

ON THE ORIGIN OF THE WORLD

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Introduced and Translated by Marvin Meyer

On the Origin of the World, the fifth tractate in Nag Hammadi Codex II, is a long and thoughtful essay (97, 24–127, 17) that addresses questions about the creation of the world, the formation of humankind, and the end of the age. In addition to the complete Codex II version, the text is also known from a short fragment from Nag Hammadi Codex XIII and several fragments from a Coptic version housed in the British Library. The text is untitled in the extant manuscripts, and it has been given its present title on the basis of its contents. Elsewhere in the literature on the text, it is sometimes referred to with the unfortunate title “Untitled Work,” “Schrift ohne Titel,” and “Écrit sans titre.” The Codex II version of the text is translated here, though the other texts have also been consulted.

On the Origin of the World is a learned work, a smart Gnostic essay by an author who uses argumentation, narration, and colorful illustration in order to demonstrate the basic points of a Gnostic worldview. Although *On the Origin of the World* does not discuss in any detail the unfolding of the divine Fullness above, it does follow the saga of Yaldabaoth, the creator of this world, and the adventures and misadventures of Adam, Eve, and the rest of humanity. In particular the text discusses themes from *Genesis*, in terms that recall *Jubilees* and the books of *Enoch*, and to these materials are added Greco-Roman, Egyptian, and Christian reflections. *On the Origin of the World* provides an accessible way of learning about various aspects of gnosis, and Hans-Gebhard Bethge suggests that the essay is presented “in the form of an apologetic tract designed for public effectiveness in attracting adherents.”¹ It may well have been a popular tract, since portions of three copies have survived in the Nag Hammadi library and elsewhere. *On the Origin of the World* builds self-consciously on a variety of literary sources, and within the text there are passages that seem to be related to at least two or three other Nag Hammadi texts. From the many parallels between the present text and the one immediately preceding it in Codex

II, the *Nature of the Rulers*, it is obvious that there is a relationship between these two texts, though the precise nature of that relationship remains unknown. Louis Painchaud also sees similarities between *On the Origin of the World* and *Eugnostos the Blessed*. Further, the song of Eve, rehearsed in *On the Origin of the World* 114, 2–24, is introduced in such a way as to recall the comments of Adam in *Nature of the Rulers* 89, 14–17, but the song itself closely follows lines from the poetry of *Thunder* 13, 19–14, 9:

I am the wife and the virgin.
I am <the mother> and the daughter.
I am the limbs of my mother.
I am a barren woman
who has many children.
I have had many weddings
and have taken no husband.
I am a midwife
and a woman who does not give birth.
I am the solace of my own birth pains.
I am bride and groom,
and my husband produced me.
I am the mother of my father
and the sister of my husband,
and he is my offspring.
I am the servant of him who fashioned me,
I am the ruler of my offspring.
He [produced me] with a premature birth,
and he is my offspring born on time,
and my strength is from him.
I am the staff of his power in his youth,
and he is the rod of my old age,
and whatever he wishes happens to me.

In addition to these parallels, the text of *On the Origin of the World* includes other features that help it inform and entertain. Within the text are numerous references to additional literature that, according to the author, may be consulted for further reading, and these references function as virtual notes to the essay. Among these notes are references to two texts of Norea, the *First Book of Noraia* and the *First Treatise of Oraia*, and others attributed to Moses and Solomon. The connection, if any, between these texts of Norea and the second

part of the *Nature of the Rulers* (93, 13–97, 21), which features Norea, the *Thought of Norea* from Nag Hammadi Codex IX, and the works of Norea mentioned by Epiphanius (*Panarion* 26.1.3) is unclear. Another text noted in *On the Origin of the World*, the *Archangelic Book of Moses the Prophet*, is cited in the Greek magical papyri.² The author of *On the Origin of the World* also incorporates etymological and other explanatory passages that seem intended to clarify the meaning of Gnostic points being addressed. Thus, the name Yaldabaoth, which ordinarily is thought by scholars to derive from the Aramaic for “child of chaos” or, less likely, “child of (S)abaoth,” is said, in *On the Origin of the World* 100, 12–14, to mean “Young man, move over here.”³ In a more lighthearted vein, it is claimed (100, 29–101, 23) that the names of the sons of Yaldabaoth—Yao, Eloai, and Astaphaios—come from the baby talk going on in Yaldabaoth’s nursery. In one of the more exotic sections of the text, on phoenixes, water serpents, and bulls of Egypt (121, 27–123, 2), the author discusses these fantastic creatures as metaphors for Gnostic truths and then concludes, “These great images have [appeared] only in Egypt, not in other lands, indicating that Egypt is like God’s paradise.”

In his important study of the text *On the Origin of the World*, Louis Painchaud has determined that the overall structure of the tractate is informed by the Greco-Roman rhetorical handbooks of the day, and that the text itself employs the terminology of rhetoric at key points.⁴ As a result, Painchaud proposes, the text is arranged in four major parts, and the flow of the discussion is determined by these rhetorical sections. Part 1, the *exordium* or *prooimion* (97, 24–98, 11), is the prologue, in which the author introduces a philosophical demonstration for the thesis that something existed before chaos. Part 2, the *narratio* or *diēgēsis* (98, 11–123, 2), constitutes the major portion of the text, and it provides a narrative account of the origin of the world and people in it. According to Painchaud, the elements in this section are organized in concentric and chiasmic patterns. Part 3, the *probatio* or *pistis* (123, 2–31), offers proof for how error and ignorance have grown strong in the world. Part 4, the *peroratio* or *epilogos* (123, 31–127, 17), brings matters to a conclusion through a discussion of immortal humanity, Jesus and the church, and the end of the age.

In what Painchaud identifies as the epilogue of the text, the author of *On the Origin of the World* promises that the end of things will be happiness and joy for all people of knowledge. With an eschatological flourish, the text states: “These people—the kingless, perfect generation—will enter the holy place of their Father, and they will reside in rest, and eternal, ineffable glory, and ceaseless joy. They already are kings. They are the immortal within the mortal, and they will condemn the gods of chaos and their powers” (125, 7–14). After Jesus the

Word comes and speaks of disclosing what is hidden⁵ and the end times approach, all that is dark and deficient in the universe will be undone, and the cosmic structure of the creator and his powers will collapse. As the text concludes, “The light will [overcome the] darkness and banish it. The darkness will be like something that never was, and the source of darkness will be dissolved. Deficiency will be pulled out by its root and cast down into the darkness, and the light will withdraw up to its root” (126, 35–127, 5).

On the Origin of the World is a Gnostic text, but it is difficult to classify the text more precisely than that. The tractate shows Christian features, especially in the last part but also earlier in the text (105, 20–106, 19), yet most of the text does not seem to be fundamentally shaped by Christian concerns. There are Sethian, Valentinian, and Manichaean motifs in the text, but the text itself cannot with confidence be identified specifically with any of those traditions. On account of the problems of language and comprehension, Bentley Layton has called the Coptic text an *opus imperfectum*, and Hans-Gebhard Bethge concurs.⁶ *On the Origin of the World* was composed in Greek and, considering the Egyptian themes, the place of composition almost certainly was Egypt, perhaps the cosmopolitan city of Alexandria. Birger A. Pearson and other scholars tend to assign a fairly late date of composition to the text as we now have it (late third or early fourth century), but Pearson agrees with Painchaud that it may be based on earlier, second-century material.⁷

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On the Origin of the World¹

Prologue: In the Beginning (97, 24–98, 11)

Since everyone, both the gods of the world and people, says that nothing existed before chaos, I shall prove they all are wrong, because they do not know the [origin] of chaos or its root. Here [is the] proof.

Although certainly [98] people in general are [inclined] to say that chaos is darkness, in actuality chaos comes from a shadow, and it is the shadow that has been called darkness. The shadow comes from something that has existed from the beginning, and so it is obvious that something in the beginning existed before chaos came into being, and chaos came after what was in the beginning.²

Let us consider the facts of the matter, and particularly what was in the beginning, from which chaos came. In this way will the truth be clearly demonstrated.

Narration: Origin of Sophia and the Powers of the World (98, 11–99, 22)

After the world of the immortals was brought to completion out of the infinite, a being with this likeness, called Sophia, flowed from Pistis.³ This being expressed its wish that it come to resemble the first light, and at once its wish appeared as a heavenly likeness with an incomprehensible greatness. This being came to be between the immortals and what came after them, like what is above, and Sophia served as a veil separating humanity from the things above.

The aeon of truth has no shadow <within> it⁴ because infinite light shines everywhere within it. There is a shadow, however, outside it, and the shadow has been called darkness. From the shadow appeared a power set over the darkness, and the powers that came afterward called the shadow limitless chaos. From it [every] sort of deity emerged, [one after] another, along with the whole world. So [the shadow] came after [99] something that existed in the beginning, and then it became visible. The abyss also came from Pistis,⁵ whom we have mentioned.

The shadow sensed that there was one stronger than it. It was jealous, and when it became pregnant by itself, all of a sudden it gave birth to envy. Since

then the principle of envy has appeared in all the aeons and their worlds. But envy turned out to be an aborted fetus, without any spirit in it, and it came into being as a shadow in an expanse of watery substance. Bitter wrath came into being from the shadow and was cast into a region of chaos.

Since that day watery substance has been visible. What lurked⁶ in the shadow flowed out and appeared in chaos. Just as all the afterbirth of a woman who gives birth to a baby flows out, so also the matter that came into being from the shadow was cast out. Matter did not come out of chaos; it was in chaos, in a region of chaos.

The Appearance of Yaldabaoth (99, 23–100, 29)

After these things happened, Pistis came and appeared over chaotic matter, which had been expelled like an aborted fetus, without any spirit in it. For chaos is all limitless darkness and unfathomable water. When Pistis saw what came into being from her deficiency, she was disturbed. And her disturbance appeared as something frightful, and it fled to her in the chaos. She turned to it and [blew] into its face in the abyss, [100] below all of the heavens.

When Pistis Sophia wanted to cause this thing with no spirit to be made into a likeness of the divine⁷ and rule over matter and all its powers,⁸ for the first time an archon appeared, out of the waters, lionlike in appearance, androgynous, with great authority in himself but ignorant of where he came from.

When Pistis Sophia saw him moving in the depth of the waters, she said to him, “Young man, move over here,” which is the meaning of Yaldabaoth.

Since then the faculty of speech has come to expression, and the faculty of speech pertains to the gods, angels, and people. The gods, angels, and people have brought to completion what has come into being by means of the word.

The ruler Yaldabaoth⁹ is ignorant of the power of Pistis. He did not see her face, but in the water he saw the likeness that spoke to him, and from that voice he called himself Yaldabaoth. Those who are perfect call him Ariael, because he is like a lion.¹⁰

After Yaldabaoth assumed authority over matter, Pistis Sophia withdrew up to her light.

Yaldabaoth Creates Heaven and Earth and Produces Sons (100, 29–101, 23)

When the ruler saw his greatness, he saw only himself and nothing else except water and darkness. He thought that only he existed. His [thought] was

completed by means of the word, and it [101] appeared as a Spirit moving to and fro over the waters.¹¹ When the Spirit appeared, the ruler separated the watery substance to one region and the dry substance to another region. From matter the ruler created for himself a dwelling place and called it heaven, and from matter he created a footstool and called it earth.

After this the ruler had a thought in accordance with his nature, and he created an androgynous being by means of the word. He opened his mouth and cooed to him. The child opened his eyes and saw his father, and he said to him, “EE,” so his father called him Yao.¹²

The ruler created a second son and cooed to him. The child opened his eyes and said to his father, “EH,” so his father called him Eloai.¹³

The ruler created a third son and cooed to him. The child opened his eyes and said to his father, “AS,” so his father called him Astaphaios.

These are the three sons of their father.

The Seven Heavens of Chaos (101, 24–103, 2)

Seven androgynous beings appeared in chaos, and they have masculine names and feminine names.

Yaldabaoth’s feminine name is forethought¹⁴ Sambathas,¹⁵ which designates the week.

His son is called Yao, and his feminine name is mastery.

Sabaoth’s¹⁶ feminine name is divinity.

Adonaios’s feminine name is kingship.

Eloaios’s feminine name is envy.

Oraios’s feminine name is wealth.

Astaphaios’s feminine name [102] is Sophia.

These are the [seven] powers of the seven heavens of [chaos].

The powers were androgynous in accordance with the immortal pattern that existed before them and the will of Pistis, so that the likeness of what was from the beginning might have power to the end.

You will find the function of the masculine names and powers in the *Archangelic Book of Moses the Prophet*.¹⁷ The feminine names are in the *First Book of Noraia*.¹⁸

Since the chief creator¹⁹ Yaldabaoth had great authorities at his disposal, he created beautiful heavens, by means of the word, as dwelling places for each of

his sons, and in each heaven he created great glories, seven times glorious. Each son has within his heaven thrones, mansions, temples, chariots, virgin spirits, and their glories, extending up to an invisible realm,²⁰ as well as armies of divine, lordly, angelic, and archangelic powers, myriads without number, so they might serve.

You will find a precise account of this in the *First Discourse of Oraia*.²¹

Everything was completed in this <way>²² up to the sixth heaven, the heaven of Sophia.

This heaven and earth were disrupted by the troublemaker who was beneath them all. The six heavens shook, for the powers of chaos did not know²³ who had disturbed the heaven beneath them. When Pistis found out about the harm caused by the troublemaker, she blew her breath, and she [bound him] and cast him down to Tartaros.

[Since then] heaven and **[103]** earth have established themselves through Sophia, who is the daughter of Yaldabaoth and is beneath them all.

Yaldabaoth Boasts That He Is God (103, 2–32)

After the heavens, their powers, and their entire government were established, the chief creator exalted himself, and he was glorified by the whole army of angels. All the gods and their angels praised and glorified him.

He was delighted. He boasted over and over again and said to them, “I don’t need anything.”

He said, “I am God, and there is no other but me.”²⁴

When he said this, he sinned against all the immortals who speak forth,²⁵ and they watched him carefully.

When Pistis saw the impiety of the supreme ruler, she became angry. Without being seen, she said, “You are wrong, Samael”—which means “blind god.” “An enlightened, immortal human exists before you and will appear within the forms you have shaped. The human will trample upon you as potter’s clay is trampled, and you will descend with those who are yours to your mother the abyss. And when your work comes to an end,²⁶ all the deficiency that appeared from truth will be dissolved. It will cease to be, and it will be like what never was.”

After Pistis said this, she revealed the likeness of her greatness in the waters, and then she withdrew up to her light.

Sabaoth Praises Pistis (103, 32–105, 20)

When Sabaoth son of Yaldabaoth heard the voice of Pistis, he sang songs of praise to her, but he condemned his father [and mother] **[104]** on account of the word of Pistis. He glorified her because she told them about the immortal human and the light of the human. Pistis Sophia pointed her finger and poured over him light from her light, as condemnation of his father. When Sabaoth was enlightened, he received great authority over all of the powers of chaos, and since then he has been called “lord of the powers.”²⁷

He hated his father, who is darkness, and his mother, who is the abyss. He loathed his sister, who is the thought of the chief creator and who moves to and fro over the waters.

All of the authorities of chaos were jealous of Sabaoth²⁸ because of his light. They were upset, and they waged a great war in the seven heavens.

When Pistis Sophia saw the war, she sent seven archangels to Sabaoth from her light. The archangels carried him up to the seventh heaven and stood in his presence as his attendants. Then she sent three more archangels to him and established his kingdom above everyone, so that he might dwell above the twelve gods of chaos.

When Sabaoth occupied the place of rest because of his repentance, Pistis also gave him her daughter Zoe,²⁹ with great authority, so that she might tell him about everything in the eighth heaven. And since he had authority, he first made himself a mansion. It is immense, magnificent, seven times as great as all the mansions in the seven heavens.

In front of **[105]** his mansion he created a large throne on a chariot with four faces, called cherubim. The cherubim throne has eight figures on each side of the four corners, figures of lions, bulls, humans, and eagles, and there are a total of sixty-four figures. Seven archangels stand before the throne. Sabaoth³⁰ is the eighth, and he has authority, and so there are seventy-two figures in all. From this chariot the seventy-two gods took shape, so that they might rule over the languages of the seventy-two nations.³¹ Beside that throne he created other, serpentlike angels called seraphim, who glorify him unceasingly.

Sabaoth Creates a Congregation of Angels, Israel, and Jesus
(105, 20–106, 19)

Then he created a congregation of angels, thousands, myriads without number, which was like the congregation in the eighth heaven. He also created a firstborn called Israel—that is, “the person who sees God”—and he created another being called Jesus Christ, who is like the Savior above in the eighth heaven and who sits at the right of Sabaoth³² on a remarkable throne. At his left the virgin of the

holy Spirit sits upon a throne and glorifies him. Seven virgins stand before her, with thirty harps and lyres and **[106]** trumpets in their hands, and they glorify him.³³ All the armies of angels glorify and praise him.

Sabaoth³⁴ sits on a throne covered by a great light cloud. No one was with him in the cloud except Sophia daughter of Pistis, and she taught him about all the things in the eighth heaven, so that what resembles these things might be created and his reign might last until the end³⁵ of the heavens of chaos and their powers.

Pistis Sophia moved him away from the darkness and summoned him to her right, and she put the chief creator at her left. Since then right has been called justice and left has been called injustice. They all received a realm in the congregation of justice, and injustice is set over all their creations.³⁶

Yaldabaoth Produces Death (106, 19–107, 17)

When the chief creator of chaos saw his son Sabaoth and the glory in which he dwells, and recognized that he was the greatest of all the authorities of chaos, he was jealous of him. He was angry, and he engendered death from his own death. Death was established over the sixth heaven, for Sabaoth had been carried away from there. So the complete number of the six authorities of chaos was realized.

Since death was androgynous, he had sex with himself and produced seven androgynous children. These are the names of the males: envy, wrath, tears, sighs, grief, lament, tearful groans. These are the names of the females: anger, pain, lust, sighs, curses, bitterness, strife. They had sex with each other, and each one conceived seven children, so that the children total **[107]** forty-nine androgynous demons.

You will find their names and functions in the *Book of Solomon*.³⁷

In the presence of these, Zoe, who dwells with Sabaoth, created seven good androgynous powers. These are the names of the males: the one not jealous, the blessed, the joyful, the true, the one not envious, the beloved, the faithful. These are the names of the females: peace, gladness, joyfulness, blessedness, truth, love, faith. Many good and pure spirits come from these powers.

You will find their accomplishments and functions in the *Configurations of the Fate of Heaven Beneath the Twelve*.³⁸

Yaldabaoth Is Distressed About His Mistake (107, 17–108, 5)

When the chief creator saw the reflection of Pistis in the waters, he was deeply

distressed, especially when he heard her voice, which was like the first voice that called to him out of the waters. When he knew that she was the one who gave him his name, he groaned. He was ashamed because of his transgression. And when he knew for certain that an enlightened, immortal human existed before him, he was greatly disturbed, because earlier he had said to all the gods and their angels, “I am God; there is no other but me.”³⁹ For he feared that they might know another existed before him and condemn him.

But the chief creator was a fool. He had contempt for condemnation and acted rashly, and he said, “If [108] anything existed before me, let it appear so that we may see its light.”

And at once, look, light shone out of the eighth heaven above and passed through all the heavens of the earth.

Adam of Light Shines Forth (108, 5–109, 1)

When the chief creator saw that the light was beautiful as it shone forth, he was amazed and very much ashamed. The light appeared and a human likeness was visible within it, and it was marvelous. No one saw it except the chief creator and Forethought,⁴⁰ who was with him. But its light was visible to all the powers of the heavens, and so they all were disturbed by it.

When Forethought saw this messenger of light,⁴¹ she fell in love with him, but he hated her because she was in darkness. She desired to mate with him, but she was not able. When she was unable to satisfy her desire, she poured out her light upon the earth.

Since then this messenger has been called Adam of light, which means “the enlightened person of blood.”⁴² The earth upon <which the light of Forethought>⁴³ spread was called holy Adamas, which means “the holy adamantine earth.”

From that time on all the authorities have honored the blood of the virgin, and the earth was purified because of the blood of the virgin.

Further, the water was purified by the reflection of Pistis Sophia, who had appeared to the chief creator in the waters. Rightly has it been said, “through the waters.”⁴⁴ Since the holy water gives life to all, [109] it purifies all.

Eros (109, 1–110, 1)

Out of this first blood Eros⁴⁵ appeared. Eros is androgynous. His masculine side is Himeros,⁴⁶ because he is fire from the light, and his feminine side is a soul of blood from the substance of Forethought. He is extremely handsome in

appearance, and more attractive than all the creatures of chaos.

When all the gods and their angels saw Eros, they fell in love with him. He appeared within them all and made them burn with desire. Just as many lamps are lit from a single lamp and all the light is the same but the light of the single lamp is not diminished, so also Eros was dispersed in all the creatures of chaos but was not diminished. Just as Eros appeared in the middle of light and darkness, and the sexual intercourse of Eros was accomplished in the middle of angels and people, so too the first sexual desire sprouted on the earth.

Woman followed the earth,
marriage followed woman,
birth followed marriage,
decay followed birth.

After Eros, a grapevine sprouted up from the blood that was shed upon the earth, and so those who drink of the fruit of the vine are filled with sexual desire.

After the grapevine, a fig tree and a pomegranate tree sprouted up from the earth, along with the rest of the trees, of every kind, and the seed of the trees came from the [110] semen of the authorities and their angels.

The Creation of Paradise (110, 2–111, 8)

Then justice created paradise. Paradise is beautiful, and is outside the circuit of the moon and the circuit of the sun in the land of pleasure, which is in the east in the rocky region. Desire dwells in the middle of the beautiful, stately trees. The tree of life eternal, as it appeared by the will of God, is in the north of paradise to give immortality to the souls of holy people,⁴⁷ who will leave their poor modeled bodies at the end of the age. The tree of life looks like the sun, and its branches are lovely. Its leaves are like the leaves of the cypress, its fruit is like a cluster of white grapes, and its height reaches the sky.

Next to it is the tree of knowledge,⁴⁸ which is endowed with the power of God. It is glorious as the moon shining brightly, and its branches are lovely. Its leaves are like fig leaves and its fruit is like a bunch of good, delicious dates. The tree of knowledge is in the north of paradise to arouse the souls from demonic stupor, so that they might come to the tree of life, eat its fruit, and condemn the authorities and their angels.

The impact of this tree is described in the *Holy Book*:

You are the tree of knowledge,
which is in paradise.

from which the first man ate.
You opened his mind,
and he loved his female partner
and condemned [111] other strange figures,
and he loathed them.⁴⁹

After this the olive tree sprouted, and it was to purify kings and high priests of justice who were to come in the last days. The olive tree appeared through the light of the first Adam for the sake of the oil of anointing that kings and high priests would receive.

The Creation of Plants, Animals, and Heavenly Bodies (111, 8–112, 25)

The first soul, Psyche, loved Eros,⁵⁰ who was with her, and she poured her blood upon him and upon the earth. From that blood the first rose sprouted upon the earth, out of a thorn bush, to give joy to the light that would appear in the bramble.

Next beautiful, fragrant flowers of every kind sprouted upon the earth from the blood of each of the virgin daughters of Forethought. They fell in love with Eros and poured their blood upon him and upon the earth.

Next, plants of every kind sprouted upon the earth, and they had the seed⁵¹ of the authorities and their angels within them.

Then the authorities created animals, reptiles, and birds of every kind from the waters, and they had the seed⁵² of the authorities and their angels within them.

But before all this, when Adam of light⁵³ appeared on the first day, he remained upon the earth about two days. He left the lower Forethought in heaven and ascended toward his light, and at once darkness covered the whole world.
[112]

When she wished, Sophia, who is in the lower heaven, received authority from Pistis and created great heavenly lights and all the stars, and she placed them in the sky to shine upon the earth and designate chronological signs, seasons, years, months, days, nights, moments, and so on. Thus the whole region of the sky was organized.

When Adam of light wished to enter his light, which is the eighth heaven, he could not do so because of the poverty mingled with his light. So he created a great aeon for himself, and in that eternal realm he created six more realms and their worlds, which are six in number and seven times better than the heavens of chaos and their worlds.

All these realms and their worlds are within the boundless region between the eighth heaven and chaos below it, and they are considered part of the world of poverty.

If you want to understand the organization of all these, you will find it described in the *Seventh Cosmos of Hieralias the Prophet*.⁵⁴

The Creation of Humankind (112, 25–114, 4)

Before Adam of light made his return, the authorities saw him in chaos. They laughed at the chief creator because he lied when he said, “I am God; no one exists before me.”

When they came to the chief creator, they said, “Is this being⁵⁵ not the God who ruined our work?”

He answered and said, “Yes. If you do not want him to be able to ruin our work, come, let’s create a human being out of earth in the image of our body and with a likeness [113] to this being, to serve us, so that when this being sees his likeness, he may fall in love with it. Then he will no longer ruin our work, and we shall make the children of the light our slaves for this entire age.”

All this happened in accordance with Pistis’s forethought, so that humanity might appear in this likeness and condemn the authorities because of their modeled bodies. For their modeled bodies contained the light.

The authorities received knowledge⁵⁶ they needed to create humanity. Sophia Zoe, who is with Sabaoth, anticipated them. She laughed at their decision, because they are blind, and they created humanity in ignorance and against their own interests. They did not know what they were doing.

So she anticipated them. She created her own human being first, so that he might tell the modeled bodies of the authorities how to despise them and how to escape them.

The birth of the instructor happened like this. When Sophia let a drop of light fall, it landed on the water, and at once there appeared an androgynous human being. Sophia first made the drop into the form of a female body, and then she took the body and gave it a shape like the Mother who had appeared. She finished it in twelve months.

An androgynous human being was born, whom the Greeks call Hermaphrodite. The Hebrews call the child’s mother Eve of life,⁵⁷ which means the female instructor of life, and the child born to her is lord. Later the authorities [114] called the child the beast so that it might lead their modeled bodies astray. The meaning of the beast is the instructor, for it turned out to be the wisest of all creatures.⁵⁸

Song of Eve (114, 4–24)

Eve is the first virgin, and she gave birth to her first child without a man. She was her own physician. For this reason she is said to have declared:

I am part of my mother, and I am the mother.
I am the wife, I am the virgin.
I am pregnant, I am the physician,
I am the comforter of birth pains.
My husband produced me, and I am his mother,
and he is my father and lord.
He is my strength,
he speaks of what he wants reasonably.
I am becoming,
but I have given birth to a lordly person.⁵⁹

This was revealed by the will of Sabaoth and his Christ to the souls who were going to enter the modeled bodies of the authorities,⁶⁰ about whom the holy voice said, “Flourish and multiply, rule over all creatures.”⁶¹ These souls were taken captive, in accordance with their destinies, by the chief creator, and they were locked up in the prisons of the modeled bodies⁶² <...until>⁶³ the end of the age.

The Rulers of the World Mold Adam (114, 24–115, 30)

Then the chief creator voiced his opinion about humankind to those who were with him. Then each of them ejaculated his semen into the middle of the navel of the earth.

Since then the seven archons have formed humanity with a body resembling their own body, but the likeness of humankind reflects the human being who appeared to them. The modeled body came into being, part by part, from each of the rulers, and the leader of the rulers created the brain and marrow.

Afterward the person appeared like the one before him. He became **[115]** a person with soul, and he was called Adam, which means father, after the name of the one who was before him.

After Adam was made, the chief creator abandoned him as a lifeless vessel, since Adam⁶⁴ was formed like an aborted fetus, with no spirit. When the chief ruler recalled the word of Pistis, he was afraid that the true human might enter his modeled body and rule over it. So he left his modeled body forty days without soul, and he withdrew and left him.

On the fortieth day Sophia Zoe blew her breath into Adam, in whom there was no soul. He began to crawl on the ground, but he could not stand up.

When the seven rulers came and saw him, they were greatly troubled. They approached him and grabbed him, and the chief ruler said to the breath within him, “Who are you? Where have you come from?”

He answered and said, “I have come through the power of the human to destroy your work...”⁶⁵

When they heard this, they glorified him, because he gave them rest from their fear and concern. They called that day the Day of Rest,⁶⁶ because they rested themselves from their troubles.

When they saw that Adam could not stand up, they were glad. They took him and put him in paradise, and withdrew up to their heavens.

Eve Gives Adam Life (115, 30–116, 8)

After the day of rest, Sophia sent her daughter Zoe, called Eve, as an instructor to raise Adam, in whom there was no soul, so that the children he would engender might be vessels of light.

[When] **[116]** Eve saw her male partner on the ground, she felt sorry for him and said, “Adam, live! Get up from the ground!”

At once her word became an accomplished deed. When Adam got up, at once he opened his eyes, and he saw her and said, “You will be called the Mother of the living, because you have given me life.”⁶⁷

The Powers Rape Earthly Eve (116, 8–117, 15)

The authorities were told that their modeled body was alive and had gotten up, and they were greatly troubled. They sent seven archangels to see what had happened.

They came to Adam, and when they saw Eve speaking with him, they said to each other, “Who is this enlightened woman? She looks like what appeared to us in the light. Come, let’s seize her and ejaculate our semen into her, so that she may be unclean and unable to ascend to her light, and her children will serve us. But let’s not tell Adam, because he is not one of us. Instead, let’s put him to sleep and suggest to him in his sleep that Eve came from his rib, so that the woman may serve and he may rule over her.”⁶⁸

Since Eve was a heavenly power, she laughed at what they had in mind. She blinded their eyes and secretly left something that resembled her with Adam.

She entered the tree of knowledge and stayed there. The rulers chased her,

and she revealed to them that she had entered the tree and had become a tree. The blind powers fell into great fear and ran away.

Later, when they recovered their sight, they came to [Adam]. They saw a female like that woman [117] with him, and they were troubled and thought this was the true Eve. They acted rashly. They came to her, seized her, and ejaculated their semen upon her.

The powers acted wickedly. They defiled her in ways natural and obscene. First they defiled the seal of her voice, which had said to them, “What exists before you?” In this way they meant also to defile those who say that they were born at the end of the age through the word, through the true human.

The authorities and their angels erred. They did not know they defiled their own body and likeness in all these ways.

Eve Bears the Children of the Powers (117, 15–118, 6)

She first became pregnant with Abel from the first ruler, and then she gave birth to her other children from the seven authorities and their angels.

All this happened in accordance with the chief creator’s forethought, so that the first mother might bear within herself every seed, every one mixed and joined with the fate of the world and its configurations, and justice.

A plan for Eve emerged, that the modeled bodies of the authorities might contain the light. Then the light would condemn the authorities through their own modeled bodies.

The first Adam of light is spiritual and appeared on the first day. The second Adam is psychical and appeared on the sixth day, called Aphrodite. The third Adam is earthly, a person of law, who appeared on the eighth day, called Sunday, [after] [118] the poor Day of Rest.⁶⁹

The offspring of earthly Adam multiplied and filled the earth, and they acquired all the technical skills psychical Adam had. But they all were in ignorance.

The Trees of Paradise and the Beast (118, 6–119, 19)

Let me continue.

When the rulers saw him and the woman with him in error and ignorance, like animals, they were very pleased.

Then they found out that the immortal human was not going to pass them by and they would even have to fear the woman who turned into a tree. They were troubled and said, “Could this be the one who blinded us and taught us about the

defiled woman who resembles the true human, in order to overpower us?”

The seven hatched a plot. They approached Adam and Eve carefully and said to him, “You may eat the fruit of every tree created for you in paradise, but be careful not to eat from the tree of knowledge. If you eat, you will die.”⁷⁰ They gave them a great fright and withdrew up to their authorities.

The beast, the wisest of all creatures, came by. When it saw the likeness of their mother, Eve, it said to her, “What did God say to you? ‘Do not eat from the tree of knowledge’?”

She said, “He not only said, ‘Do not eat from it,’ but ‘Do not touch it, or you will die.’”

The beast said to her, “Don’t be afraid. You certainly will [not die. He knows] that when you eat [119] from it your minds will become sober and you will be like gods, knowing the difference between evil and good people. He said this to you because he is jealous, so that you would not eat from it.”⁷¹

Eve believed the words of the instructor. She looked at the tree and saw it was beautiful and appealing, and she liked it. She took some of its fruit and ate, and she gave it to her husband too, and he also ate. Their minds opened.

When they had eaten,
the light of knowledge⁷² shone on them.
When they clothed themselves with shame,
they knew they were stripped of knowledge.
When they became sober,
they saw they were naked
and they fell in love.
When they saw their makers looked like beasts,
they loathed them.

They understood a great deal.

The Rulers Confront Adam and Eve (119, 19–121, 27)

When the rulers realized that Adam and Eve⁷³ had broken their commandment, they entered paradise and came to Adam and Eve with an earthquake and a great threat, in order to see what happened as a result of the help that was given. Adam and Eve were very much disturbed, and they hid in the trees in paradise. The rulers did not know where they were, and they said, “Adam, where are you?”

He said, “I’m here. I was ashamed and hid because I was afraid of you.”

They said to him, ignorantly, “Who told you about the shame with which you clothed yourselves? Unless you ate from the tree!”

He said, “The woman you gave me gave it to me, and I ate.”

They [said] to the woman, **[120]** “What have you done?”

She answered and said, “The instructor urged me to eat, and I ate.”

The rulers approached the instructor. Their eyes were blinded by it, and they could not do anything to it. They were powerless, and they cursed it. Then they came to the woman, and they cursed her and her children. After the woman they cursed Adam and the earth and the fruit because of him. Everything they created they cursed. There is no blessing from them. Good cannot come from evil.

Since then the authorities have known for certain that there is something stronger than they. They simply recognized that their commandment was broken. Great envy came into the world just because of the immortal human.⁷⁴

When the rulers saw that their Adam had acquired different knowledge, they wanted to test him. They gathered all the domestic animals, wild beasts of the earth, and the birds of the sky, and brought them to Adam to see what he would call them. When he saw them, he gave names to the creatures of the rulers.

The rulers were troubled that Adam had recovered from all his anguish.⁷⁵ They gathered together and made a plan, and said, “Look, Adam has become like one of us, and he knows the difference between light and darkness. Now perhaps he will go astray as he did with the tree of knowledge and will come to the tree of life, eat from it, and become immortal and [rule] and despise us and consider [us] and all our glory to be foolish. And he will denounce [us and our] world. Come, let’s throw him **[121]** out of paradise down to the earth, where he came from, so that he no longer can know anything better than we can.”

So they threw Adam and his wife out of paradise.

What they had done did not satisfy them. They were still afraid. So they went to the tree of life and set great dreadful things around it, fiery living creatures called cherubim, and among them they put a flaming sword, constantly turning in a terrifying way, so that no one from the earth might ever enter that place.⁷⁶

After this, since the rulers were jealous of Adam, they wanted to shorten the human life span, but they could not do so because of fate, which was established from the beginning. To each human being there was assigned a life span of one thousand years according to the circuit of the heavenly luminaries. Though the rulers were not able to do this, each one of the evildoers subtracted ten years, so the remaining time comes to nine hundred thirty years, and these are spent in grief and weakness and evil distractions. This is how life has gone, from that day until the end of the age.

Phoenixes, Water Serpents, and Bulls of Egypt (121, 27–123, 2)

When Sophia Zoe saw that the archons of darkness cursed her friends who were like her, she was angry. She came from the first heaven with all her power and chased the rulers from [their] heavens, and she cast them down into the sinful world so that they might dwell there as evil demons upon the earth.

[She sent a bird] [122] that was in paradise so that, until the end of the age, it might spend a thousand years in the rulers' world. The bird, a living creature endowed with soul, is called the phoenix, and it kills itself and revives itself as an image of the judgment against the rulers, because they dealt unjustly with Adam and his generation, until the end of the age.

There are three human beings and their descendants in the world until the end of the age: the spiritual, the psychical, and the earthly. This circumstance is like the three kinds of phoenixes of paradise:⁷⁷ the first is immortal, the second lives a thousand years, and the third is consumed, according to what is written in the *Holy Book*. Likewise, there are three baptisms: the first is spiritual, the second is by fire, the third is by water.

As the image of the phoenix appears with reference to the angels, so the water serpents⁷⁸ in Egypt indicate those who go down for the baptism of a true human being.⁷⁹

The two bulls in Egypt⁸⁰ indicate a mystery, the sun and the moon, which represent Sabaoth, because Sophia of the world has been exalted⁸¹ above the sun and the moon from the time when she created them and sealed her heaven until the end of the age.

The worm that is born from the phoenix also represents⁸² humanity. It is written of it, "The just will sprout like a phoenix."⁸³ The phoenix first appears alive, then dies, and then rises again, as an image of what appears at the end of the age.

These great images have [appeared] only in Egypt, not in other lands, indicating [123] that Egypt is like God's paradise.

Proof: The World Is in Error and Ignorance (123, 2–31)

Let us return to the rulers of whom we spoke, so that we may offer an explanation of them.

When the seven rulers were cast from their heavens down to the earth, they created for themselves angels, numerous and demonic, to serve them. These angels taught people much about error, magic, potions, idolatry, bloodshed, altars, temples, sacrifices, and libations to all the demons of the earth. The angels

work with fate,⁸⁴ which came into being by agreement of the gods of injustice and justice.

So when the world came into being, it went about in error and confusion all the time. All people on earth served the demons from the creation until the end of the age—both the angels of justice and the people of injustice. Thus the world was in confusion, ignorance, and stupor. All erred, until the appearance of the true human.

Enough on this. Next we shall consider our world so that we may present an accurate description of its structure and administration.

Then it will be clear how the proof of hidden things, which have been apparent from the foundation of the world to the end of the age, came about.⁸⁵

Epilogue: The Blessed Little Innocent Spirits and the Church
(123, 31–125, 14)

Now I come to the main points [about] immortal humanity. I shall discuss all the beings belonging to immortal humanity and explain how they got here.

When a multitude of people had come into being through [Adam, who] **[124]** was formed from matter, and the world was filled, the rulers reigned over it—that is, they kept it in ignorance.

What is the reason? It is this. The immortal Father knows that deficiency of truth came to be among the aeons and their world. So when he wanted to bring down the rulers of perdition by means of their modeled creatures, he sent the blessed little innocent spirits, who are like you, down to the world of perdition. They are not strangers to knowledge.⁸⁶

All knowledge is in one angel who appears to them. This angel stands before the Father and is not incapable of giving them knowledge.⁸⁷

Whenever they appear in the world of perdition, the blessed spirits immediately reveal the pattern of incorruptibility so as to condemn the rulers and their powers.

When the blessed spirits appeared in the modeled bodies of the authorities, the authorities were jealous of them. Out of envy the authorities mixed their semen⁸⁸ with them in order to defile them, but they were not able.

When the blessed spirits appeared in an enlightened form, they appeared in different ways. They came from different realms and revealed their knowledge to the church⁸⁹ that appeared in the modeled bodies of perdition. The church was found to have all kinds of seed because of the seed of the authorities mixed [with it].

Then the Savior made all of them [one]. The spirits of these people [proved

to be] superior, being blessed [125] but varying in election. There are many others who are kingless and superior to everyone before them.

So there are four generations. Three generations belong to the kings of the eighth heaven, and the fourth generation, which is the most exalted, is kingless and perfect.

These people will enter the holy place of their Father, and they will reside in rest, and eternal, ineffable glory, and ceaseless joy. They already are kings. They are the immortal within the mortal, and they will condemn the gods of chaos and their powers.

Jesus the Word (125, 14–32)

The Word⁹⁰ who is above all was sent for one reason only, to announce what is unknown. He⁹¹ said, “There is nothing hidden that is not apparent, and what has not been known will be known.”⁹²

These people were sent to reveal what is hidden and expose the seven authorities of chaos and their godlessness, and so they⁹³ were condemned to death.

When all those who are perfect appeared in the modeled bodies of the rulers and revealed matchless truth, they put to shame all the wisdom of the gods.

Their fate was condemnation,
their power was dried up,
their dominion was dissolved,
their forethought was [empty],
as was their glory.

The End of the Age (125, 32–126, 35)

Before the end [of the age], this whole region will shake with loud thunder. The archons will lament because of their [fear of] [126] death, the angels will grieve for their human beings, the demons will weep over their times and seasons, and their people will mourn and cry on account of their death.

Then the age will come, and they will be disturbed. Their kings will be drunk from the flaming sword and will wage war against each other, so that the earth will be drunk from the blood that is poured out. The seas will be troubled by war. The sun will darken and the moon will lose its light. The stars of the sky will abandon their circuits, and loud thunder will roar from a great power, above all the powers of chaos, where the firmament of the female⁹⁴ is located. She had

produced the first creation, and now she will put away her wise fire of afterthought and put on irrational wrath.

Pistis Sophia will drive out the gods of chaos, whom she had created along with the chief creator, and she will cast them down to the abyss. They will be wiped out through their own injustice. They will be like mountains blazing with fire,⁹⁵ and they will consume one another until they are destroyed by their chief creator. When he destroys them, he will turn on himself and attack himself until he is no more.

The heavens of the gods of chaos will collapse upon one another and their powers will be consumed. Their realms will also be overthrown. The chief creator's heaven will fall and split in half. His [stars in their sphere]⁹⁶ will fall down to the earth, [and the earth will not] be able to endure them. They will fall [down] to the abyss, and the abyss will be overthrown.

Light Overcomes Darkness (126, 35–127, 17)

The light will [overcome the] darkness and banish it. The darkness will be like [127] something that never was, and the source of darkness will be dissolved. Deficiency will be pulled out by its root and cast down into the darkness, and the light will withdraw up to its root.

The glory of the unbegotten will appear and fill all the eternal realms when the prophets and the writings of rulers⁹⁷ are revealed and fulfilled by those who are called perfect. Those who have not become perfect in the unbegotten Father will receive glory in their realms and the kingdoms of immortals, but they will never enter the kingless realm.

All must return to the place where they came from. By what they do and what they know all of them will reveal their natures.⁹⁸