8. Theology in Debate

If GPhil is a collection of texts from various sources, there does not have to be a single theological framework behind it. Layton (1987) sees the work as a collection, arguing that we can only analyze an excerpt in combination with other excerpts if it is plausible that they come from the same source. To facilitate such analysis he provides a list of excerpts with a thematic unity.364 Martha Lee Turner (1996) argues that the collection was made around themes and was deliberately ambiguous so that not only the reader but also the collector would be stimulated to mythical speculation. In that case, she concludes, it makes no sense to speak of ‘the author’s beliefs’.365 She sees several traditions reflected in the passages: a Thomas tradition, conservative Valentinianism, and several classical or Sethian sources.366

The hypothesis that GPhil is a baptismal instruction, however, requires a coherent theology. Hans-Martin Schenke understood this when he changed his opinion with regard to the sources of GPhil. In his contribution to Nag Hammadi Deutsch,367 he argued that it is out of the question (‘Gänzlich ausgeschlossen’) that a theology of GPhil can be gathered from the entire text: excerpts should be studied individually. When, however, he adopted Isenberg’s thesis as an interpretative framework for his 1997 commentary, he explains that he now had to tire himself (‘zu mühen’) with the coherence between the various excerpts. Unfortunately, he did not leave us an overview of the theology of GPhil.

8.1 Current scholarship

By far the most comprehensive analysis of the theology of Valentinians to take into account the Nag Hammadi writings was made by Einar Thomassen in his 2005 monograph: The Spiritual Seed. Prior to that he investigated the theology of GPhil in his 1995 article ‘How Valentinian is the Gospel of Philip?’ He came to the following conclusion (page 279):

> Apart from its idiosyncratic use of the term ‘the middle’, and this last instance of a likely interpolation,368 however, Gos. Phil. conforms to known patterns of Oriental Valentinian teaching. Although it appears to draw on older materials and traditions, it expresses a reasonably coherent system of thought, which can have represented the shared beliefs of a community and is hardly adequately described as an unmethodical collection of disparate quotations.

What Thomassen means with ‘known patterns of Oriental teaching’ is detailed in The Spiritual Seed. He argues that a reconstruction of Valentinian theology should not start with the testimony of the church fathers, but with the writings of the Valentinians themselves. Irenaeus’ description of ‘the doctrine’ of the Valentinians does not describe the teaching of Valentinus but emphasizes instead the doctrines of one of the groups belonging to the Italian school, who were his direct opponents. Thomassen sees a more ‘primitive Christology, soteriology and protology preserved in the eastern form of Valentinianism’, which he outlines on the basis of the Tripartite Tractate and

365 Turner (1996), Philip, p 255.
367 Although issued in 2001, Schenke’s contribution takes into account only his works up to 1994. His 1997 commentary is not listed in the bibliography.
368 The negative remark about the apostles in 55.29-30.
excerpts attributed to Theodotus (noted down by Clement of Alexandria). In this chapter, I am particularly interested in his reconstruction of Valentinian opinions regarding the nature of Sophia, the incarnation of the Saviour, and the salvation of believers – three key topics in GPhil.

8.1.1 Sophia

According to Thomassen (page 34 onward), the eastern view can be found in ExcTh 32:1-33:1, where there is only one Sophia; she went outside the plerôma. From her thought came forth Christ, who was not a full son, as he had only a mother. He left behind his mother and entered the plerôma where he became like ‘an adopted son’.

In the western view, as reported by Irenaeus and Hippolytus, the story is that Sophia was split into two (page 257 onward). Sophia re-entered the plerôma and left behind her desire or thought, which was called Achamoth and also Sophia. Achamoth’s grief leads to a creator and a creation in which her spiritual nature is trapped.

I note, however, that the distinction between these two types is not always clear. In A Valentinian Exposition 33.28-37 Thomassen sees that the ‘eastern’ view is espoused (page 255 onward), whereas other scholars see reasons to classify the document as a western text. In the Tripartite Tractate, it is not Sophia who went outside the plerôma, but the male/female Logos. The male part rejoins the plerôma, leaving the female part behind. One could see this split of ‘Logos’ as analogous to the split of Sophia but also, as Thomassen does, as a split between the male part of the Logos (Christ) and the female part (Sophia), and therefore as a variant of the ‘one Sophia’ view (page 248 onward).

8.1.2 The work of Christ as saviour

Thomassen starts with Theodotus to reconstruct the eastern view with regard to the body of the earthly Saviour (page 28 onward). In this view, the saviour, or Logos, descended from the plerôma, to the sphere of Sophia. There he assumed a ‘spiritual flesh’ (ExcTh 1:1) consisting of ‘Sophia and the [angelic] church’, which He brought down to the human sphere. This was his visible body that the invisible ‘only-begotten Son’ put on. The purpose of this further descent was to reunite them with the spiritual elements trapped in earthly human beings (ExcTh 1:1 and 26:1, see also 35:1). The angels are ‘males’ to be rejoined in marriage with the humans who are the ‘females’. The angels were baptized with Jesus in the River Jordan (ExcTh 22:6). On the cross, where Jesus rendered his spirit into the hands of his father (ExcTh 1:1, quoting Luke 23:46), he allegorically brought all the spirituals (the angels and their human partners, as well as Sophia) back to the plerôma.

According to Thomassen, the western view is quite different (page 59 onward). In this view, which Thomassen reconstructs on the basis of Irenaeus’ Against Heresies 1.6.1, the focus shifts from salvation of the spiritual to salvation of the psychic:

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369 See the cautious introduction by Elaine Pagels, with John D. Turner (translation and notes), in The Coptic Gnostic Library, volume xxviii of the Nag Hammadi Studies (Leiden, 1990). ‘The affinities between A Valentinian Exposition and Hipp. Ref. 6.29.2-32.8 suggest that the text may be placed in the milieu of one of the western, Italic traditions of Valentinian theology’ (p.105).
the spirituals are saved by virtue of their innate nature, they are not affected by being in this world; therefore the mission of the Saviour cannot be principally concerned with them.... [T]he focus is transferred from the spirituals to the psychics as the object of the Saviour’s mission and work of salvation.

But, yet again, the distinction is not always clear. The same section of Irenaeus’ text says that Christ assumed both the (spiritual and psychic) natures of those whom he intended to save. Thomassen’s explanation is that this point ‘reveals traces of an earlier soteriology’, which is not western. Another point concerns the *Tripartite Tractate*. Although with good reasons classified by Thomassen as a specimen of eastern soteriology, this text suggests that some of the psychics are saved:\footnote{Tripartite Tractate, NHC I, 119}

The spiritual race will receive complete salvation in every way. The material will receive destruction in every way.... The psychic race, since it is in the middle when it is brought forth ... is double in its determination for both good and evil.

### 8.1.3 The two schools

Thomassen believes that the two main types of Valentinian teaching, as he finds them in the sources, are referred to in the words of Hippolytus about the eastern and Italian schools. According to Hippolytus, in *Refutation* 6.30, Valentinians disagreed about the interpretation of the words spoken to Mary in Luke 1:35: ‘the power of the highest will overshadow thee’. The first interpretation given by Hippolytus ran as follows:\footnote{Refutation 6.30.3-7; ANF vol 5, p 89 with emendations.}

3. Jesus was born of Mary the virgin, according to the declaration (in Scripture), ‘The Holy Spirit will come upon thee’ – Sophia is the Spirit – ‘and the power of the highest will overshadow thee,’ ...
4. ...so that the Demiurge may complete the formation and constitution of his body, and that the Holy Spirit may supply his essence, and that a celestial Logos may proceed from the Ogdoad, being born of Mary.

In this passage, the Demiurge is the ‘highest’ one, who shapes the body. The Holy Spirit supplied the essence or substance of the fruit in her womb, while the Demiurge may have been the craftsman. Hippolytus continues with two variations:

5. Concerning this they have a great question among them – an cause both of divisions and dissension. And hence their doctrine has become divided: and one doctrine, according to them, is termed Oriental, and the other Italian:
   - 6. Those from Italy, to whom Heracleon and Ptolemy belong, say that the body of Jesus was psychic, and on account of this, that at his baptism the Holy Spirit as a dove came down – that is the Logos of the mother above (I mean Sophia) and came to the psychic and raised him from the dead....
   - 7. The Orientals, on the other hand, including Axionicus and Bardesanes, assert that the body of the Saviour was spiritual: for ‘there came upon Mary the Holy Spirit’ that is, Sophia. And the ‘power of the highest’ is the creative art, in order that what was given to Mary by the Spirit might be fashioned.

Thomassen sees no real difference between Hippolytus’ first description and his description of the eastern view. According to Thomassen, Hippolytus’ testimony ‘is inaccurate and shows a lack of understanding’ (page 43):
In fact, Hippolytus’ explanation does not describe the difference between the eastern and western schools, but, at most, an internal difference within the western school. For, as the comparison of Theodotus with Iren. *Haer.* I 6:1 suggest the fundamental issue dividing the two schools was that in the east the body of the Saviour – i.e. the church – was seen as spiritual only, whereas for the western Valentinians it had a psychic as well as a spiritual component. The two theories distinguished by Hippolytus, however, both belong to the latter category. (page 45)

Although I agree with Thomassen that the eastern school saw the body of Christ as spiritual only, I do not believe that we have to ascribe a lack of understanding to Hippolytus. In my opinion, the first description that Hippolytus gives does not specify that the body of Jesus had a psychic component. It only leaves open this possibility, which was subsequently adopted by the Italian school. In the Italian view, the contribution of the Demiurge concerned not only the shape, but also the substance of his body. As the Demiurge is a psychic being, Jesus was born with a psychic body. According to Irenaeus, some even said that the Demiurge conceived this body as a father does:372

But there are some who say that he produced Christ too, as his son, but of a psychic nature about which is spoken by the prophets. This is him who passed through Mary just as waters flow through a tube; and there descended upon him in the form of a dove at the time of his baptism, the Saviour from the plerôma, out of all (the aeons).

In the western view, then, Jesus consisted of Achamoth’s spiritual substance and the Demiurge’s psychic body. During his baptism, the logos from the plerôma (that is the region above Achamoth), descended upon him. The eastern Valentinians, however, did not accept that the Demiurge contributed a psychic component. They said that the ‘power of the highest’ regarded only the activity of giving bodily shape to a purely spiritual substance. Hippolytus’ description can even be read in the sense that the Demiurge was not involved at all, but only the creative ‘art’.

8.1.4 The flesh of Christ

Thomassen continues his investigation of eastern Valentinian doctrine with the soteriology of the *Tripartite Tractate*. In order to save the spirituals within the cosmos, who were held captive by the body and soul, the Saviour ‘let himself be conceived and he let himself be born as an infant with body and soul’ (115.9-11). Thomassen concludes on page 50:

The ‘body of the Saviour’ therefore means two different things. On the one hand, there is the body that is implied in his physical incarnation; this body must be material, although it is without sin and defilement. On the other hand, there is the body of the Logos and its offspring, which the Saviour brings with him when he descends into the world; this body is spiritual and co-extensive with the spiritual church.

Thomassen believes that this teaching is consistent with Theodotus and can be seen as part of eastern Valentinian doctrine and reflecting the original view of Valentinus. But I fail to see how this doctrine, if it is to be taken literally, can be reconciled with

372 *Against Heresies* 1.7.2, my translation.
Theodotus’ statement that the *visible* body of Jesus was spiritual (26:1). Perhaps the *Tripartite Tractate* is not representative of eastern Valentinian doctrine around 200 CE or, alternatively, it may see Jesus’ ‘body and soul’ as a spiritual body and soul.\(^373\) I also note that the preserved fragment from Valentinus about Jesus’ body suggests that this body was incorruptible and not merely human.\(^374\)

### 8.1.5 The Gospel of Philip

Thomassen believes that the soteriology of *GPhil* belongs to the eastern type (chapter 13, page 93):

> By now it has been established that Gos. Phil. shows the same basic pattern as the other texts of the eastern group: the Saviour is a spiritual being in a material body.

Unlike some other interpreters of *GPhil*, Thomassen does not take Joseph and Mary as his parents, but rather the Demiurge and Mary. In §91 Jesus is called Joseph’s seed and ‘there can hardly be any doubt that Joseph ... is interpreted by Gos. Phil. as a type of the Demiurge’ (page 91). Thomassen believes that more is told about Jesus’ conception in §§81-83. In §§81-82 it is said that at Jesus’ baptism ‘the Father of the Entirety joined with the virgin who had come down’. This is followed by the following statement in §83: ‘Adam came into being from two virgins: from the Spirit and from the virgin earth. For this reason Christ was born from a virgin....’ Thomassen believes that ‘it is logical to assume that not only Adam but Christ as well had two virgin mothers’ (page 92), and concludes:

> Jesus Christ, the earthly Saviour, has two sets of parents. The Father of Entirety and Sophia are the parents of his spiritual being, and the Demiurge-Joseph and Mary produced his material body.

I agree with Thomassen that Joseph is to be interpreted as a type of the Demiurge (see 8.2.3 below), but why then does he not consider the possibility that Mary may be a type of the Holy Spirit? As §83 simply reads ‘*a* virgin’, we should first investigate whether this straightforward reading yields a plausible interpretation. If the Demiurge is to be the father of Jesus, we have a doctrine that Irenaeus reports in the context of Jesus’ psychic body, a doctrine of the western school (see quotes above).

Other questions regard Thomassen’s points about the single Sophia in the eastern doctrine and the idea that the Saviour came only to save the spiritual. With regard to both criteria, *GPhil* cannot be said to conform to Thomassen’s descriptions of the eastern doctrine, as I will demonstrate in the next section.

### 8.2 Analysis

In order to analyze the various theological references in *GPhil* in their own context, it is useful to recall the conclusions of the rhetorical analysis performed in chapter 4. In

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\(^373\) The passage in the *Tripartite Tractate* continues with the statement that the spiritual beings from above ‘took body and soul’ from the Logos (115.22-30); ‘they, too, received their bodily emanation along with the body of the Saviour... These others were those of one substance, and indeed it is the spiritual.’ (116.5-8).

\(^374\) Clement, *Miscellanea* 3.59.3 ‘While he endured everything, he was continent. Jesus exercised his divine nature. he ate and drank in a peculiar way, and did not evacuate his food. For he had so great a power of continence that the food not corrupted in him, since he himself was not perishable.’ Translation: Grant (2003), *Second-century*, p 62.
the introduction, the subject is transformation. In the proposition, the key assertion is that the cosmic powers have caused mainstream Christians to misinterpret theological concepts. Through Christ’s transformation, this can be changed. This is then proven in the next five units, of which two are of particular interest to our analysis:

- In the third unit, we find a series of debates with regard to the nature of Christ and the resurrection.
- The fifth unit deals with the various roles of the Sophia or the Holy Spirit, with regard to gnostic Christians and mainstream Christians.

After the initial seven units follow three mystagogical instructions, of which the first two discuss the transformation that takes place in the mysteries. The final part is less a theological instruction than a practical exhortation for those who have been baptized. In this analysis, I will focus on the introduction, the proposition, units three and five, and the first two mystagogical instructions.

8.2.1 Salvation in the introduction

In the introduction, there is a trajectory from Gentiles to Hebrews, and then to Christians. The word ‘Christian’ denotes the gnostic Christian only. According to §17, Hebrews are ‘apostles and the apostolics’, or mainstream Christians. When we look at their fates, we find a resemblance with the material, psychic and spiritual races in the Tripartite Tractate:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GPhil</th>
<th>Tripartite Tractate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gentile</td>
<td>dead, destruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hebrew</td>
<td>alive, but mortal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christian</td>
<td>immortal</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8.1

Gentiles are dead; just like the material race they cannot be saved. Hebrews are alive but risk dying, as the psychic race that can either be saved or lost. Christians, like the spiritual race, are alive and will not die. But the emphasis in GPhil is not on one’s race or essence, but rather on the potential for transformation. People became Hebrews and now become Christians (§6). The whole idea of GPhil is that Christ – both in the beginning and after he was born, baptized and crucified – came to move people from lower into higher states. In §9 this is stated as follows:

§9 Christ came, for some indeed to buy them, but for others to save them, others to ransom them:
- Those who are alien he bought. He made them his own.
- And he set apart his own, whom he had given as a deposit according to his will.
  (Not only ‘when he appeared he laid down the psyche willingly’, but since the day that the cosmos is, he laid down the psyche at the moment that he wanted. Then he came first, in order ‘to take her back’ because she was given as a deposit. She found herself among robbers and was taken captive, but he saved her.)
- Both the good ones in the cosmos, as well as the evil ones, he ransomed.

375 Tripartite Tractate (NHC I, p 119): ‘The spiritual race will receive complete salvation in every way. The material will receive destruction in every way... The psychic race, since it is in the middle when it is brought forth... is double in its determination for both good and evil.’ See chapter 8.1.2 above.
Jesus came to make strangers (Gentiles) his own (Hebrews).\textsuperscript{376} His own are related to his psyche which he gave into this world in the beginning and again when he appeared. As in the \textit{Exegesis of the Soul} (NHC II,6), ‘she’ is personified and fallen in the hands of robbers and adulterers.\textsuperscript{377} But she, and others like her, are to be set apart and become (gnostic) Christians. Gnostic Christians are redeemed to become part of the \textit{plerôma}.

It seems therefore that all classes of people are objects of salvation. But \textit{GPhil} makes no attempt to come up with any kind of salvation for Gentiles or mainstream Christians if they remain mainstream Christians. Their fate is hell or at best the frighteningly uncertain (§65 and 107). In order to be saved, the baptismal candidates must become true Christians. In the end, however, we see that psychic divine powers (the Demiurge and his angels) are saved outside the \textit{plerôma} under the arms of the cross (§125), not unlike the others who stand outside the bridal chamber in §111/122. These statements fit within a rhetorical strategy aimed at convincing the mainstream Christian candidates that they should be baptized in a gnostic Christian way.

8.2.2 \textit{The names in the proposition}

As analyzed in chapter 4.3 above, the second unit functions as a proposition for the remaining pre-baptismal instructions. In a repetitive structure, §11 and §13-14 make the point that mainstream Christians are deceived by the archons in their understanding of the divine. It is through baptism (§12a) and eucharist (§15) that people are transformed, and that they learn to know the truth (§12b and 16). Theologically, the opening statements are the most relevant ones:

\begin{quote}
§11 The names which are given to the cosmic ones contain a great error, for they divert their hearts from those who are stable to those that are unstable. And the one who hears ‘God’ does not think of the one who are stable, but he thinks of the one who is unstable. Likewise with ‘Father, Son and Holy Spirit’, ‘the life’, ‘the light’, and ‘the resurrection’, ‘the church’ and all the others, - they do not think of the ones who are stable, but they think of the unstable ones, unless they have learned about the ones who are stable. The names that are heard are in the cosmos. [Let no one be]
misled: if they were in the aeon they would not be mentioned in the cosmos at any time, nor have been set among the cosmic things. They have an end in the aeon.

...\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
§13 The rulers wished to mislead Man, since they saw that he has a kinship with those who are truly good. They took the name of those who are good. They gave it to those who are not good so that through the names they will mislead him and bind them to those who are not good and after that - as if they did them a favour – remove them from those who are ‘not good’ and place them among those who are ‘good’ that they ‘knew’. For they wished to take the free one and make him their slave forever.


\begin{quote}
Es ist ja deutlich, daß die “Namen”, um die es in unserem # 11a geht, Zentralbegriffe des christlichen Glaubensbekennisses sind, speziell des Constantinopolitanum, in
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{376} Cf. I Ephesians 2:11-13.

\textsuperscript{377} See chapter 5.3.3 above.
Even though both groups use the same concepts, perhaps even similar confessional formulae, these words refer to completely different, even opposite realities. The idea that Valentinians did indeed use the same names and expressions in their initiation, is also found in Irenaeus’ warning against them in Against Heresies 1.9.4:

In like manner also he, who retains the rule of faith which he received by means of baptism immovable in himself, will doubtless recognize the names, the expressions, and the parables taken from scripture; but he will by no means acknowledge the blasphemous use which these men make of them.

According to GPhil, mainstream Christians worship the Demiurge as God. They will not acquire the true life, light and resurrection. Gnostic Christians, on the other hand worship the true God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit – and become partakers of the true life, light and resurrection. The speaker provides proof for his contention about the true Father and the true resurrection in the next instruction. His point about the Holy Spirit is proven in unit five.

8.2.3 The debate about the parents of Jesus and the resurrection

The third unit is structured as follows:
1. §17-20: Debate with mainstream Christianity about the true mother and father of Christ.
2. §21-22: Debate with mainstream Christianity about the resurrection of Christ.
3. §23: Debate with mainstream Christianity and others about the resurrection body.

I suggest that these debates follow an established order that can also be found in the counterargument of Tertullian in his two-volume work On the Flesh of Christ and On the Resurrection of the Flesh. In these books, Tertullian provides a lengthy counterargument against teachers like Marcion and Valentinus and their followers. I do not claim that Tertullian and GPhil react directly upon one another, but rather that they derive from the same discussion. In the introduction to his first volume, Tertullian writes:

Let us examine our Lord’s bodily substance, for about his spiritual nature all are agreed. It is his flesh that is in question. Its reality and quality are the points in dispute.

According to Tertullian, Valentinus’ argument that Jesus’ flesh was not material but of a unique ‘peculiar’ nature was connected to the denial of the resurrection of the physical body. Mainstream Christians argued for the bodily resurrection by

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378 On the Flesh of Christ 1; ANF vol 3, p 521.
379 Tertullian seems to know both kinds of Valentinian doctrine. In chapter 10, he speaks of ‘another class of heretics’, possibly the followers of the Italian school, who claim that ‘the flesh of Christ is composed of soul’ in order that it be visible. In chapter 15, Tertullian speaks directly of Valentinus who claimed Christ had ‘a spiritual flesh’, and not ‘human’ or ‘born of man’. He also says that followers of Valentinus ‘refuse at the outset that a human and earthly substance was created for Christ, lest the Lord should be regarded as inferior to the angels, who are not formed of earthly flesh.’
claiming that Jesus had assumed human flesh from his mother Mary. At the start of his second volume, he summarizes the argument of the first as follows:

They are driven to give a different dispensation to Christ so that he may not be accounted as belonging to the Creator. Thus they have achieved their first error in the doctrine about his flesh:

- some, with Marcion and Basilides, contend that it possessed no reality
- whereas others, after the tenets of Valentinus and according to Appelles, hold that it had qualities peculiar to itself.

And so it follows that they shut out from all recovery from death that substance (the flesh) of which they say that Christ did not partake.... Hence it is that we have ourselves previously issued our volume On the flesh of Christ; in which we

- furnish proof of [his body’s] reality – in opposition to the idea of its being a vain phantom
- and claim for it a human nature without any peculiarities of condition....

For when we prove [Christ] to be clothed with the flesh and in a bodily condition, we at the same time refute heresy.... Being thus refuted regarding God as the Creator, and Christ as the Redeemer of the flesh, they will at once be defeated also with regard to the resurrection of the flesh.

The debate about Jesus’ parents

The debate opens with the mainstream Christian interpretation of Luke 1:35: The Creator God had made the human virgin Mary pregnant through his Holy Spirit:

§17 Some say that Mary conceived by the Holy Spirit. They are in error. They do not know what they say.

Tertullian argues that Jesus took his human flesh from Mary, with God’s spirit as the seed of conception. GPhil gives three arguments against this position and in favour of the concept of the fatherhood of the Demiurge. The first argument regards the role of the Holy Spirit as the ‘seed donor’:

When did a woman ever conceive from a woman? Mary is ‘the virgin that no power defiled’. It is a big anathema for the Hebrews (that is the apostles and the apostolics): this virgin that no power defiled is [spiritual]; the powers defiled themselves.

According to the speaker, the Holy Spirit cannot have played the role of the male in the conception of Jesus, as ‘spirit’ is a female concept. The ‘power of the highest’ is the male power. But then the human Mary cannot be considered a virgin. The speaker therefore interprets Mary as ‘the virgin whom no power defiled’, who is an anathema to mainstream Christians. Here he no longer speaks of the virginity of the human

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380 On the Resurrection of the Flesh 2; ANF vol 3, p 546; with emendations.
381 On the Flesh of Christ 17, ‘Let us confine our inquiry to a single point: whether Christ received flesh from the virgin? Thus we may arrive at a certain proof that his flesh was human, if he derived its substance from His mother’s womb’. And chapter 18, ‘As, then, before his birth of the virgin, he was able to have God for his father without a human mother, so likewise, after he was born of the virgin, he was able to have a woman for his mother without a human father. He is thus man with God, in short, since he is man’s flesh with God’s spirit, he is flesh without seed from man, he is spirit with seed from God.’ ANF vol 3, p 536-537.
382 As a result of my analysis, I suggest reconstructing the lacuna here with ὀψιθήν τέκνα.
Mary, as this was no anathema in mainstream Christianity. Rather he speaks of Mary as a type of Sophia, the virgin whom no power defiled. She is already characterized with this phrase by Philo in *De Fuga* 51:

But *Betuel* in the sacred scriptures is called *Sophia*; and this name, being translated, means ‘the daughter of God’; and the legitimate daughter, always a virgin, having received a nature that shall never be touched or defiled.  

To say that ‘Mary’ really stands for the Holy Spirit, and that not the human Mary but the Holy Spirit gave her ‘flesh’ to Jesus’ body is an anathema for ‘apostolic’ Christians, as this spiritual flesh is an argument against the doctrine of bodily resurrection. The remaining two arguments intend to prove that Jesus had both the Demiurge and the highest God as his fathers:

\[
\text{And the Lord would not have said, ‘My Father who is in the heavens’, unless he had another Father; but he (would have) said simply: [‘my Father’].}
\]

§18 The Lord said to the disciples, [‘Take] out of every house’ (and) ‘bring into the house of the Father’, but on the contrary, ‘Do not carry them in the house of the Father’ (and) ‘Do not take out’.

The first logion is the typical address of the highest God by Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew, as for instance on ‘Our Father, who is in the heavens’ in the Lord’s Prayer. The speaker claims that Jesus could address two different fathers, and therefore added the words ‘in heaven’ to distinguish between the cosmic Demiurge and the highest father.

In the final argument, he demonstrates that Jesus made contradictory statements about his father, which can better be understood if the first quote refers to the house of the highest father (where people should go to) and the last two quotes to the house of the Demiurge (where people should not remain).

According to the speaker, then, Jesus had two fathers and one mother, none of them human. Whereas Adam was born of two virgins (the Spirit and the virgin Earth),

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383 The title is also applied to the figure of Norea in the *Hypostasis of the Archons* NHC II,91.34-923: ‘Again Eve became pregnant, and she bore [Norea]. And she said, ‘He has begotten on [me a] virgin as an assistance [for] many generations of mankind. She is the virgin whom the forces did not defile.’

384 This is the argument of Cyril of Jerusalem against the *per virginem* concept of the Valentinians: ‘Believe then that this Only Begotten Son of God for our sins came down from heaven upon earth, and took upon Him this human nature of like passions with us, and was begotten of the Holy Virgin and of the Holy Spirit, and was made Man. Not in seeming and mere show, but in truth; nor yet by passing through the virgin as through a channel; but was of her made truly flesh, [and truly nourished with milk,] and did truly eat as we do, and truly drink as we do. For if the Incarnation was a phantom, salvation is a phantom also.’ *Catechetical Lecture* 4.9; NPNF II, vol 7, p 21.

385 The expression ‘My Father who is in the heavens’ occurs in Matthew 7:21, 10:32, 10:33, 12:50, 16:17, 18:10 and 18:19. The expression ‘Our Father who is in the heavens’ occurs in Matthew 6:9, whereas ‘your Father who is in heaven’ can be found in Matthew 5:16, 5:45, 6:1, 7:11, 18:14, Mark 11:25, and Luke 11:13.

386 Here I must disagree with Schenke, who believes that Joseph is one of the fathers referred to here. The argument could not have worked as Joseph would not have been mistaken as an addressee of any of the sayings involved.

387 In a dispute with mainstream Christianity, it is not improbable that the speaker quoted and paraphrased shared scriptures. The idea of ‘bringing in from everywhere into the house of the father’ may come from an inflation of Mark 6:10 (the mission of the twelve) and Luke 14:23, where it is said in the context of the parable of the great banquet. In the resulting paraphrase we now read ‘from every house’ rather than Luke’s ‘from every street’. The other text may come from the accounts of the cleansing of the earthly temple, especially Mark 11:16 and John 2:16. It is possible that these texts were also combined in *ExcTh* 9.2: ‘Furthermore when he says, “Go out of the house of the father” he speaks of the elect ... and (also) where the king in the marriage feast called the ones on the roads.’
Jesus was born of one virgin, as §83 states. As in Hippolytus’ account of the western school, the Demiurge and Sophia are the parents of his earthly body.

Before the speaker continues with the second debate, §19 and 20 make clear that the parenthood of Jesus is really about the identity of Jesus. According to the speaker, this identity can be understood from the names. In the table below, I have listed the explanations from §19 together with those of §47:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Explanation in §19:</th>
<th>Explanation in §47:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Christ</td>
<td>Measured</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jesus</td>
<td>Salvation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nazarene</td>
<td>Truth</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8.1

The outer man is Christ: he is visible and he is measurable. His body can be touched and seen. I suggest that we see this as the body that he received from the Demiurge. According to §47, both Jesus and the Nazarene are measured by the Christ. I suggest that this means that they, although immeasurable in nature, are contained by the outer man, Christ. Indeed, §20 says that Christ contains everything: ‘man, or angel, or mystery, and the Father.’

Jesus is a hidden and inner man, who is the instrument of salvation. The Nazarene is the Truth that is hidden, but can be revealed through names and symbols (cf §12). In §26 we see Jesus kept his logos hidden for everybody, but assumes an angelic body and a human body. According to §69, the Father is inside the outer and inner man: he is in the hidden one. The outer man is left behind on the cross (§72), the inner man receives a spiritual body in baptism (§82). It seems therefore that the speaker wants his audience to think of Jesus as having various layers. This is tightly connected with the speaker’s view of salvation, as we will see in the debate about the resurrection below.

A note on the identity of Joseph and God

First, however, I must deal with the possible objection that §17 would be about the distinction between Jesus’ divine father and his human father, Joseph. Some scholars, like Schenke, have pointed to §91 as proof that GPhil sees Joseph as the human father of Jesus, and hence Mary as his human mother. With Thomassen (see above), I believe that Joseph here should be read as a type of Demiurge. Even if GPhil would teach that Jesus is the physical son of Mary, then certainly not of a human Joseph, as Jesus is the son of a virgin (§83) that was not defiled (§17). This rules out intercourse between Joseph and Mary (§102 also makes clear that human procreation is ‘defiled’).

Secondly, in Majella Franzmann’s overview of Jesus in the Nag Hammadi writings, GPhil is the only document that, she believes, claims a human father for Jesus. This is not impossible, but a priori unlikely. It is even more unlikely when we take into account that none of the church fathers ascribed such a doctrine to any group of Valentinians or Valentinian teacher, even though the heresy hunters among

388 I see this as a gnostic alternative to Tertullian’s argument in On the Flesh of Christ 17: Jesus’ virgin birth was prefigured by that of Adam, who was born from the earth that ‘was still in a virgin state, not yet reduced by human labour, and with no seed yet cast into its furrows’. So also Irenaeus in On the Apostolic Preaching 32 where Adam was formed ‘from the will and wisdom (Sophia) of God and the virgin earth’. Likewise Christ was ‘born from the virgin [Mary] by the will and wisdom (Sophia) of God’.

them were prone to accuse ‘heretics’ who believed that Jesus had a human father. Irenaeus, for example, accuses the Carpocratians and Ebionites of this doctrine, but not the Valentinians.\footnote{Against Heresies 1.25-26 and 5.1.}

Finally, I believe that Schenke has not taken the context adequately into account. Seen within the concentric structure of the first part of the tenth unit, it is clear that the passage should be read together with §94:

§89 First inclusion

§90 Second inclusion

§91 Philip the apostle said, ‘Joseph the woodworker planted a \textit{paradise}, because he needed wood for his craft’. He is the one who made the cross from the trees that he planted! And its seed hung from what he had planted. Its seed was Jesus, and the plant was the cross.

§92 But the Tree of Life is in the middle of the \textit{paradise} and (it is) the olive tree from which the chrism came forth, (and) through (the chrism) the resurrection.

§93 This \textit{cosmos} is a corpse-eater. All things that are eaten in it, they die as well. Truth is a life-eater. Therefore, nobody of the ones who eat of Truth will die. Jesus came out from that place, and he brought food from there. And to those who wished, he gave [to eat], so that they do not die.

§94 God [planted] a \textit{paradise}. Man [lived in the] \textit{paradise}. There are [… …] exist with [… …] of God. In the [… …] truth(\textit{s}). Those in it [I will eat as] I wish. This \textit{paradise} [is the place] where it will be said to me, ‘[O, man, eat] this or do not eat [that, as you] wish’. That is the place where I will eat everything as the Tree of Knowledge is there. That one there killed Adam, but here, the Tree of Knowledge made Man alive. The law was the tree. It can give the knowledge of good and evil. It neither removed him from what is evil, nor set him in what is good, but it produced death for those who ate from it. For by saying, ‘Eat this, do not eat this’, it became the beginning of death.

§95-96 Second inclusion

§97 First inclusion

Adam, God’s offspring after his own image, was killed by a tree that God had planted, namely the Tree of Knowledge of good and evil, which is the Law of the Hebrew God. Likewise, Jesus was killed on the tree of the Demiurge; but then it transforms into the Tree of Life,\footnote{I note that a similar parallelism can be found in the baptism instruction of Cyril of Jerusalem. ‘In Paradise was the Fall, and in a Garden was our Salvation. From the Tree came sin, and until the Tree sin lasted.’ (13.19). Cyril calls Jesus the ‘good olive tree’ from which we are anointed (20.3). The ‘Tree of Life’ was planted in the earth (13.35). ‘Adam by the Tree fell away; thou by the Tree are brought into Paradise.’ (13.31).} from which the chrism is received. A mainstream Christian version can be found in Ephrem’s \textit{Hymn on Virginity} 16.10:

Greatly saddened was the Tree of Life when it beheld Adam stolen away from it; it sank down into the virgin ground and was hidden – to burst forth and reappear on Golgotha...
Note that §91 and §94 use the same phrase: Joseph/God planted a paradise. The phrase is derived from Genesis 2:8, and the most economic solution is that Genesis 2:8 influenced the wording of §94, and §94 then influenced the wording in §92.392 Joseph in §91, therefore, is to be compared to the Demiurge in §94. As Wilson, Philip (1962) notes, there is a (later) parallel in a Bogomil story wherein Satanael planted in Paradise the tree whose wood was used for making the cross.

The reason why these passages are included in a discussion of baptism and chrismation is because of the association of the Demiurge with mainstream Christian baptism in water. §93 has a parallel in §14 and §50, that all deal with God as a ‘man-eater’ and the sacrifices of animals (psychic people). A new phase starts when the living and perfect Man (Jesus) is sacrificed to God (§14). In GPhil, therefore, baptism of the body is seen as a sacrifice to the Demiurge. In baptism, the soul unclothes itself of the body, and is clothed with the spirit and the logos of Jesus, his blood and his flesh (§23 and §27). This contrast is also reflected in the inclusor of the sixth textual unit, where there are two contrasting passages about baptism by ‘God’ and by the Lord:

§43 God is a dyer. As with the good dyes that are called the true, - they die with those that are dyed -, so it is with those who are dyed by God. Inasmuch as his dyes are immortal, they become immortal through his pharmacy.  
- But God baptizes the ones that he baptizes in water.

...  
- §53 The eucharist is Jesus, for he is called in the Syrian language ‘Pharisatha’, which is ‘the one spread out’. For Jesus came to be crucified to the cosmos.

§54 The Lord went into the dye-works of Levi. He took seventy-two colours (and) threw them in the cauldron. He took them out all white and said, 'This is how the Son of Man came to her: as a dyer'.

The identity of ‘God’ is important here, as people are easily deceived by the name (§11). When this ‘God’ baptises, it leads to many colours (division), whereas Jesus brings the seventy-two colours back to one colour (unity). The number seventy-two stands for the number of nations or languages, which were dispersed as a result of Noah’s flood.393 As the Lord went into the dye works of Levi, the heavenly Christ was incarnated in the world of the Hebrew God and undoes the effect of his baptism.

The debate about Jesus’ resurrection

The second debate in §21 and §22 concerns the resurrection of Jesus. Again the mainstream Christian position is disputed:

392 If there was an apocryphal saying attributed to Philip, then the speaker rephrased it deliberately to resemble §94. In the same way that our speaker changed Mary’s sister into Jesus’ sister in §32 to typify Sophia, he may here have changed Joseph. The apocryphal Joseph behind our passage, if there was one, may have been the owner of the garden of Golgotha, Joseph of Arimathea. In order to typify the Demiurge, the speaker may have turned him into Joseph the constructio-worker the father of Jesus.  
393 This refers back to the story of the tower of Babel, when the Creator God was afraid that humans would reach to heaven because they were one race with one language. In the LXX and DSS version of Deuteronomy 32:8,43 we find the idea that when God scattered them over the earth, he assigned angels to rule each nation. The LXX version of Genesis 10 lists 72 nations, right after the story in which God destroyed the world with the great flood of Genesis 6-9. A number of 72 princes and peoples is used explicitly in 3 Enoch 17:8, 18:2f and 30:2 (see comments on Luke 10:1 in Marshall (1978), Luke; but note that 3 Enoch was finalized only in about the sixth century CE (P. Alexander in Charlesworth, Old Testament Pseudepigrapha, volume 1). In The Concept of our Great Power (NHC VI,4), Jesus came to our world and ‘spoke in seventy-two tongues’ (41.6). The number of 72 envoys in major textual witnesses of Luke 10:1 may result from the same idea.
§21 The ones who say, that the Lord died first and (then) rose, are in error. For he rose first and (then) he died. If someone does not acquire the resurrection first, will he not die? As (true as) God lives, this one would ...

§22 Nobody will hide a great object that is precious in something great. But many times, one has cast innumerable myriads into a thing worth an assarion. This is how it is with the psyche, which is a precious thing: she came to be in a despicable body.

The argument is immediately applied to people in general. ‘One’ must attain the resurrection. The text is almost paralleled in §90, where it is spoken of in the context of the baptism and chrismation of the initiate. If one does not become a gnostic Christian one might die. But note that this is not said explicitly, as we also see in the parallel of this passage in §63: If a soul has not acquired the resurrection in this life, it will – when it is divested of the flesh – not ascend to the plerôma but remain in ‘the middle’, a frightening place. Only Jesus knows its fate (§107).

The speaker therefore does not need a bodily resurrection on the last day, or a physical resurrection of Jesus after his crucifixion. On the contrary, according to §72 Jesus used his crucifixion to separate from his body; there he was divested of his flesh, even though it was not the same flesh as that of other people’s. The body that stayed behind cried out to the Lord who had ascended. The resurrection first acquired in baptism was put into effect in his crucifixion.

According to §67, resurrection, rebirth and (communion in) the bridal chamber are all presented in (ritual) images. For Jesus, this is described in §81-82:

§81 Jesus revealed [in the] Jordan the plerôma of the kingdom of heavens:
- He who [was born] before the all, was born again.
- He who was anointed at first, was anointed again.
- He who was redeemed, redeemed again.

§82 How necessary it is to speak of a mystery! The Father of the all united with the virgin who had come down and a fire enlightened him on that day. He revealed the great bridal room. Therefore his body came into being on that day. It came from the bridal room as one who came into being from the bridegroom and bride.

It is possible to see three persons here, in line with ExcTh. 59: The one who was before the aeons of the plerôma (the Father of the All), the anointed (=christos) who was produced at the beginning of the creation of the entities outside the plerôma, and the visible Jesus who was born through Mary. The first two persons are born again, respectively anointed again, in Jesus’ baptism. The third person is redeemed in baptism and will later redeem others who will follow in his footsteps.

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394 §90 reads, ‘Those who say they will die first and then rise are in error. If they do not first receive the resurrection while they live, when they die they will receive nothing.’ Cf also §67, 76, 92 and 95.

395 §72 reads, ‘My God, my God, why, O Lord, have you forsaken me?’ It was on the cross that he said these words, for he had departed from that place. [...] who has been begotten through him who [...] from God. The [Lord rose] from the dead. [He did not come as he] was, but now [his body had become] wholly perfect. [He did have a] flesh, but this [flesh] is true flesh. [Whereas our flesh] is not true, but [a flesh that is] an image of the true.’ Cf also Irenaeus Against Heresies 1.8.2.

396 Louis Painchaud shows that through the interpolation of ‘O Lord’, the cry is not to God, but to the heavenly Christ who left his body behind. See Painchaud (1996), ‘Le Christ Vainqueur’, pp. 382-392.
Jesus’ body was not the same after his baptism. He received a ‘resurrection body’ from the union of the Father and the Virgin. In the words of §67, Jesus received ‘a male and female power’. If we combine §82 with §26, the logos from above descended through the spiritual realm of Achamoth/Sophia, where it appeared to the angels in a ‘great’ body (through its union with the Virgin spirit). Then he descended to the cosmos, where he appeared to humans in a ‘small’ body (through his union with the psychic Jesus). Valentinians may have read the idea that Jesus received the logos and the spirit in Matthew 3:16-17: the spirit descended like a dove, and the logos came to Jesus as a voice from heaven.

But which body is it that rises? This becomes clear in the passage that concludes the debate: the body is despicable and will not be resurrected. The valuable part is the psyche. It is like treasure kept in a cheap vessel. The psyche will die with the body, unless it is resurrected before the body dies. This argument about the earthen vessel (taken from 2 Corinthians 4:7) may have provoked Tertullian to present the bodily vessel as something precious. Therefore it seems that as in Hippolytus’ account of the western school it is the psychic Jesus who was resurrected in baptism. Jesus was born of the Holy Spirit and the Demiurge, without assuming human flesh from Mary, and received the spirit and the logos in baptism.

The debate about the resurrection body

The third debate in §23 regards the nature of the resurrection body. The speaker first ridicules the mainstream Christian position:

§23 Some are afraid, lest they rise naked. This is why they wish to rise in the flesh! And [they] do not know that those who wear the [flesh] are naked. It is those who [are able to] strip [themselves] that are not naked.

The idea is that the flesh consists of perishable rags. But those who replace the flesh by the resurrection body have received precious clothes, as is clear from the passage that follows the debate (§24a).

The nature of the resurrection body is then argued on the basis of a quote from Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians. The body that the initiate receives for his ascent consists of the logos and the spirit, as was the case with Jesus above:

‘Flesh [and blood will] not inherit the kingdom [of God]’ (1 Cor. 15:50). Which (flesh) is this that will not inherit? That which is upon us. And which (flesh), moreover, is this that will inherit? It is that of Jesus and his blood. For this reason, he said, ‘He who does not eat my flesh and drink my blood does not have life within him’. What is it?

397 Interestingly, the non-gnostic Tyconius (North-Africa, fourth century) could also distinguish between the pre- and post-baptismal Jesus. In baptism, ‘the one “who was descended from David” was united to “the prime Spirit” ...David’s descendant rose in Christ. And so the two became one flesh. “The Word became flesh” and the flesh God...’ (translation by Babcock, p 13).

398 On the Resurrection of the Flesh 6-7. Tertullian tries hard to prove that the clay body had become precious, because God’s hands had formed it and he had breathed upon it. ‘You indeed must refuse to mount [gems and pearls] in lead, brass or, iron, or even in silver, but should set them in the most precious and most highly wrought gold.’

399 Hippolytus wrote in 6.30, ‘Those from Italy, among whom are Heracleon and Ptolemy, say that the body of Jesus was psychic, and on account of this, that at his baptism the Holy Spirit as a dove came down -- that is the Logos of the mother above (I mean Sophia) and came to the psychic and raised him from the dead.’ See chapter 8.1.3 above.

400 §24: ‘In this cosmos, those who clothe themselves are better than the clothes. In the kingdom of heavens, the clothes are better than those who have put them on.’
His flesh is the *logos*, and his blood is the Holy Spirit. He who has received these has food and he has drink, and clothing.

The argument from I Corinthians 15:50 is also the key argument that Tertullian had to overcome. He devotes most of the last fifteen chapters of *On the Resurrection of the Flesh* to its refutation. He opens the argument as follows:401

But ‘flesh and blood’, you say, ‘cannot inherit the kingdom of God’ (1 Cor 15:50). We are quite aware that this too is written; but although our opponents place it in the front of the battle, we have intentionally reserved the objection until now, in order that we may in our last assault overthrow it, after we have removed out of the way all the questions which are auxiliary to it.

Tertullian argues that since Christ rose in the flesh, the bodies of his followers shall also rise in the flesh (which is the exact opposite of the argumentation in *GPhil* where Jesus was not physically resurrected after his crucifixion, but rose in his baptism). But flesh and blood need the spirit to be changed and to become incorruptible before they can inherit the kingdom of God.

*The debate with other gnostic Christians about the resurrection body*

Finally, the speaker turns against those gnostic Christians who deny that the flesh will rise:

I find fault with the others who say that it will not rise; or, rather, both are wrong. You say it: ‘The flesh will not rise’, - but tell me what will rise, so that we may pay respect to you. You say, ‘The spirit in the flesh’. And even this is a light ‘in the flesh’! Even a *logos* is something which is ‘in the flesh’. Whatever you will say, you say nothing outside the flesh. It is necessary to rise in this flesh, as everything is within it.

The other gnostic Christians speak of the resurrection of the spirit only, as if this could happen independently of body or soul. Their position may be connected with those who refuse to be clad in (the flesh and blood of) the lamb in §27, and also with those who would not submit to baptism of the body in §108. The speaker, as we saw, believes that the soul should rise in the body and receive spirit and logos. Interestingly, when attacking the position of these other gnostic Christians, he uses the same argument that Tertullian uses against gnostic Christians in general.402

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401 *On the Resurrection of the Flesh* 48; ANF vol 3, p 581. See also Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 5.9 ff.
402 *On the Resurrection of the Flesh* 7: ‘Speech is the result of a fleshly organ. The arts come through the flesh; through the flesh also effect is given to the mind’s pursuits and powers (etc)’; ANF vol 3, p 551.
Mary, the Holy Spirit and Sophia

The main topic of the fifth textual unit is the Holy Spirit in various roles and the different types of offspring. It is therefore an appropriate textual unit to investigate the role of Sophia / Achamoth in GPhil. The unit seems to have a somewhat repetitive structure:

§32-33 Mary is Jesus’ mother, sister and consort. Holy Spirit is a double name: she is above and below
§34 Holy Spirit is mother of the holy ones and provides through the powers
§35-37 Sophia can be sterile, but the Holy Spirit gives birth to many who will become like their father.

§38-39 Two spirits / two Sophias leading to life and death
§40 Perfect Man and Holy Spirit rule through the powers to provide for everyone
§41-42 Offspring of created humans is not noble; offspring of the snake is evil

Three Marys and two Holy Spirits

In §17, we encountered Mary the mother as a type of the Holy Spirit; §32 mentions three Marys or three roles of Mary vis-à-vis Jesus:

§32 There were three who walked with the Lord all the time: Mary his mother, and her sister, and Magdalena, who is called ‘his partner’. For Mary is his sister, and she is his mother, and she is his partner.

In order to assess who the three Marys refer to, we need to combine §33 and §17 with the following passages:

• In §82 the virgin who had come down united with the Father of All, and thus they descended upon the psychic Jesus.
• In §55, we read that Mary Magdalene is related to the barren Sophia (as in §36 below) and the mother of the angels and the consort of the Lord.

These references suggest that the same person can be sister, consort and mother. Sophia had come down. She became the mother of the spirituals. The Logos, the Father of All and also her brother, came to make her his bride. Sophia is the mother of the Jesus that was born, and the sister and consort of the heavenly saviour.

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403 §34 and §40 are clearly related. Similarities can be found in the other paragraphs as well but these are not compelling.
404 In §55, however, Mary Magdalene is then differentiated from Sophia to function as a type of soul of the gnostic Christian (see 5.3.3). This passage suggests that the myth of Sophia wandering outside the pleroma is in some way comparable to the plight of the soul trapped in a body. A parallel for her roles as sister, bride and mother can be found in the Exegesis on the Soul: ‘As long as she was alone with the father, she was virgin and in form androgynous. But when she fell down into a body and came to this life, then she fell into the hands of many robbers…. From heaven the father sent her man, who is her brother, the firstborn. Then the bridegroom came down to the bride…. And when she has intercourse with him, she gets from him the seed that is the life-giving spirit, so that by him she bears good children and rears them.’ NHC II, 127.22-26, 132.2-10, 133.34-134.3.
405 Such titles can be found individually in Euguostos and the Sophia of Jesus Christ, where Sophia is called the sister and consort of Man, and the Mother of All (e.g. NHC III, 81.23, 82.5.21, 88.7, 101.16, 104.11.18, 106.17.22, 112.7.19, 113.14, V 8.31, 9.5); in combination we find the titles in NHC III, 114.15 and Hippolytus’ Refutation VI,34.3.
406 The same is said of Isis in a fragment preserved by Porphyry, and ascribed to first century Chaeremon, an Egyptian priest and philosopher: ‘Hence, in the tradition, Osiris, Isis’ husband, is also her brother and her son.’ De cultu simulacrorum fr. 10.1 therefore do not believe that the shift from ‘her sister’ to ‘his sister’ in §32 is a mistake. The speaker deliberately changes the affiliation in his allegorisation of a text like John 19:25.
This interpretation would be comparable to the description of the Achamoth by Irenaeus in the first seven chapters of \textit{Against Heresies} Book 1. Achamoth, the residue of the fallen Sophia, desired to return to the father (4.1). Therefore, the saviour was sent to her (4.5). She became the mother of the angels (4.5) and the bride of the saviour (7.1).

The next passage in \textit{GPhil} (§34) switches to the name ‘Holy Spirit’, because it can be used as a starting point for exegesis: ‘The Holy Spirit is a double name. ... The Holy Spirit is in the revealed: it is below. It is in the concealed: it is above.’ It seems that the name Holy Spirit is used here as the name of Sophia in Irenaeus: ‘Achamoth is called the thought of that Sophia who dwells above’ (4.1). She is also called Holy Spirit and Sophia (5.3). The difference is that the higher Sophia is not equal to theHoly Spirit in the western systems described by Irenaeus.

\textit{The barren Sophia}

After describing the Holy Spirit as the mother of the disciples in §34, the speaker introduces the name Sophia for the first time in \textit{GPhil} in §35:

\begin{quotation}
\textbf{§35} The apostles said to the disciples: ‘May our entire offering acquire salt’. They called Sophia ‘salt’, without her no offering is acceptable.
\end{quotation}

In 5.3.1, I reviewed the ritual context of this passage. Here I am interested in the role of Sophia. The problem, however, is that the next passage is badly damaged. Here I suggest a reconstruction on the basis of Galatians 4:27, which I believe the speaker interpreted to demonstrate the difference between gnostic and mainstream Christians. Irenaeus applies this verse to demonstrate the difference the synagogue and the church, interspersing quotes with his interpretation: 407

\begin{quotation}
‘Rejoice, o barren one, who did not bear [children]’ (Gal 4:27a) 
– and barren is the Church, which in former times, did not present any children at all to God –
‘break forth and cry out, you who were not in labour; for many are the children of the deserted one, more than her who has a husband’ (Gal 4:27b)
– and the former synagogue has a husband: the Law.
\end{quotation}

If we use the same technique for \textit{GPhil}, the passage reads as follows:

\begin{quotation}
\textbf{§36} And Sophia is ‘barren’, ‘[without] children’. Therefore she is called [‘deserted’], inasmuch as <she is> salt 408. Where they will [become children] alike, the Holy Spirit [will give birth to them], and ‘many are her children’.
\end{quotation}

\begin{footnotes}
\footnotetext[407]{On the Apostolic Preaching (94); translation John Behr (1997), p 96-97.}
\footnotetext[408]{The parallels suggest that the second lacuna needs to be filled with the other title from Galatians 4:27: ‘desolate’. The Coptic would then read: ‘<σαρχή> ήταν <ο> ημέρα’. Translated: ‘She is called: ‘desolate’, for <she is> salt’ (but compare LXX IV Maccabees 7:21: έπελε και όλοκλος). This, however, requires us not only to fill the lacuna, but also to add <ο> to obtain a grammatically correct sentence. The salt renders the soil barren and is accountable for certain desert (<σαρχή>) areas. The relationship between desert and desolate is also found in the expositions of Isaiah 54:1 in Justin Martyr and Clement (both in the Annex below) as well is in the Midrash on Song of Songs IV.4.9. Philo’s \textit{De Opificio Mundi} 38: ‘God ordained that all the water which was salt, and destined to be a cause of barrenness...’ In \textit{De Cofusione Linguarum} 26-27 he associated the ‘valley of salt’ with a desolate terrain for men ‘barren of wisdom’. Salt could also be associated with the ruins of a city, like those of Jerusalem. When Sichem was destroyed, salt was cast on the soil to symbolize that the place had become barren and uninhabitable Judges 9:45. Theoderet describes salt as sterilizing the soil (\textit{Questions in Judges} 18/1.335). The story that Carthage was likewise treated has become commonplace, but R.T. Ridley argues that it is not attested in ancient sources. See “To Be Taken with a Pinch of Salt: The Destruction of Carthage”, \textit{CP} 81 (1986), pp 140-146.}
\end{footnotes}
In Galatians 4, two mothers are contrasted: the slave woman (Hagar) and the free woman (Sara); one is typified as the earthly Jerusalem bound under the Law, the other as the free Jerusalem in heaven.\(^{409}\) The free woman was first barren, but then brought forth many children. The next passage, §37, picks up the theme of inheritance of §2:

\[\text{§2 \ The [s]lave only seeks to be free and does not seek for the domain of his lord. The son, however, is not only son, to the contrary: he claims the inheritance of the father.}\]

\[\text{§37 \ That which belongs to the father, belongs to the son. But regarding him, the son: as long as he is small he is not entrusted with his possessions. When he becomes a man, his father gives him all his possessions.}\]

Together these two passages reflect Galatians 4:1-3:

Gal. 4:1 What I am saying is that as long as the heir is an infant, he is no different from a slave, even though he is lord over everything. 2 But he is under guardians and stewards until the time set by his father. 3 So also, when we were children, we were in slavery under the basic principles of the world.

In the thinking of GPhil then, gnostic Christians are sons according to the promise (cf §30) like Isaac in Galatians 4:23, whereas mainstream Christians are slaves like Ishmael and sons according to the flesh only who will not share in the inheritance of the father (Galatians 4:28-31).

The spirit of death

In the next passages, the speaker enlarges the differences: in baptism, mainstream Christians do not receive the true Sophia (or Echamoth), but a counterfeit spirit: the wisdom of death:

\[\text{§38 \ O wanderers! Those who are born of the spirit, wander off again because of him. Therefore: by one and the same wind (=spirit), the fire is kindled and extinguished.}\]

\[\text{§39 \ Echamoth and Echmoth are two different (things). Echamoth is simply Sophia. But Echmoth is the Sophia (of death, which is the one) who knows death, who is called 'little Sophia'.}\]

Although the Holy Spirit is Jesus’ mother in §17, she also – with the Father of All – descends upon him during his baptism (§82 and §95). Likewise, mainstream and gnostic Christians both have the Holy Spirit as their mother, but the question is what they receive when they are born again. The speaker suggests that they are born of adultery, which implies communion with an unclean spirit.\(^{410}\) In §42 adultery with the snake (the devil) led to the birth of a murderer (Cain). In A Valentinian Exposition

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The story that Jerusalem was thus treated is found in the late-fourteenth-century English poem The Siege of Jerusalem. Cf also the prophecies in Jeremiah 26:18 and Micah 3:12: Jerusalem would be destroyed and plowed over.

\(^{409}\) Jerusalem’ is another name for Sophia in Irenaeus’ Against Heresies 1.5.3.

\(^{410}\) Cf. also ExcTh 83-85: the devil fights against the baptismal candidates with impure spirits who try to descend with them in the water and be sealed with, or better, in them. That is why baptism is only beneficial if it is done with purity.
38.21-27, Adam brings forth this race from Cain because the devil *breathed* into him.\(^{411}\)

The difference between the two spirits that one can receive in baptism is also present in §109:

\(^{109}\) As Jesus fulfilled the water of baptism, so he has poured out death. Therefore, we indeed go down into the water, but we do not go down into death, so that we are not emptied in the spirit of the *cosmos*. When he blows, it becomes winter. When the Holy Spirit blows, it becomes summer.

Baptism as ‘going down into death’ is the doctrine of mainstream Christians (cf. Rom 6:3). In other words, whereas Echamoth may be similar to the Achamoth of western systems with two Sophias, Echmoth is a completely different figure: the spirit of this world.

8.2.5 **Transformation in unit eight**

Unit 8 deals with the mystery of transformation, and is therefore one suitable to investigate the soteriology of *GPhil*. It has a concentric structure. The unit is enclosed by references to baptism and chrismation (§66 and §75). Through symbols (§67-68), the believer is born again by the Holy Spirit, conceived by Christ and united in the bridal chamber (§74). In the centre of this unit (§69 and §70) the theme of uniting is explained:

\(^{69}\) [Therefore he said], ‘I came to make [those from below] like those from above, [and those from the] outside like those from the [inside]’. And to join them there, [he works] here through types [and images]. *Those who say, ‘[There is an earthly man and] there is one above [him]’ are wrong. [For] the one who is visible [to them] is the one there who is called ‘the one who is below’. And the one to whom the hidden one belongs, is the one there who is above him. For it is better that they say, ‘The inner, the outer, and the one outside the outside’.*

- Because of this, the Lord called the destruction ‘the darkness on the outside’. There is nothing else beyond it.

He said, ‘My Father who is in the hidden one’. He said, ‘Go into your chamber and close your door behind you, and pray to your Father who is in the hidden one’, which is the one who is within all of them.

- And that which is within all of them is the *plerôma*. After that, there is nothing else on its inside. *Of this it is said that it is ‘the one above them’.*

\(^{70}\) Before Christ, some came out from where they could no longer go into, and they went to where they could no longer come out. But Christ came. Those who had gone in, he brought out. And those who had gone out, he brought in.

\(^{71}\) When Eve was [in] Adam, death did not exist. When she separated from him, death came into being. Yet again: if he goes in and if he receives himself, there will be no death.

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\(^{411}\) Contrary to John D. Turner in *The Coptic Gnostic Library* (NHS xxviii), I suggest restoring θανάσιοιος instead of θανάσιοιος. This gives a better reading in the context: In line 22 ‘Adam sowed him [the devil] (into his offspring). Therefore he acquired sons who angered one another. And Cain killed Abel his brother, for the devil had breathed into him [Adam].’
The text that I have presented in italics suddenly disqualifies the familiar concepts of *above* and *below*, and gives preference to the terms *inner* and *outer*. With the strong statement that people ‘are wrong’, when they see him as the one ‘above’, the teacher will have surprised the candidates, as he previously used that type of language himself. With that surprise he forces the candidates to shift their focus from life after death to their transformation in the present. In terms of above and below, we see the following levels:

- Above everything is the highest Father, with the divine *plerôma*, where the Logos came from (§30).
- He descended through the ‘above’, the spiritual sphere, where he assumed a ‘great body’ and appeared to the angels (§26).
- He brought the angels down to the ‘below’, where the psychics live entrapped in the material world, to unite the spiritual angel with the psychic image (§26b). For that reason he entered in baptism into the psychic body of the Christ (§81-82). After unification with the angels, the souls of the gnostic Christian will pass the psychic sphere of the Demiurge and the spiritual sphere of the angels, until they reach the highest Father.

In terms of inner and outer, the inner man is spiritual, and the outer man is psychic. The material man is ‘outside the outer’ and will suffer destruction, as will the souls that do not leave the body. The idea is that the believer (the soul) no longer lives on the outside (the body), but turns to the (spiritual) one inside.\(^{412}\) The center of the passage is formed by Jesus’ words about the Father who is in the hidden (Matthew 6:6).\(^{413}\)

### 8.2.6 The temple metaphor in §76

Cosmology, Soteriology and Eschatology come together in the temple metaphor. This metaphor underlies various passages in *GPhil*, most clearly §76 and §125, and possibly also §18 and §27. I will first discuss §76 line by line:\(^{414}\)

§76 There were three houses where to offer sacrifice in Jerusalem.

This notice may seem unhistorical to modern readers, accustomed as we are to two-dimensional maps of the temple, on which we see only one building and lines around it to demarcate the various courts. But this was not the spatial experience of first-century visitors. Josephus (*The Jewish War* 5,184-237) speaks of a succession of three temples (and not temple courts as in some translations). A first-century visitor would have looked up at the walls surrounding the Temple Mount and considered them the first building. Having entered the first ‘house’ he would find himself in the Court of the Gentiles and see a second house with high-rising walls: the Sanctuary (enclosing the three smaller courts: those of the Women, Israel and the Priests). Here, only ritually pure Israelites could enter. Within the court of the priests stood the third house: the temple with the porch and the two central rooms, the Holy and the Holy of

\(^{412}\) Cf 7.3.4 above. See also the *Exegesis on the Soul* 131.13-132.2, which explains conversion as a turning inward of the soul in baptism.


\(^{414}\) In chapter 5.2.4 above, I discuss this passage in its ritual context. Here I focus on the metaphor itself and its soteriological meaning.
the Holies. The Holy could only be entered by priests; the Holy of the Holies only once a year by the High Priest. The idea of ‘three houses for sacrifice’ is perhaps a little forced, but still rooted in historical reality. At the entrance to the first house were the mikvaoit for purification by washing. Inside the second house stood the altar for animal sacrifice, like the paschal lamb. Inside the temple itself stood the altar for incense, along with the table for the showbread. The text continues as follows:

The one opening to the west was called the ‘Holy’. The other one, opening to the south, was called the ‘Holy of the Holy’. The third one, opening to the east, was called the ‘Holy of the Holies’, the place where only the high priest goes into.

The spatial progression of holiness fits within the range of contemporary descriptions. Josephus only describes the last two stages: the Sanctuary was for him the Holy, whereas the inner ‘holy temple’ contained the Holy of the Holies. The Mishna (Kellim 1.6-9) describes no less than ten degrees of holiness, starting with the land of Israel. In GPhil we find three degrees: Holy, the Holy of the Holy and the Holy of the Holies, which is connected to the initiation rite (see below). The idea of three gates opening to the west, south and east is a deliberate simplification of historical reality. The metaphor is likely to refer to the course of the sun as in Ephrem Syrus’ Songs for Epiphany, wherein baptism is the subject (10.8 and 10.10):

The East in the morning was made light!
The South at noonday was made dark!
The West again in turn at eventide was made light.
The three quarters represent one Birth, His Death and Life they declare.
...
And like as, save by the door of birth, none can enter into creation;
– so, save by the door of resurrection, none can enter into the kingdom.

In §76 the order is reversed: west, south and east. This suggests a view of salvation as a return from the West to the East, where the sun came from. The east as the bridal chamber is also known from psalm 19 and Eclogae Propheticae 12: the sun rises in the east, like a bridegroom emerging from his wedding canopy, the heavenly tabernacle. This order is also noted in a study of a large number of early Christian baptisteries in North Africa. In many cases, The baptism candidate entered the basin from the west (the world of Satan), was baptized in the middle – standing in the water and receiving an outpouring of water over his or her head – and left the basin on the east side, into the world of Christ.

In the next sentence of §76, the three Holies are related to the initiation:

Baptism has the resurrection in the redemption, being the redemption in the bridal chamber, and the bridal chamber in that which is above [it, to which we belong]. You will find nothing like it.

415 Cf Levine (2002), Jerusalem. The most impressive gate to the Temple Mount was the central gate on the west. From the Palace of Herod a wide road bridged the Cheesemakers Valley. On the same side was also a second elaborate gate with an arched stairway descending from the enormous basilica on the southern side of the Court of the Gentiles. But these gates seem to have been used mainly for exit. Most people entered the complex on the south, where there were elaborate mikvaoit for last-minute purification (p. 230). The Sanctuary had no fewer than nine gates and the most impressive Herodian gate was on the east. But most people will have used the gates on the south, where they came from, and it seems that in Hasmonaean times, the main gate of the Sanctuary faced south (p 112). The temple itself opened up to the east.

416 Luiks (1975), Baptisterium, p 164.
I suggest that the three houses of worship represent three levels of worship: body, soul and spirit. Baptism of the body is the gate to the resurrection of the soul, redemption of the soul is the gate to the ascent of the soul, whereas unification with the spirit in the bridal chamber is the gate to the heavenly plerōma, which is above the sphere of Sophia and the angels, but to which all the spiritual will return in the end. This is illustrated in the following illustration of the three ‘houses’:

![Figure 8.1: Diagram of three houses of worship](image)

With this in mind, I agree with Schenke’s restoration of the badly damaged sentences that follow:

> [Those who receive it] are those who pray [in spirit and truth. They do not pray in] Jerusalem. [There are some in] Jerusalem [indeed praying in] Jerusalem, [but] waiting [for the mysteries] that are called the Holy of the Holies. [This is that (house) whose] veil was rented. [Our] bridal room [is nothing else] but the image [of the bridal chamber that is] above.

Those who receive the bridal chamber above are the true Christians. In Heracleon’s comment on John 4:21: the pneumatikoi will not worship the Devil in the world nor the Demiurge in Jerusalem, but the Father of Truth. Those who pray in Jerusalem worship in the realm of the psyche, or the Demiurge. But some of these do so in the expectation of renting the veil, when they can ascend past the Demiurge to the Holy of Holies.

> Because of this, its veil was rent from above to below. For it was necessary for some from below to go to the above.

§77 Those who are clothed with the perfect light, the powers do not see, and they are not able to seize them. One will clothe himself in this light in the mystery in the union.

In §27 we read that the lamb should not be despised, as without it we cannot see the king (the Demiurge). According to Clement, Valentinus explained that those who are saved have overcome the deadly rule that ‘No man shall see the face of God and live’ (Exodus 33:20). Our text continues with the statement that no one can approach the king while he is naked. This also refers to the sacrifice of Jesus or the lamb, as is clear

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417 The idea of the human individual as consisting of ‘houses’ can also be found in Resurrection 10, attributed to Justin Martyr: ‘... [The] spirit dies not. The soul is in the body and without a soul it cannot live. The body, when the soul forsakes it, is not. For the body is the house of the soul; and the soul the house of the spirit.’

418 In Origen, Commentary on John 13.16.

419 Miscellanies 4.13 (ANF 2, p 425).
from the preceding §23. In §125, there is also an eschatological dimension to this passage:

The veil, indeed, was closed at first. How (else) would God govern creation? But if the veil is torn and the inner parts are revealed this house will be left behind, being desolate. Even more, it will be destroyed. And the whole godhead will flee from these places (but) not in the Holies [of the Holies].

This description not only recalls the renting of the veil in the gospels and the prophecy of Jesus in Luke 13:35 (‘your house will be left desolate’), but also the portents of the destruction of the Jerusalem temple in 70 CE, described by Josephus and summarized by Tacitus. Daniel Stöckl Ben Ezra argues for an eschatological understanding of §76 and other Valentinian writings:

Valentinian theologians of the second century, among them Theodotus, Heracleon and the writer of the Valentinian Exposition, adopted the motif of the high priest’s entrance into the holy of holies from Jewish apocalyptic ascent visions to describe the eschatological entrance of Christ and the pneumatics into the Plerôma.

He points to, inter alia, the following passage from the Excerpta ex Theodoto (38), which he translates as follows:

A river of fire pours forth from beneath the throne’ of the Topos (that is: the Demiurge), and streams into the void of creation, the Gehenna; and though streaming from (the day of) creation, it is not filled. And the Topos himself is a fire. For this reason, he says, there is a veil in order that the spiritual ones do not perish when they see him. Only the Archangel has access beyond him. The image of that is the High Priest who entered the Holy of the Holies once a year. Therefore, also, Jesus is called to help, sitting (enthroned) besides the Topos, so that the spiritual ones remain and do not ascend before him, both in order to pacify the Topos as well as to provide the (spiritual) seed with a passage into the Plerôma.

8.2.7 No structure of the plerôma

A number of Valentinians speculated about the ‘fullness (plerôma) of God’. They attributed to God specific ‘motions’ or emanating ‘aeons’. Each consisted of a male and a female aspect. The majority of the known Valentinian structures, as reported by the church fathers, start with a group of 8 aeons, then a second group of 12 aeons and a third group of 10 aeons. Sometimes there were additional ‘generations’.

Despite the differences between the various structures, the names of the first 8 aeons are relatively stable. Most of the schemes discussed by Thomassen are variations of the following:

420 Cf also Heracleon’s comment on John 1:29 the lamb stands for the earthly Jesus, the imperfect body that will be sacrificed, whereas ‘he who dwells in it’, the Lord, is not sacrificed; in: Origen, Commentary on John 6.60.
421 Josephus, Jewish War VI, 293-299.; Tacitus, Histories V,13: ‘The doors of the holy place abruptly opened, a superhuman voice was heard to declare that the gods were leaving it, and in the same instant came the rushing tumult of their departure.’
423 There is a curious parallel in Hecateus of Miletus’ summary of Egyptian mythology as a development of first 8, then a second group of 12 and a third group of many gods (Hecateus of Miletus, Periegesis, discussed in Herodotus, Histories 2.145). So far, I have not seen this passage discussed in any study of Valentinian theology.
424 Thomassen (2005), Spiritual Seed, part III.
names expressing that God cannot be known, like:

Deep, Unspoken, Pre-beginning, Forefather

(names from philosophical reasoning, often with words that also occur in the Prologue to the Gospel of John:

Mind, Beginning, Father, Only-begotten

Truth, Grace

Logos (first-born Son)

Life (‘the Light of man’)

Table 8.2

A baptismal instruction transmits secrets to candidates who had for some years already been tested. This is what we see in Hippolytus’ description of Marcosian baptismal instruction. And indeed, the only text from Nag Hammadi that systematically sets out the structure of the plerōma is the only other Valentinian baptismal instruction in the Nag Hammadi corpus: a Valentinian Exposition. In GPhil, however, there is no exposition of the structure of the plerōma. On the contrary, it seems that such a structure is not assumed as there are only two aeons: the present aeon and the one to come, which is the aeon (§7, 11, 103, and 127).

I note that there are many pleromatic systems described in the accounts of the church fathers but very few in the Nag Hammadi writings themselves. I suggest that these heresiarchs, in their eagerness to condemn Valentinian doctrine as polytheist fantasies, used the most explicit and divergent texts that they could find. These, however, do not give us an accurate description of the Valentinian movement. Although Tertullian believed that the idea of 30 aeons goes back to Valentinus himself, he had to admit that Valentinus himself could not be accused of worshipping thirty gods:

Ptolemaeus afterwards entered on the same path, by distinguishing the names and the numbers of the Aeons into personal substances, which, however, he kept apart from God. Valentinus had included these in the very essence of the Deity, as senses and affections of motion.

It seems a number of the Valentinians held a more conservative view of the Aeons:

1. How much more sensible are they who, rejecting all this tiresome nonsense, have refused to believe that any one Aeon has descended from others by steps like these....[I]t is, in fact, from his [God’s] mere motion that they gain their designations.

2. When, as they say, he thought of producing offspring, he on that account gained the name of ‘Father’. After producing, because the issue he produced was true, he received the name of ‘Truth’. When he wanted himself to be manifested, he on that account was announced as ‘Man’. Those, moreover, whom he preconceived in his thought when he produced them, were then designated ‘the Church’. As Man, he uttered his ‘Word’ and so this Word is his first begotten Son, and to the Word was

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425 Refutation, 6.37: about the Marcosians who said that Irenaeus’ report was incorrect: ‘We have therefore been anxious to investigate more accurately, and to discover minutely, what (instructions) they deliver in the case of the first bath (they call it something like that), and in the case of the second, which they call Redemption (for not even this secret of them escaped us.’ After this, Hippolytus describes Marcus’ system of the plerōma, which seems not to have been disclosed before (6.36).

426 Cf. Thomassen (2005), Spiritual Seed, p. 193 ff.

427 Against the Valentinians 4.2. ANF vol 3, p 505.

428 Against the Valentinians 36.1-2. ANF vol 3, pp 519-520.
added ‘Life’. And by this process the first Ogdoad was complete. However, the whole of the tiresome story is utterly poor and weak.

According to Irenaeus this is the opinion of ‘those of them ... deemed more skilful than the persons mentioned before’. Those mentioned before include Valentinus himself, Secundus, and the followers of Ptolemy. If we are to look for teachers who lay no emphasis on pleromatic structures, we should probably be looking among the eastern teachers and Heracleon.

8.2.8 Conclusions

The analysis of various textual units and passages in GPhil reveals the following: In the introduction it is clear that Christ came to transform people from Gentile to Hebrew and from Hebrew to Christian, in order to recover his psyche. The community of GPhil uses the same creedal concepts as mainstream Christianity, but these concepts refer to principally different entities. The highest father is not the Creator of this world. The Virgin Mary stands for the Holy Spirit.

GPhil sees Jesus as the son of the Demiurge and the Holy Spirit. The Logos and the Holy Spirit descended upon him during his baptism. This doctrine is compatible with the doctrine that Hippolytus ascribes to the Italian school. The christological debate is intimately connected with the debate about the resurrection of the body, as it is in Tertullian’s writings on these subjects. Sophia/Achamoth seems to share some characteristics with the western systems featuring two Sophias, but the teacher does not present an entire Sophian myth. Salvation, finally, consists of turning inward to the Father/angel/plerôma within, and, in the end, of unity within the plerôma above.

8.3 The place of GPhil within Valentinian doctrine

In order to translate the theological position GPhil into geography and time, I will first summarize my understanding of the development of the Valentinian movement:

• 140 – 160 CE. Valentinus, a well-educated Alexandrian, is active in (one of) the Roman church(es). He writes homilies and psalms, and teaches pupils. He tries to reconcile Hellenistic ideas with Christianity and, like the Syrian Cerdo, believes that Jesus proclaimed a higher father than the Jewish God. He seems to teach docetic beliefs about Jesus’ body. In 144 CE, the ship-owner Marcion, a pupil of Cerdo, asks the Roman church(es) to adopt the idea of a higher father above the Jewish God. This is not accepted and may well have been the first ‘formal’ rejection of this doctrine. Marcion starts his own separate church. Valentinus does not leave the church.

• 160 – 180 CE. Ptolemy and Heracleon are well-known second-generation teachers in Rome. Ptolemy further develops Valentinus’ teaching about the plerôma. Heracleon works as an exegete. He may well have left Rome for Alexandria as no writings or followers of Heracleon are mentioned in western sources. Marcus is another teacher active in Asia Minor. He introduces number/letter symbolism and

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429 Tertullian slightly amended the report of Irenaeus Against Heresies 1.12.3.
ritual innovations. Valentinians participate both in their own cult groups and in the mainstream church, from which they recruit new followers.

- 180 – 220 CE. The ‘followers’ of Heracleon and Ptolemy become known as the Italian school, which specifies that Jesus’ body was not physical but spiritual and psychic, and that the psychic part was produced by the Demiurge. Others, like Axionicus in Antioch, maintain that Jesus’ body was only spiritual. They are called the Oriental school. The followers of Marcus have a similar christological position as the oriental teachers, but also share certain ideas with the Italian school. Followers of Ptolemy are reported in Italy and North Africa, followers of Marcus in Asia Minor, the south of France and Rome. Valentinians in Alexandria possess writings from Heracleon, but also from Ptolemy and his followers and from Theodotus, a teacher in the Oriental school. Opposition to Valentinians in mainstream churches grows in the west, with Irenaeus in the south of France (ca 180 CE), Tertullian in North Africa (ca 200 CE) and Hippolytus in Rome (ca 215 CE).

Later in the third century, the Valentinian movement seems to become marginalized. There are few reports of their activities or teachers. They seem to have been driven out of most mainstream churches and are no longer experienced as an immediate threat. In the fourth century CE, only a few communities are attested to in Egypt and in the east. But documents like the Nag Hammadi writings were still read by ‘pneumatkoi’.432

The illustration below summarizes the main groups of Valentinians, but does not include third generation teachers such as Alexander and Secundus. Axionicus is included, however, as Tertullian sees in him a proponent of the eastern school, and the only one in his days who was still faithful to Valentinus’ regulae.433

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432 See the dedication at the end of Nag Hammadi Codex II.
433 Against the Valentinians 4.3.
In the analysis presented in chapter 8.2 above, I found that *GPhil* cannot be seen as a product of the Oriental school as its christology closely corresponds with what Hippolytus describes as the doctrine of the Italian school. Also, the emphasis on the salvation of the soul in the introduction and the roles of Sophia in the fifth unit do not fit very well with the eastern doctrines reconstructed by Thomassen. On the other hand, they also differ somewhat from the ideas of Ptolemy’s followers described by Irenaeus: salvation is not so much dependent on one’s essence but achieved through transformation, and the Holy Spirit and the Sophia above may be the same person. Decidedly different from both the followers of Ptolemy and of Marcus is the lack of a pleromatic structure consisting of many aeons. This difference also applies to Marcus. I also note that Marcus’ teaching about letters and numbers is completely absent in *GPhil*.

Of the four teachers mentioned at the bottom of the illustration, the theology of *GPhil* cannot be reconciled with that of Ptolemy, Axionicus, or Marcus. That implies that *GPhil* originated within a group of followers of Heracleon, or that the theology of *GPhil* stands apart from all four main types of Valentinian doctrine.

**Heracleon**

Although Heracleon was a leading teacher within the Valentinian movement, only a few fragments of his work have been preserved. The heresy hunters report little about him, possibly because his ideas and practices were less easy to attack than those of Ptolemy’s followers and Marcus. Clement of Alexandria even called Heracleon ‘the most distinguished of the school of Valentinians’. Clement preserved two fragments of Heracleon’s commentary on Matthew, whereas Origen preserved 48 fragments of his commentary on John. As Ansgar Wucherpfennig in his *Heracleon Philologus* argues, Origen, who knew ‘followers’ of Heracleon in Alexandria, may sometimes have paraphrased and amplified rather than quoted Heracleon. This means that the wording may have been influenced somewhat by what Origen thought that later followers of Heracleon believed. This is not necessarily a negative point for my analysis, as I am only interested in the question whether *GPhil* fits better with the tradition of Heracleon than with those of other second-generation teachers.

**The psychikoi**

Unfortunately, Heracleon’s preserved fragments say nothing about Sophia. There is also little on the nature of the body of Jesus. For Heracleon’s opinions in this respect we are dependent on Hippolytus’ testimony. Nevertheless, if Thomassen is correct that a concern for the salvation of *psychikoi* (often) corresponds with a descent of the Saviour into a psychic body, we can also investigate what the teaching is of *GPhil* with regard to the salvation of the psychics. This is made clear in Heracleon’s comment on John 8:44:

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434 In chapter 6 above, I observed that the ritual in the *Gospels of Philip* has remained close to mainstream Christian rites. It has none of the Marcosian innovations described by Irenaeus.

435 Miscellanies 4.9 (4.71).

436 The translation used in this chapter is that of Robert Grant (2003), *Second Century*, pp 70-79.

437 In: Origen, *Commentary on John* 20.20.
These things were spoken not to the natural earthbound sons of the Devil but to the psychikoi who by choice become sons of the Devil; from being such [psychics] by nature, some can also by choice become sons of God.

As in §76 and §125 of GPhil, there is a temple metaphor. Commenting on the cleansing of the temple in John 2:13, Heracleon says that Jerusalem is the ‘place of living things’ (which is the place of the Demiurge – cf. his comment on John 4:21). The ‘sellers’ are not true believers, as ‘a calling without the spirit is not assisted by the Lord’ (cf §59). He continues:

The temple [that Jesus cleansed] is the Holy of Holies, which only the high priest enters, where the pneumatikoi go. The court of the temple where the Levites also enter is a symbol of those psychikoi who are saved outside the plerôma.

Salvation of the soul

More generally, we see that the salvation of the soul plays the same role as in GPhil. In his comments on John 4:35-36, Heracleon says, ‘The harvest means the souls of the believers’. In fact the reapers that the saviour sends are ‘angels, each for his own soul’. In his comments on John 4:46-54, he says, ‘The soul is not immortal but only suited for salvation’. The Samaritan woman, whose nature is spiritual but who fell into fornication with matter (comments on John 4:18 and 24), resembles the story of Mary Magdalene and the Exegesis on the Soul. Her soul was drawn to the saviour because of its spiritual nature: ‘For the soul is drawn to the Saviour through the spirit and by the spirit’ (on John 4:28).

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Material</th>
<th>Psychic</th>
<th>Spiritual</th>
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<td>sound</td>
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<td>slave</td>
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| Gentile | Jew | - |

The Aeon

As we saw, GPhil does not describe pleromatic structures as Ptolemy and his followers and Marcus seem to have done. A similar absence of pleromatic structures is observed by Elaine Pagels, in her comparison of the fragments of Heracleon with the teachings of Ptolemy on the prologue of John. Ptolemy uses it to explain the structure of the plerôma, but Heracleon uses it to explain how the Logos employs the

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438 In: Origen, *Commentary on John* 10.33, the comment on John 4:21 is contained in: Origen, *Commentary on John* 13.16.
439 Cf. §125: ‘And the whole godhead will flee from these places (but) not in the Holies [of the Holies]. For it will not be able to mingle with the unmingled light and the plerôma without [fault. But] it will be under the wings of the cross [and under] its arms. This ark will be [their] salvation when the flood prevails over them. If some are of the priestly tribe, these will be able to go inside of the veil, with the high priest.’
440 In: Origen, *Commentary on John* 13.41.
441 In: Origen, *Commentary on John* 13.60.
Demiurge to create the cosmos. It is possible that Heracleon was less concerned with the *plerôma* than Ptolemy. But according to Pagels, another explanation is possible. As Heracleon’s work was a commentary that could come into the hands of outsiders, it makes sense that he didn’t disclose the deepest secrets of the Valentinians. I do not believe that Heracleon and Ptolemy can be ‘harmonized’ on this point. As in *GPhil* (§7, 11, 103), Heracleon speaks only of this aeon and the aeon to come (see his comments on John 4:17 and 4:22).  

*Other points of comparison*

Just like §120 of *GPhil*, Heracleon emphasizes the role of Christ in creation and not the role of Sophia; he created the world through the Demiurge (comment on John 1:3). Both the Demiurge and Jesus administer baptism (John 1:25-27 and §43/54). The Lamb of God is the imperfect body of Jesus that is sacrificed and secures our entry into the wedding feast (John 1:29/2:13 and §27). The metaphor of sowing and reaping (John 4:35-37), the first of which is done in winter, is also present in §7. The confusion of names in §11 and 17 also seems present in Heracleon’s comment on John 4:24.

Two further differences are of interest: Heracleon’s most frequent designation of Christ is ‘the Saviour’; in *GPhil* this occurs only in §55. Finally, the comment on Matthew 10:32-33 shows that in Heracleon’s days there was debate about confession before the human authorities, something that seems absent from the confession in §49 (for discussion, see chapter 9.2.3 below).

*Conclusion*

Similarities in thinking and the use of similar metaphors cannot be taken as proof that *GPhil* stands in the tradition of Heracleon. The same ideas are also present in other Valentinian and gnostic Christian writings. Nevertheless, a connection between Heracleon and *GPhil* is likely because of the combination of the following two findings:

- Their doctrines regarding the *psychikoi* and the *psyche* set *GPhil* and Heracleon apart from the eastern school and confirm Hippolytus’ testimony about Heracleon.
- The doctrine about the *Aeon* sets *GPhil* and Heracleon apart from Ptolemy and his followers and Marcus.

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448 In: Origen, *Commentary on John* 1.3.