed themselves to be materials, and perhaps still others revealed themselves to be somewhere in-between—but still part of the terrestrial Church.¹¹⁰ Yet at the end of the world—what *Tri. Trac.* calls the ‘Restoration’—there will

of ‘spiritual’ and ‘animate’ in *Tri. Trac.* stand or fall regardless of whom one believes the ‘animates’ to be.

106 Similarly Brakke, *Gnostics*, 116.

107 Goff, “Angels,” 4. On sectarianism at Qumran with respect to the question of determinism, see Alexander, “Predestination,” 48; on sectarianism at Qumran more generally, see Regev, *Sectarianism*, esp. 33–93.

108 Regarding the various typologies concerning “churches,” “sects,” and “cults,” see Bromley, “Sect / Sectarianism / Cult.”

109 See e.g. Williams, *Rethinking “Gnosticism”*, 111; Brakke, *Gnostics*, 119; cf. also idem, “Scriptural Practices,” esp. 274.

110 Noting that the *Shepherd of Hermas*, Clement of Alexandria, and even Irenaeus himself also explored notions of higher and lower salvific rewards among the saved, Kocar suggests that for all parties involved—including Valentinian authors—“the phenomenon of higher and lower levels of salvation was a useful technology that could help maintain expectations for ethical conduct, but could also help account for moral shortcomings” (“In Heaven,” 230). This hope of progress within and beyond these “moral shortcomings”—i.e., “fluidity in practice”—is not described in 4QInstruction.

no longer be any soul, only spirit and flesh. At this moment of the Restoration of the entire pre-existent Church to its original, celestial state, the Valentinian Church is, in sociological terms, no longer a church at all. It is a sect.

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