

**GNOSTICISM AND
PLATONISM
THE PLATONIZING
SETHIAN TEXTS FROM
NAG HAMMADI IN
THEIR RELATION TO
LATER PLATONIC
LITERATURE**

by

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The attentive reader of the Sethian treatises contained in the Coptic Gnostic Library from Nag Hammadi is no doubt struck by the rather large fund of philosophical and technical terminology that they contain, particularly in their descriptions of the divine world and in certain cases their portrayal of the means necessary to become assimilated to that world. The intention of this paper is to examine this phenomenon and try to account for certain of its aspects as owing to an interaction between gnostic Sethians and a presumably well-established fund of metaphysical speculation deriving from Neopythagorean and Middleplatonian circles of the first three centuries of our era.

Current scholarship considers the following literature to be representative of Sethian gnostic doctrine: The "Barbeloite" report of Irenaeus (*Haer.* I.29); the reports on the Sethians (and Archontics and related groups) by Epiphanius (*Haer.* 26 & 39-40), pseudo-Tertullian (*Haer.* 2) and Filastrius (*Haer.* 3); the untitled text from the Bruce Codex (Bruce, *Untitled*); and the following treatises from the Nag Hammadi and Berlin gnostic codices: four versions of the Apocryphon of John (*Ap. John*: short versions, BG 8502, 2 and NHC III, 1; long versions NHC II, 1 and III, 1); The Hypostasis of the Archons (*Hyp. Arch.*: NHC II, 4); The Gospel of the Egyptians (*Gos. Egypt.*: NHC III, 2 and IV, 2); The Apocalypse of Adam (*Apoc. Adam*: NHC V, 5); The Three Steles of Seth (*Steles Seth*: NHC VII, 5); Zostrianos (*Zost.*: NHC VIII, 1); Melchizedek (*Melch.*: NHC IX, 1); The Thought of Norea (*Norea*: IX, 2); *Marsanes* (NHC X, 1); *Allogenes* (NHC XI, 3) and Trimorphic Protennoia (*Trim. Prot.*: NHC XIII, 1).

The formal genre of these materials varies. The bulk of them are apocalypses. *Apoc. Adam* is a deathbed testament of Adam to his son Seth, the spiritual progenitor of the historical Sethians, in which he reveals the content of a dream vision concerning the fortunes of Eve and himself, his son Seth and Seth's offspring in the contest between the evil creator Saklas and the beings of the higher world who will rescue the seed of Seth, especially through the final visitation of the "Illuminator." *Melch.* likewise contains revelations imparted to the biblical high priest

Melchizedek by the angel Gamaliel during a visionary experience revealing future events including his own ultimate assimilation with the suffering, dying and rising Savior Jesus Christ.

In contrast to these two treatises in which knowledge concerning the future course of history is communicated from the higher realm to the lower by an angelic intermediary, we also find three apocalypses which relate the singular experience of a gnostic visionary who himself achieves an ecstatic ascent through the various levels of the divine world and becomes divine. Thus *Allogenes*, *Zost.*, and *Marsanes* each feature a visionary figure, respectively Allogenes or Zostrianos or Marsanes, each of whom probably is to be understood as a manifestation of the Sethian gnostic savior Seth. Each figure undergoes a visionary ascent involving a vision of the divine world and its various personages, hypostases and levels of being, followed by a subsequent descent and transmission of this knowledge in written form for those who in the future would achieve a similar ascent.

One also finds two plainly didactic treatises, both apparently having undergone secondary Christian Sethian redaction: *Hyp. Arch.* contains an esoteric mythological interpretation of Genesis 1-6 in terms of the struggle between the spiritual rulers of this world and the exalted powers of the supreme deity over the fate of the divine image incarnated in Adam and his descendants, and concludes with a revelation discourse between Eve's daughter Norea and the great angel Eleleth concerning the origin and end of these ruling Archons. *Ap. John* is cast as a dialogue between John, son of Zebedee and the risen Jesus, who reveals the unknowable deity, the divine world which sprang from him, the fall of the divine wisdom (Sophia) resulting in the birth of the world creator and his making an earthly copy of the divine Adam, and concludes with the subsequent history of the attempts of various representatives of the divine world to awaken the divine spirit in Adam, Seth and Seth's seed which will culminate in ultimate salvation.

While these two treatises are primarily concerned with a

mythological theogony, cosmology, anthropogony and a history of salvation governed by the intervention of various divine saviors, two other treatises show themselves to be etiologies of the two principal Sethian cultic rites, baptism and visionary ascension. *Gos. Egypt.* explains the origin of Sethian baptism by means of a mythological theogony, cosmogony and history of salvation similar to that of *Ap. John*, but which is used to explain the origin and function of the figures who are invoked during the course of the baptismal ritual which has been conferred by Seth appearing in the form of Jesus. Although *Gos. Egypt.* has undergone Christian redaction, this is not the case with *Steles Seth*, a non-Christian etiology of the Sethian rite of ecstatic visionary ascent into the divine world. Here Seth is represented as originating and transmitting for his posterity a set of three doxological prayers, each of which is to be applied to a separate stage of the ecstatic ascent through the three highest levels of the divine world.

Another treatise, *Trim. Prot.*, takes the form of an aretology in which the divine First Thought, speaking in the first person, recites her attributes and deeds in three separate compositions relating respectively to her establishing heavenly dwellings for her fallen spirit trapped in mankind, her destruction of the power of the hostile spiritual rulers, and her final saving descent in the guise of Christ.

Finally, the short piece *Norea* is an ode to Norea, wife-sister of Seth, conceived as a manifestation of the fallen divine wisdom (Sophia) who will be restored along with her progeny into the divine world by the very aeons from which she once departed.

A major bifurcation arises among this group of treatises precisely in view of their use of various triadic schemes and structures. One group of treatises considers salvation to be conveyed by means of a horizontal, temporally ordered history of divine salvific visitations by successive descents of separate figures or repeated descents of the same figure in different modalities. Thus in *Apoc. Adam* and *Gos. Egypt.* there is a tripartitioning of history from the creation onwards in terms of

the biblical demiurge's attack on the Sethians, ancient through contemporary, by 1) the flood, whereupon they are rescued by certain angels, and 2) through the rain of fire and brimstone on the holy dwellings of the Sethians at Sodom and Gomorrah, whereupon they are rescued by the servants of the Four Lights (who preside over the heavenly aeons where Adam, Seth and his primal seed dwell); these acts will be followed by 3) a third and future act of salvation when the Illuminator will rescue their souls from death. While the final savior is an unidentified "Illuminator" in *Apoc. Adam*, in *Gos. Egypt.* the third saving descent will be undertaken by Seth himself in the guise of Jesus. In *Trim. Prot.*, this scheme is worked out in terms of three successive descents of the divine First Thought, Protennoia or Barbelo. First, as Father, she is the divine but as yet inarticulate Voice of the First Thought of the high deity (the Invisible Spirit) who creates heavenly dwellings for her fallen members and descends to loosen their bondage to the world and its powers. Second, as Mother, she is the articulate Speech of the Thought who overthrows the old aeon ruled by the evil powers and announces the dawn of the new age of salvation. Third, as the Son, she is the Word (*logos*) who adopts the guise of successively lower spiritual powers, descends to and enters the "tents" of her members, puts on Jesus, rescuing him from the accursed Cross, and leads her members back into the light by means of the celestial baptismal ascent ritual called the Five Seals.

The horizontal scheme of three descents is also present in (and probably derived from) the three-stanza hymnic conclusion to the longer version of *Ap. John* (NHC II, 1: 30,11-31,25), which similarly narrates in the first person three saving descents of the divine "Pronoia" culminating in the communication of the Five Seals. It should also be noted that the main body of all four versions of *Ap. John* likewise narrates three saving missions inaugurated by Barbelo, the merciful Mother-Father. First, she sends her divine son Autogenes (a celestial Adam or Seth figure) with his Four Lights to cause the ignorant demiurge to blow the spiritual power stolen from his mother Sophia into the

face of the freshly made but still inert Adam, unwittingly making him luminous. Second, she descends as the Epinoia of Light who hides in Adam, is transferred to Eve by means of Adam's rib, and initially enlightens him; after producing Cain and Abel by means of the demiurge, she bears Seth by her now spiritual husband Adam and elevates Seth and his seed for whom the now repentant Sophia has created a heavenly dwelling, and then aids Noah in escaping the flood. Thirdly and finally, the blessed Mother-Father sends the final savior, who in the present versions of *Ap. John* is the Christ who communicates the entire saving history to John as a saving revelation or Gnosis.

On the other hand, in the treatises *Allogenes*, *Steles Seth*, *Zost.* and *Marsanes*, one finds a more vertically oriented, non-temporal / historical scheme in which salvation is not brought from above to below by divine visitations, but rather occurs through a graded series of visionary ascents by the gnostic himself. Here one finds an exemplary visionary utilizing a self-performable technique of successive stages of mental detachment from the world of multiplicity, and a corresponding assimilation of the self to the evermore refined levels of being to which one's contemplation ascends, until one achieves the absolute unitary stasis of self-unification, mental abstraction and utter solitariness characteristic of deification. While not entirely clear in *Zost.* and *Marsanes* owing to their fragmentary condition, according to *Allogenes* and *Steles Seth* this ascent occurs in three stages: through the levels of the Aeon of Barbelo, through the levels of the Triple Powered One of the Invisible Spirit, and culminates in a "primary revelation" or "command" of the Unknowable One.

For the purposes of this paper, it is this latter group of four treatises, which I shall call "the *Allogenes* group," that shall be the focus of attention in this analysis of the relation between gnostic Sethianism and the Platonism contemporary with it. These treatises in particular display a strong rapprochement with contemporary Platonic metaphysics in their transcendental ontology and in their technique of contemplative ascent to the

high deity, not to mention their use of specific philosophical terminology such as "being," "non-being," "truly existing," "identity," "difference," "something," "quality," "quantity," "time," "eternity," "intellect," "individuals," "universals," "parts," "wholes," "existence," "vitality," "mentality," "life," and many more. These texts are further distinguished by the apparent absence of any Christian influence as well as the lack of prominent Sethian themes, such as the apocalyptic schematization of history according to periodic descents of a revealer or redeemer figure. They exhibit a greatly attenuated interest in or even total absence of a narrative of the cosmogony of this world including the downward declination of Sophia and the origin and activity of her offspring the demiurge. So also they lack the Sethian speculation on the creation of mankind and his primeval history drawn from traditional Sethian exegesis of the Old Testament, especially Genesis 1-6. Briefly put, in these texts, Sethianism has become a form of mythological Platonism.

In order to put the ensuing analysis of this "Allogenes group" of texts into perspective, I offer the following summary sketch of the history of the Sethian movement as reflected in their literature, with specific reference to the interaction between Sethianism and Christianity.[1]

It seems that Sethianism interacted with Christianity in five phases: 1) The Sethians likely originated as one of a number of Palestinian or Syrian baptismal sects in the first centuries BCE and CE; they considered themselves the historical progeny of Seth, their spiritual ancestor by whom (together with Adam) they had been primordially enlightened, but from whom they expected yet a final saving visitation in the form of the conferral of a new form of spiritual baptism called the Five Seals. 2) In the later first century, Sethianism gradually became Christianized through an emerging identification between the preexistent Christ and Seth (or Adam) that resulted from increasing contact with Christian groups. 3) Toward the end of the second century, Sethianism gradually became estranged from a Christianity increasingly on the road to a polemical orthodoxy which rejected the rather docetic Sethian

interpretation of Christ. 4) In the third century Sethianism is rejected by the Great Church, but in the meantime has become strongly attracted by the individualistic contemplative practices of second and third century Platonism, a shift that entailed a gradual loss of interest in their primal origins and sacred history and a corresponding attenuation of their awareness of group or communal identity (i.e. a tendency toward "rootlessness"). 5) In the late third century, Sethianism also became estranged from orthodox (Neo)Platonism under the impetus of attacks and refutations from the circle of Plotinus and other Neoplatonists which were just as effective as those of the Christian heresiologists. At this time, whatever Sethianism was left became increasingly fragmented into various derivative and other sectarian gnostic groups such as the Archontics, Audians, Borborites, Phibionites and others, some of which survived into the Middle Ages.

The designation "Allogenes group" for the strongly Platonizing Sethian treatises is meant to signal the originality of the doctrine of the divine world and of the visionary ascent spelled out in *Allogenes* (*See note at end of this article!*). By comparison, it seems to me that the other members of this group, *Steles Seth*, *Zost.*, and *Marsanes*, are dependent upon *Allogenes* rather than the other way around. *Steles Seth*, as previously mentioned, seems to be an etiology of a previously existing rite of cultic ascension oriented toward a community praxis. *Zost.* clearly tries to interpret the visionary ascent in terms of the older tradition of Sethian baptism by marking out each stage of the ascent as a certain baptism or sealing. *Marsanes* does likewise, almost as an aside in the first few pages of that document. It is only in *Allogenes* that we see an author at work trying to make sense out of the assemblage of traditional Sethian divine beings by means of Platonic metaphysical categories and structures without any particular interest in trying to legitimate these speculations in terms of cultic tradition; the only legitimation invoked is that he received his doctrine through traditional Sethian revealers (Youel and the Luminaries of the Aeon of Barbelo), but even this is subordinate

to his own vision of these realities.

We now pass on to a more detailed examination of the doctrine of *Allogenes* as being generally representative of the group as a whole. The cosmology of *Allogenes* presents itself as tripartite in structure. There is a highest unbegotten level, apparently called *pantelios*, "all perfect," which is headed by the Unknowable One or Invisible Spirit and its Triple Powered One; a median self-begotten level, apparently called *telios*, "perfect," which is the Aeon of Barbelo; and a lowest begotten level, referred to once as Nature (*fusis*). These levels seem to correspond to the levels of Plotinus' three hypostases the One, the Intellect and the Soul; his lowest, Matter, does not seem to figure in *Allogenes*.

The Unknowable One (called the Unknowable God in 61,16) is, like the One of Plotinus, to be regarded as beyond being. It is non-being existence (*hyparxis*, 62,23), silent and still (62,25-26), not an existing thing (63,9-18), and absolutely unknowable (63,13; 63,29-32; 64,4-14). It transcends all its positive attributes and properties which are in turn unknowable: blessedness, perfection and divinity or stillness (62,28-36; 63,33-64,4), since it is better than those that are better (63,19). It exists, <lives> and knows without Mind, Life or Existence (or non-existence, for that matter: 61,32-39; 62,17-20). Since it shares neither time nor eternity (*aiôn*, 63,21-23; cf. 65,21-24), it is perhaps to be regarded as pre-eternal. Its major positive name seems to be the Invisible Spirit, although this term is sometimes used in such a way that one might regard it as a syzygy of the Unknowable One, or even as a cognomen of its potency, the Triple Powered One.

Certainly the most intriguing feature of *Allogenes'* metaphysics, and perhaps the crucial feature by which it can be placed at a definite point in the Platonic metaphysical tradition, is the doctrine of the Triple Powered One. This being is mentioned sometimes separately from (XI, 3: 45,13-30; 52,30-33; 53,30; 55,21; 61,1-22; regularly in *Marsanes*) and sometimes in conjunction with the Invisible Spirit (XI, 3: 47,8-9; 51,8-9; 58,25; 66,3334; cf. *Zost.* VIII, 1: 20,15-18; 24,12-13;

97,2-3; 128,20-21) as "the Triple-powered Invisible Spirit" or "the invisible spiritual Triple Powered One." By a static self-extension, the Invisible Spirit through its Triple Powered One becomes the Aeon of Barbelo (XI, 3: 45,21-30; cf. *Zost.* VIII, 1: 76,7-19; 78,10-81,20; *Steles Seth* VII, 5: 121,20-122,18; *Marsanes* X, 1: 8,18-9,28). Furthermore, the Triple Powered One is said to be the traverser of the boundlessness of the Invisible Spirit which turns the Triple Powered One back on itself in order to know what is within the Invisible Spirit and how it exists, a notion very close to the Neoplatonic doctrine of emanation in which a product proceeds from its source and becomes hypostatized in the act of contemplative reversion upon its source. In this case, the Triple Powered One, initially unbounded, turns back upon its source in an act of objectivizing self-knowledge, becoming bounded and taking on form and definition as Barbelo, the self-knowledge or First Thought of the Invisible Spirit (XI,3: 49,8-21). Virtually the same notions are found in *Steles Seth* (VII,5: 121,20-122,19), *Zost.* (VIII,1: 66,top-84,22) and *Marsanes* (X,1: 7,1-9,29).

The Triple Powered One is also identified with the triad Existence (*hyparxis*) or Being (*ousia* or *petsoop* = *to on*), Life (*pônkh* = *zôê*) or Vitality (*mntônh* = *zôotês*) and Mentality (*mnteime* = *noêtês*, a neologism) which the Unknowable One, although it exists, lives and thinks, does not itself possess (49,26-38; 61,32-39; 62,17-20). A similar phenomenon is found in Plotinus, derived from his exegesis of Plato, *Sophist* 248C-E to the effect that true being must also have life and intelligence:

Life, not the life of the One, but a trace of it, looking toward the One was boundless, but once having looked was bounded (without bounding its source). Life looks toward the One and, determined by it, takes on boundary, limit and form ... it must then have been determined as (the life of) a Unity including multiplicity. Each element of multiplicity is determined multiplicity because of Life, but is also a Unity because of limit ... so Intellect is bounded Life (*Ennead* VI.7.17,13-26).

On the whole, Plotinus tends to conceive Being, Life and Mind as aspects of his second hypostasis, Intellect, owing to his

increasing aversion to the multiplication of the transcendental hypostases beyond three. He regards the One as entirely transcendent to Intellect; there is no being that exists between them as mediator, nor may one distinguish between a higher intellect in repose and a lower one in motion, or a One in act and another One in potency (*Ennead* II.9.1); nor may one distinguish between an intellect at rest, another in contemplation and yet another that reflects or plans (*Ennead* II.9.6) as did Numenius in his *Peri t'Agathou* (frgg. 11-23 des Places). Since the Triple Powered One of *Allogenes* seems to mediate between the Unknowable One and the next lower hypostasis, the Aeon of Barbelo, it seems to function either as a One in potency or perhaps as a higher form of Intellect (i.e. of Barbelo), it may be that, since *Allogenes* was likely read in his circle (Porphyry, *Vita Plot.* 16), it was this doctrine of *Allogenes* and not just that of Numenius which provoked Plotinus' criticism in *Ennead* II.9 and caused him to place the Being, Life, Mind triad in the Intellect rather than conjoining it with the One as the link between these two.

There was certainly precedent in Neopythagorean arithmological speculation for regarding a triad to be conjoined with or reside latently within the One or the Monad. Theon of Smyrna, a Neopythagorean Platonist of the early second century, wrote: *estin prôton ho monas, legomenê trigônnon ou kat' entelecheian hôs proeirêkamen, alla kata dunamin, epei gar hautê oion sperma pantôn estin arithmôn. echei en heautêi kai trigônnoeidê dunamin* (*Expositio* 37,15-18 Hiller). So also Theon's contemporary, Nicomachus of Gerasa: *hina kai trigônnos dunamei fainetai hê monas. energeia de prôtos ho G'* (*Eisagoge* II.8 p. 88,9-10 Hoche; cf. <Iamblichus>, *Theol. Arith.* 16,4-6 de Falco). Such speculation may have influenced both Plotinus and the author of *Allogenes*.

The nomenclature of the Being-Life-Mind triad is held to derive from late Platonic exegesis of Plato (*Sophist* 248C-E and *Timaeus* 39E) and perhaps of Aristotle (*Metaphys.* XII.7, 1072b,2731), all passages dealing with the relation between true being and the living divine Intellect. However, a somewhat

similar nomenclature for a transcendent triad is found in the first half of the first century in Irenaeus' report on the "Barbeloite" (i.e. Sethian) system in *Haer.* I.29 and in *Ap. John* (BG 8502, 2: 28,5-29,8): Barbelo, as the self-realization of the Thought of the Invisible Spirit, asks it to grant her Prognôsis (conceptually close to intellect or intellection), Aphtharsia (characteristic of stable being as opposed to perishable becoming), and Aiônia Zôê. This could be a more personified precursor of the Being-Life-Mind triad of *Allogenes*, although it is produced at a lower ontological level (that of Barbelo rather than that of the Invisible Spirit) equivalent to the level of Mind (i.e. where Plotinus locates this triad).

Since *Allogenes* probably derives a part of its negative theology from *Ap. John* (XI, 3: 62,28-63,23 = BG 8502, 2: 23,3-26,13 = II, 1: 3,18-30), it indeed may have been influenced by the triad Prognôsis, Aphtharsia, and Aiônia Zôê as well as by speculation based upon the above-mentioned Platonic passages. Guided by the sort of contemporary Neopythagorean arithmological speculation cited above, the author of *Allogenes* could easily have arrived at the Being-Life-Mind nomenclature which is applied to the Triple Powered One.

To be sure, in *Allogenes* the nomenclature for the triad varies. In 49,26-38 one finds Being (variously *pê ete paï pe*, *petsoop* and *ousia*), Life (*pônh*) as well as Vitality (*mntônh* perhaps translating *zôotês*), and Mentality (variously *mnteime* and the neologism *noêtês*). No particular hierarchical order of these terms is specified in this passage, since each single term includes the other two in cyclical permutations. But in the section 58,26-61,22 relating *Allogenes*' ascent through the levels of the Triple Powered One, one finds the hierarchical order Existence (*hyparxis*), Vitality and Blessedness (highest to lowest), while in 61,32-39 (also 62,19-20) one finds the non-hierarchical order Existence (and nonexistence!), Life and Mind.

The variation between the Coptic noun *ônh* and the abstract *mntônh*, (corresponding respectively to *zôê* and *zôotês*) initially seems to be without significance, although when one compares it with the variation between *nous* and *noêtês* (probably for

nootês), one gets the impression that abstracts seem to be preferred, perhaps in order to avoid the implication that Life or Vitality or Mentality are to be taken as substantial hypostases. Indeed, Proclus (*In Parm.* 1106,1-1108,19 Cousin) mentions a technique of paronymy, in which abstracts in *-otês* ontologically precede their respective substantives, by which one may illustrate that acts precede their substances; an example would be this series of terms from most abstract to most substantial: *noêma*, *nooun*, *nootês*, and *nous*.

The variation between the terms Mentality and Blessedness is also significant. The term Blessedness figures in the triad Blessedness, Perfection and Divinity (62,28-36; 63,33-37; cf. 55,2628; the source of this triad is *Ap. John* BG 8502, 2: 24,9-12; NHC II, 2: 3:20-22; in *Allogenes*, the term Blessedness occurs consistently, while the term Perfection varies with Goodness and Existence and the term Divinity is once replaced with Silence). In *Allogenes*, Blessedness is an attribute of the highest level of the Aeon of Barbelo (Kalyptos, 58,7-20) and is generally the main attribute of the lowest level of the Triple-Powered One. There are two further witnesses for the correspondence between Blessedness and Mentality. The latest is Victorinus, *Adv. Arium* I.52,3-5 Henri-Hadot: *Deus potentia est instarum trium potentiarum, existentiae, vitae, beatitudinis, hoc est eius quod est esse, quod vivere, quod intellegere*. The earlier is *Zost.*, VIII, 1: 15,3-12:[2]

[These are the] perfect waters: the [water] of Life, which is that of Vitality, in which you have now been [baptized] in Autogenes; the [water] of Blessedness, which is [that of] Mentality, in which you shall be baptized in Protophanes; and the water of Existence, which is that of Divinity, which belongs to Kalyptos.

In *Allogenes* the variation between the terms Being (*pê ete paï pe*, *pet[sinvcircumflex]oop* and *ousia*, possibly all for *to on* or *ontotês*) and Existence (*hyparxis*) is highly significant, since while Plotinus used *to on* for the first member of the triad, Porphyry apparently used the term *hyparxis*. P. Hadot[3] thinks that Porphyry was the first to adopt this term for the triad, and

that he may have discovered it in the *Chaldaean Oracles*, where it apparently designated the high deity, the Father (cf. Damascius, *Dub. et sol.* 61, 1.131,17 Ruelle *hê men prôt archê kata tên hyparxin theôreitai. hês en tois logois* and 221, 2.101,25 Ruelle: *hês haldaïkôs eipein, ho men nous kata tên energeian histatai mallon. Hê de zôê, kata tên dunamin, hê de ousia, kata tên tou patros hyparxin.*

In Neoplatonism, the One is generally beyond being; being characterizes the second hypostasis Intellect. Although Plotinus radically separated these hypostases, most Neoplatonists after him (save possibly Iamblichus) did not, wishing instead to emphasize the continuity rather than the discontinuity of the chain of being. This tendency is nicely demonstrated in the contemporary exegesis of Plato's *Parmenides* in which the One of the first hypothesis (137D-142A) was identified with the Plotinian One, and the One-who-is of the second hypothesis (142B-143C) was identified with Intellect, as in this citation from the anonymous *Parmenides* commentary published by Kroll:[4]

The One beyond essence and being is neither being nor essence nor act, but rather acts and is itself pure act, such that it is itself being (*einai*) before being (*to on*). By participating this being (the *einai* of the One), the One (*scil.* "who is," i.e. the second One) possesses another being declined from it (the *einai* of the Supreme One) which is to participate being (*to on*). Thus being (*einai*) is double: the first preexists (*proiiparchei*) being (*to on*); the second is derived from the transcendent One who is absolute being (*einai*) and as it were the idea of being (*to on*).

One ought to compare with this *Allogenes* 61,32-39: "Now it (the Unknowable One) is something insofar as it exists in that it either exists and will become or acts or knows, although it lives without Mind or Life or Existence (*hyparxis*) or nonexistence, incomprehensibly."

In his article of 1961 and book of 1968, Hadot argues forcefully for ascribing the anonymous *Parmenides* commentary to Porphyry. In this work, the doubleness of being is meant to

show how the supreme One can be both continuous and discontinuous with the Intellect below it. The One is not simply beyond being (*to on*), but has a higher form of purely active being (*einai* rather than the more fixed and stable *to on*) in which the Intellect merely participates. So also, by the term *hyparxis*, *Allogenes* likewise wished to attribute a purely active being to the Unknowable One.

Hadot argues further that Porphyry conceived the Intellect in two phases: a first in which Intellect is still identical with its source the One, and, after its generation from the One, a second in which it has become Intellect itself. In this self-generation, *hyparxis* is the leading term in a three stage process. As *Anon. Taurensis* = <Porphyry>, *In Parm.* XIV, 10-26 puts it:

With respect to [existence (*hyparxis*) alone] it (the potential Intellect still identical with the One) is one and simple ... with respect to existence (*hyparxis*), life (*zôê*) and thought (*noêsis*) it is neither one nor simple. With respect to existence, thinking is also being thought. But when Intellect [abandons] existence for thinking so as to be elevated to the rank of an intelligible in order to see itself (as an intelligible; cf. *Allogenes* 49,6-14), thinking is life. Therefore thinking is boundless with respect to life. And all are activities (*energeiai*) such that with respect to existence, activity would be static; with respect to thinking, activity would be directed to itself; and with respect to life, activity would be turning away from existence.

Now it is quite probable that Porphyry made *hyparxis* (rather than *to on* as did Plotinus) the leading term of this triad. In the works cited above, Hadot argues that this version of the triad originated with Porphyry even though it occurs in none of his extant works nor is explicitly attributed to him by ancient authors. But Hadot has interpreted certain statements of Damascius such as those cited above and statements of Porphyry himself in such a way as to show that Porphyry regarded the highest deity to be simultaneously continuous and discontinuous with the Intellect below by means of this triad. Partly on the grounds that such a doctrine appears in the

anonymous *Parmenides* commentary cited above, Hadot assigns the commentary to Porphyry. Hadot's attribution to Porphyry of the triad with *hyparxis* as its leading term rests heavily on his claim that Porphyry is the author of the commentary. Hadot also invokes the working hypotheses of W. Theiler:[5] every non-Plotinian Neoplatonic doctrine found both in Augustine and a later Neoplatonist derives from Porphyry. Augustine (*De civ. Dei* X.23) reports that Porphyry interposed a *medium* between the supreme deity (*pater*) and the Intellect (*filius*), which Hadot identifies with the modality of the triad in which life predominates. The "later Neoplatonists" would be Proclus, Damascius and especially Victorinus, whose metaphysics is strikingly close to that of the anonymous *Parmenides* commentary (and to that of *Allogenes* for that matter). Therefore the commentary is Porphyrian.

If this is Porphyry's doctrine, one can see that it differs from Plotinus' triad not only in the substitution of the term *hyparxis* for *to on*, but also in distinguishing two modalities or phases of the Intellect: First, as *hyparxis* it is potential intellect still identical with its idea, the *einai* of the One. Second, as *noêsis* it is actual Intellect insofar as it is identical with the substantial exemplification (the *to on* of Intellect) of its idea, the One. Therefore the transitional stage between these two phases in effect constitutes a median modality (Augustine's *medium patris et filii*) in which Intellect is yet undefined, "boundless" thinking as it were (cf. "the traverser of the boundlessness of the Invisible Spirit," in *Allogenes* 49,8-10), or Intellect *qua* Life. Correspondingly in *Allogenes*, the Triple Powered One is continuous with the Invisible Spirit or Unknowable One as *hyparxis*, and discontinuous with it as Mentality (but now identical with the Aeon of Barbelo). But as Vitality, the Triple Powered One can be regarded as discontinuous with both, which is why *Allogenes* tends to represent the Triple Powered One as an independent hypostasis, or sometimes names it in conjunction now with the Invisible Spirit and now with Barbelo (as in 64,34-36). Thus the ontological status of the Triple Powered One is very close to that of the Life modality of the

triad in Hadot's exposition of Porphyry's metaphysics. Indeed, the Triple Powered One is explicitly identified with "Eternal Life" in *Allogenes* (66,32-36).

Yet, as 49,28-36 makes clear, the Triple Powered One even *qua* Vitality still has Being (That-which-is) and Knowledge; the same is made clear in this striking parallel citation from Proclus, *Elem. theol.* 103, 92,13-16 Dodds:

Proclus

Allogenes 49,28-36

<p>For in Being (<i>to on</i>) there is Life and Intellect, and in Life there is Being (<i>einai</i>) and Intellection (<i>noein</i>), and in Intellect there is Being (<i>einai</i>) and Living (<i>zên</i>).</p>	<p>For then That-which-is constantly possesses its Vitality and Mentality, and Vitality possesses Being (<i>ousia</i>) and Mentality; Mentality (<i>noêtês</i>) possesses Life and That-which-is.</p>
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Each term in the series predominates and includes the other two in cyclical permutation. Hadot illustrates this phenomenon with respect to <Porphyry's> triad *hyparxis*, *zôê* (or *dynamis*) and *noêsis* by means of the following diagram:

First triad = Father	<i>Existence</i>	Life	Intellection
Second triad = Life	Existence	<i>Life</i>	Intellection
Third triad = Intellect	Existence	Life	<i>Intellection</i>

In each of the three phases of the triad, the underlined term indicates the relative predominance of one of its three modalities; The first triad is coincident with the One and the third triad is coincident with the Intellect, in effect giving rise to the median triad which Augustine called the *medium*. In the case

of *Allogenes*, one might suggest a similar scheme based on the passage just cited as well as 61,34-38: the Unknowable One "exists and will become or <lives> or knows, although it <acts> without Mind or Life or Existence or nonexistence, incomprehensibly" (cf. also 54,9-61,22):

Unknowable One/ Invisible Spirit	<i>Exists</i>	Lives	Knows
Triple Powered One/ Eternal Life	Existence	<i>Vitality</i>	Mentality
Barbelo/ First Thought	(Being)	(Life)	<i>Knowledge</i>

The scheme is similar to that of <Porphyry> with certain exceptions. The terminology is used more fluidly, with less rigor and precision. In accord with Proclus' technique of paronymy mentioned above, the triad as applied to the Unknowable One employs verbs which serve to stress its pure activity and utter non-substantiality, while abstracts are applied to the Triple Powered One and, as one might expect, concrete substantives to Barbelo. At the level of Barbelo, the parentheses indicate that the Being-Life-Mind triad is instead represented by a rather more Sethian mythological triad, Kalyptos, Protophanes, and Autogenes (although Barbelo is specifically called Knowledge in 45,16), which in the "Allogenes group" in turn replaces the triad Prognôsis, Aphtharsia and Aiônia Zôê found in *Ap. John*. The correspondence between the Barbelo triad and the triad of the Triple Powered One can be seen in 54,8-16, where the male Mind Protophanes (= "Harmedon") is praised according to Vitality; another being, presumably Autogenes, is praised according to Mentality; and in the missing section at the top of page 54, another being, presumably Kalyptos, was praised according to Existence.

The fact that the leading term can be expressed by both *hyparxis* and *to on* seems to show that *Allogenes* trades in the same terminology familiar to Plotinus on the one hand and to Porphyry on the other at a point in the speculative process where terminological fluidity still obtained. The fact that Plotinus reacted against the notion of an Intellect consisting of several

distinct levels (*Ennead* II.9.1; 9.6, a notion which *Allogenes* clearly implies) and surely would be ill-disposed to the location of a triad latent in the One or between the One and Intellect means that the scheme of *Allogenes*, and not only that of Numenius and others, as is usually supposed, was likely one of those so strongly rejected by Plotinus. The similarity between the schemes of *Allogenes* and of the <Porphyrian> *Parmenides* commentary may indicate that Porphyry could have derived his scheme as much from *Allogenes* as from the *Chaldaean Oracles* which are cited by the commentary.

The fact that the scheme of *Allogenes* is, by contrast with that of these two philosophers, rather unsystematic owes not only to the author's desire to reconcile his doctrine with traditional Sethian mythological cosmologies, but may also quite likely owe to his originality. That is, *Allogenes* may have been an important catalyst and conceptual source to both Plotinus and Porphyry, no matter how unacceptable certain other of its features may have been to them. Since the author of *Allogenes* is quite capable of accurate citation of his sources (cf. his citation of the negative theology from *Ap. John*, discussed below), the unsystematic character of his metaphysics more likely owes to his originality than to a confusion or misappropriation of the doctrine of Plotinus or of Porphyry. The fact that *Allogenes* or some version thereof was read in Plotinus' circle tends to add weight to this likelihood.

In sum, the fact that revelations under the names of "Allogenes," "Zostrianos," and "Zoroaster," circulated in Plotinus' seminars, coupled with the fact that doctrines refuted by Plotinus in *Ennead* II,9 are so close to those of the "Allogenes group," seems to suggest that the Neoplatonists are more likely dependent on the Sethian "Platonists" than the reverse. If so, a treatise like *Allogenes* would have been produced at a point prior to Plotinus' antignostic polemic (*Enneads* III.8, V.8, V.5 and II.9 [chronologically 30-33] as identified by R. Harder) of the years 244-269 CE.

Before we pass on to an analysis of the Aeon of Barbelo which is the equivalent to the Neoplatonic intellectual level in

these Sethian texts, it will first be useful to outline certain features of the doctrine of Numenius and of the *Chaldaean Oracles* for purposes of comparison, especially since these systems were in all likelihood formulated in the second half of the second century, and may have been known to the author of *Allogenes*, whose work may have been produced around the end of this period.

Numenius exhibits a very complicated system of three gods, which has been interpreted in various ways, owing to apparent contradictions between fragments of his work *On the Good* contained in Eusebius' *Preparation for the Gospel* and various *testimonia* to his philosophy from such later authors as Proclus, Chalcidius, Porphyry, Macrobius, Iamblichus and others. As Dodds and others have suggested,[6] Numenius' system of three gods seems to be inspired by the three kings of Plato's *Second Letter* 312E and the distinction between the contemplative (*kathorôn*) and planning (*dienoêthê*; in Numenius *dianooumenos*) activities of the demiurge according to *Timaeus* 39E which Plotinus also discussed in *Ennead* II,9.1 & 9.6; also III,9.1. Following the admirable reconstruction of M. Baltes,[7] Numenius seems to exhibit the following system of three gods. The first god is an inert Mind, called the Monad, King and Sower; it is the Good in itself and is characterized by stability and motionless motion. Though not explicit in the system, this Monad seems to be opposed by an Indefinite Dyad, that is Matter, at first unbegotten, but then begotten by the Demiurge (i.e. by the second and third gods; cf. frg. 52 des Places). The second god, called Good and Cultivator, is a Mind in motion contemplating (*kathorôn, theôrêtikos*) the first, in which act it is self-generated (*autopoiei tèn te idean eautou kai ton kosmon*) as an imitation of the first god (frg. 16 des Places). But this self-generation is also the generation of the world; that is, the second god is dyadic, alternating between contemplation of the first god above and demiurgical activity directed below (for so I interpret *dêmiourgos ôn, epeita theôrêtikos holôs*, frg. 16 des Places, against most interpreters). The third god is the demiurge proper insofar as it is occupied with Matter; indeed it is a sort of

conjunction between the second god and Matter, and is the Mind which intends or plans (*dianooumenos*) the world. In this sense, the third god would correspond to something like the Logos or rational part of the World Soul in the systems of Philo of Alexandria or Plutarch of Cheironia. Presumably the fourth level of Numenius' system would be occupied by the World Soul proper as a conjunction of the third god with Matter. For this reason, the third god is the rational part of the World Soul (*anima beneficentissima*, frg. 52 des Places), while the passive, hylic component of the World Soul actually constitutes a lower, evil soul. Finally, the last ontological level is the physical world.

Somewhat as in the Old Academic system of Speusippus, it seems that in Numenius, Matter or the Indefinite Dyad is associated with all levels: insofar as the second god is associated with Matter, it is split by it, becoming a second and third god (frg. 11 des Places); the combination of the second god with Matter is the third god, the beneficent aspect of the World Soul; and the combination of Matter with the third god is the lower or subrational aspect of the World Soul.

Roughly contemporaneous with Numenius are the *Chaldaean Oracles*, attributed to Julian the Theurgist who was credited with a miraculous deliverance of Marcus Aurelius' troops in 173 CE. The *Oracles* exhibit a hierarchical system with many Neopythagorean features. The supreme god is called the Father, Bythos (frg. 18 des Places), who is totally transcendent, having nothing to do with creation, and can be apprehended only with the "flower of the mind," a non-knowing, mentally vacant mode of intellectual contemplation (frgg. 1 & 18 des Places; the same doctrine as is found in *Allogenes*). The Father is the Monad, presumably beyond being (*hapax epekeina*), but also consists of a triad comprising himself or his existence (*hyparxis*, according to Damascius, *Dub. et sol.* 61, p.131,17 Ruelle; cf. frg. 1 line 10 des Places), his power and his intellect. Below him is the demiurgic Intellect proceeding from the Father who himself remains aloof with his power but does not confine "his fire" (frgg. 3, 4, & 5 des Places). This Intellect is a Dyad, contemplating the intelligible realm (of the Father's intellect),

and bringing sense-perception to the world (frgg. 7 & 8 des Places). Furthermore, this Intellect is "dyadically transcendent" (*dis epekeina*), yet it too is also triadic insofar as it contains the "measured triad" (probably ideal forms or numbers) flowing from both it and the triadic Father (frgg. 26-29 & 31 des Places). Thus there is in effect an ennead: the first triad of the Father together with his power and intellect; the second triad of the dyadically oriented (above and below) demiurgic Intellect; and third the "measured triad" representing the multiplicity of the Ideas. On the border between the intelligible and sensible realms as both a barrier and link between them (so J. Dillon),[8] is Hecate, a sort of diaphragm or membrane (frg. 6 des Places), the life producing fount (frgg. 30 & 32 des Places) from which the World Soul flows (frg. 51 des Places). Finally, there is the world of Matter, springing both from the Intellect and the Father (frgg. 34-35 des Places). Yet, as Dillon correctly points out, Hecate exists on a higher level as well, being the center between the two fathers (frg. 50 des Places) and thus identified with the Father's power. As Hadot explains, Porphyry also must have located Hecate at this upper level (*apud Augustine, De civ. Dei 10.23, patris et filii medium*).

Hadot also provides a diagram to show the structure presupposed in the system, in which the vertical axis represents the ontological and hypostatic hierarchy, and the horizontal axis represents the relative predominance of the components of the triad formed at each level:[9]

Paternal Monad	<i>the Father</i>	his power	his intellect
Hecate (as center)	(father)	<i>power</i> (life)	(intellect)
Dyadic Intellect	(father)	(power)	<i>Intellect</i>
Measured Triad (Ideas)	Iynges	Synocheis	Teletarchai
Hecate (as membrane)		fount of life	
World Soul		mistress of life	
Nature			
Perceptible Cosmos			

Turning now to a consideration of the Aeon of Barbelo, it will be useful to attend not only to *Allogenes*, but to draw together results from all the members of the "Allogenes group." In addition to the doctrine of the Triple Powered One, *Zost.*, *Steles Seth*, and *Marsanes* share with *Allogenes* a peculiar triadic division of the Aeon of Barbelo, the First Thought and self-knowledge of the Unknowable One or Invisible Spirit. In this connection, it should be noted that other Sethian materials place a triad at this level as well, the level corresponding to that which Intellect or Mind occupies in Neoplatonic systems. According to Irenaeus, *Haer.* I,29, *Ap. John*, and *Gos. Egypt.*, a triad of hypostases (Prognôsis, Aphtharsia and Aiônia Zôê) is associated with the Aeon of Barbelo. *Trim. Prot.* exhibits a sort of modal monarchianism in its division of the divine First Thought Barbelo into three modalities of increasing articulateness, the Voice of the Thought, the Speech of the Thought, and the Word (*logos*). The "Allogenes group" names the three modalities of Barbelo Kalyptos (the Hidden One), Protophanes (the First-appearing One), and Autogenes (the Self-begotten One), and conceives these as distinct hypostases constituting the Aeon of Barbelo, supplemented by a fourth being, the Triple Male.

Kalyptos (sometimes abbreviated *kls*) appears frequently in *Allogenes*, *Steles Seth*, *Zost.* and in Bruce, *Untitled*, and once in *Gos. Egypt.* (IV, 1: 57,16). In *Marsanes* (X, 1: 4,7-10), the ninth seal, where one expects to find Kalyptos (between Protophanes the eighth and Barbelo the ninth), is obscured by a lacuna of about seven letters, but concerns "[something] of the power [which] appeared [in the beginning (i.e. Protophanes)]" or perhaps [(something)] of the power [of the one who] appeared [in the beginning]," suggesting that here Kalyptos may have been defined in terms of Protophanes. In *Trim. Prot.* (XIII, §1_: 38,10) Protennoia/Barbelo calls herself "the immeasurable invisible one who is hidden," suggesting a translation of something like *ho aoratos kaluptos ametrêtos*. The name may have something to do with a veil (*kalumma*) or covering separating the lower from the higher realms, much as the Valentinians posited an upper Limit (*Horos*) separating Bythos

from his subordinate aeons including Nous. *Steles Seth* calls Barbelo "the first shadow of the holy Father, a light from light" who originates "from a shadow of him, thou a Kalyptos." *Zost.* (VIII, 1: 78,17-19 & 82,8-13) says that the emergence of Barbelo involved her "darkening," and that Kalyptos emerged as the second knowledge of the Invisible Spirit (the first being Barbelo), "the knowledge of his knowledge." *Allogenes* (XI, 1: 66,37) mentions the shadow in connection with the appearance of an "Eternal Life." *Marsanes* apparently omits all mention of Kalyptos. It seems, then, that in terms of the Platonic metaphysics of the divine intellect, Kalyptos occupies the position of the *nous noêtos*, the contemplated intellect, somewhat like the first god of Numenius. In *Allogenes*, the "image of Kalyptos" is said to be "the patterns (*typoi*) and forms (*eidê*) of those who truly exist," that is, the Platonic intelligibles or ideas of universals.

The median level of Barbelo is the male Mind Protophanes. In *Ap. John* (II, 1: 8,33) Geradamas, the archetypal heavenly Adam, is "the first appearance," and in *Gos. Egypt.* (IV, 2: 55,25) the figure named Triple Male Child is called the "first one who appeared," both apparently translations of Protophanes. The name Protophanes seems to derive from the Orphic doctrine of Phanes (also called Eros, Metis, Erikepaios), who was "first to appear" (*prôtos gar efanthê*) from the cosmic egg (Apollonius Rhodius, *Orph. Argon.* 14-16). Bisexual, he was regarded as "always two-formed," "looking this way and that," "the key of Mind" (*Orph. Frag.* 72-89 & 167 Kern; Synesius, *Hymn.* 2.88-89 Terzaghi calls the Son of God *gonon prôtogonon kai prôtofaê*). Both the Orphic etymology "first appearing" and his characterization as mind, as well as his double inclination above and below are clearly reflected in his position in *Allogenes* (XI, 3: 45,34-36; 46,24-25), where he represents the progression from the psychic "individuals" in Autogenes to the intelligible level of the "authentic existents" in Kalyptos. In Platonic metaphysics, Protophanes would correspond to the *nous nooun* or perhaps *nous noeros*. In *Allogenes*, Protophanes is said to contain "those who exist together," a median state between the

"individuals" in Autogenes and the "authentic existents" in Kalyptos. Ultimately, in the Sethian system, Kalyptos and Protophanes may represent two phases in the emanation of the divine Thought Barbelo; at first "hidden," then "manifest."

The lowest level of Barbelo's Aeon is Autogenes, the third member of the traditional Sethian Father-Mother-Son triad used to designate the high deity, his First Thought Barbelo who as the "merciful mother" directs the entire history of salvation, and the savior Autogenes who is identified variously as Adamas, Seth or Christ. In *Allogenes*, Autogenes is said to contain the "perfect individuals" as his members.

Interpreted in terms of Platonic ontology, Kalyptos would be the contemplated Mind containing the paradigmatic ideas or authentic existents. Protophanes would be the contemplating Mind containing a subdivision of the ideas, "those who exist together," perhaps "mathematicals," distinguished from the authentic existents by having "many the same" and being combinable with each other (cf. Aristotle, *Metaphys.* I.6; XIII.6). Autogenes would be the planning Mind containing the "perfect individuals," the ideas of particulars used to shape the world below. The similarity to the system of Numenius is clear.

Clearly one may see at work in the "Allogenes group" a combination of Sethian mythology and Platonic metaphysics of the Mind which finds certain echoes in Plotinus and other Neoplatonists. In *Ennead* III,9.1 Plotinus toys with the notion that one might interpret Plato's doctrine of the demiurgic Intellect in *Timaeus* 39E by distinguishing between a first intellect in repose, a second intellect which contemplates the first, and perhaps a third planning or discursive intellect (*nous merisas*) which divides universal ideas into particular ideas (perhaps the "mathematicals" of the Old Academy). Some such conception, which seems close to the distinctions made in the "Allogenes group," was espoused by Amelius, a member of Plotinus' circle (*apud* Proclus, *In Tim.* 1.398.16-26) and earlier by Numenius. In his treatise "Against the Gnostics" (*Ennead* II,9.6), which probably has Sethians in view, Plotinus definitely rejects such a view in favor of a unified Intellect which contains

the ideas in itself as its own objects of thought. One may indeed wonder if some of these notions were conveyed to him by certain treatises of the "Allogenes group" as well, or perhaps whether it was the particular way these treatises expressed them (not to mention their use of mythology and incantation) that drove Plotinus to oppose these ideas so strongly.

The "Allogenes group" also assigns a fourth being, called the Triple Male, to the members of the Aeon of Barbelo. But before treating the function of this being, a few observations about the position of Barbelo in the Sethian system are in order. In the Ophite system described by Irenaeus (*Haer.* I.30.1), which is very close to portions of *Ap. John*, the divine world originates with three principal figures: the high deity (First) "Man" is Father of the All; his Thought (*ennoia*) which proceeds from him is the Son of Man; below these is a certain Holy Spirit from whom the First Man begets Christ as the "Third Male" (*tertius masculus*, perhaps a variant expression for the Triple Male). This system, no doubt deriving from an interpretation of Genesis 1:2 & 26-27, suggests an androgynous high deity whose "image" is the (likewise androgynous) Son of Man as the Thought of the high deity "Man" (i.e. the deity in whose image the archetypal Adam is made as male and female). But this Son of Man could also be considered in terms of its female aspect, which in turn could be hypostatized as the Mother of the Son of Man/ Third Male. All this makes possible a divine triad consisting of a Father ("Man"), a Mother (the Thought, the female aspect of the Son of Man), and a Son (the Third Male as the masculine aspect of the Son of Man).

Such a process of Genesis-speculation is likely also the origin of the Sethian Father-Mother- Son triad of the Invisible Spirit, Barbelo and the Son Autogenes. In Sethianism, the Autogenes (self-begotten) Son could be identified as Adamas (alias Geradamas) or as the Triple Male Child (cf. the Ophite "Third Male"). It is also significant that the Mother Barbelo continues to bear traces of the male aspect of her androgyny, since she is sometimes called "the merciful Father" or "the merciful Mother-Father" in the various versions of *Ap. John*. Because of her

associations with the Thought of the high deity, the Sethian treatises call Barbelo also Thought (*ennoia*), First Thought, Pronoia, Protennoia, Image of the Invisible Spirit, etc. in addition to the terms reflecting her androgyny such as Male Virgin, Father of the All, Thrice Male, Mother-Father, and so on. The name Barbelo seems to mean something like "in four [letters] is God" (Aramaic *b'arba`'eloah*), a hypostatization of the tetragrammaton *YHWH*, according to the (still most convincing) etymology proposed by W. Harvey in the nineteenth century.

With regard to the Triple Male as a separate being within the Sethian system, in *Gos. Egypt.* (III, 2: 44,22-28; IV, 2: 55,11-56,11) the "Thrice-male Child of the great Christ whom the great Invisible Spirit has anointed" is called "the first one to appear," which sounds as though he is identified as the Protophanes of the "Allogenes group." Indeed in pages 61-63 of *Zost.*, Zostrianos is baptized, coming into being as "truly existing" and then is brought by a figure named Yoel (probably the Yoel of *Allogenes*) into the aeonic place of the Triple Male and there sees the "invisible Child," after which Yoel sets him down before Protophanes to be instructed by the Luminaries of Barbelo's Aeon (Salamex, Selmen and Ar[m]e; cf. *Allogenes XI*, 3: 56,21-30). Although *Marsanes* seems to omit mention of this being, in *Allogenes* (XI, 3: 45,34-37; 46,11-34) it is said that Barbelo is Triple Male insofar as she grants power to the "individuals" (within whom Protophanes acts). A being called "this one" (XI, 3: 46,14) "sees them all existing individually" such that "they will become as he is by seeing the divine Triple Male," who is "the Thought of all those who exist together." Further, "if the (Triple Male) reflects upon himself, he reflects upon Protophanes," the path or procession from the state of "those who exist together" to that of "those who truly exist," whom to see is to see Kalyptos, indeed to see Barbelo herself. In XI, 3: 58,12-17 *Allogenes* sees "the good divine Autogenes and the Savior who is the perfect Triple Male Child and his goodness, the noetic perfect Protophanes-Harmedon." In view of these statements, it seems that Protophanes may be an

alternate designation for the Triple Male Child, but also that they can be distinguished, at least to the extent that Protophanes is associated with "those who exist together" (perhaps something like the Old Academic ideal numbers), while the Triple Male Child is associated with the self-begotten "individuals" (perhaps the ideal forms of physically existing things or persons). In *Steles Seth* (VII, 5: 120,16-121,4) the Triple Male is blessed as the unifier and completer of the All and Savior of the "perfect individuals." In *Steles Seth*, then, the Triple Male is identified with the Sethian savior-figure Autogenes, who is in turn identified with the divine Adamas ("Geradamas"), which suggests that the Triple Male is a Sethian designation for Adamas, or perhaps Seth. Originally, the term Triple Male may have been only a superlative, i.e. triple male = thrice male = "truly male."

Thus, because of the traditional Sethian association of the Triple Male with the divine Adam who is both self-begotten and was the first to appear, the treatises of the "Allogenes group" consistently associate him with the Aeon of Barbelo, but on a more specific level vacillate between associating him with Protophanes or with Autogenes. This suggests that in the "Allogenes group," the triadic division of the Aeon of Barbelo into Kalyptos, Protophanes and Autogenes is a later intruding development in the Sethian system inspired by contemporary Platonic speculation on the tripartition of the divine intellect based on *Timaeus* 39E as well as upon continuing speculation on the Sethian triad of Father, Mother, and Son.

For purposes of visualization, we now present a summary diagram of the ontological levels in *Allogenes*:

Invisible Spirit/ Unknowable One	<i>Exists</i>	Lives	Knows
The Triple Powered One/ Eternal Life	Existence	<i>Vitality</i>	Mentality
The Aeon of Barbelo/ First Thought	(Being)	(Life)	<i>Knowledge</i>

Kalyptos praised according to	Existence
Protophanes praised according to	Vitality
Triple Male (Child)	
Autogenes praised according to	Mentality
The realm of Nature	

The lowest cosmological level, Nature (*fusis*), appears to hold no interest for the author of *Allogenes*. It is only alluded to as the realm on which Autogenes works "successively and individually" so as to rectify its flaws or defects (51,28-32). This natural realm may correspond to the lowest level of Plotinus' transcendentia, *fusis*, or the lower, creative Soul (cf. *Ennead* III,8.4 *passim*), although *Allogenes* may intend by this term a lower and more immanent psychic realm. In any case, it is to be noted that all the members of the "Allogenes group" take a remarkably "soft" stance toward this lower realm. It is defective, but not evil or chaotic; it is to be "rectified," or as *Marsanes* puts it, "is worthy to be saved entirely" (X, 1: 4,24-5,16; 5,24-26). So also *Zost.* (VIII, 1: 131,10-14): "Release yourselves, and that which has bound you will be dissolved. Save yourselves, in order that it may be saved."

This completes the inventory of the major transcendentia of the "Allogenes group." *Allogenes* presents itself as restrained in nearly Plotinian fashion: "Whether the Unknowable One has angels or gods, or whether the One who stills himself possessed anything except the stillness which he is" is not known to the author; the transcendentia have "brought forth nothing beyond themselves" (XI, 3: 49,21-26; 67,22-25).

It now remains to summarize the structure of the visionary ascent in *Allogenes*, a pattern which is reflected in the rest of the "Allogenes group," although with some variations. In *Zost.* the levels of the ascent are mostly marked by certain "baptisms" and "sealings," while *Steles Seth* consists mainly of doxologies to be used during the ascent which itself is not narrated, and *Marsanes* merely comments on certain features of the ascent, which the author has already undergone.

In *Allogenes* (XI, 3: 58,26-61,21) the ascent is tripartitioned into separate but successive stages, just as its general ontology is tripartitioned, since the object of the ascent is to become assimilated with each higher level of being through which one passes. The first stage of the ascent seems to occur within the second cosmological level, the intelligible level of Barbelo, in which Autogenes, Protophanes *cum* Triple Male, and Kalyptos are mentioned (57,29-58,26). Following this, 58,26-61,22 describes a further ascent in terms of the tripartite nomenclature previously applied to the Triple Powered One in 49,26-38 except that the term Existence (*hyparxis*) replaces the term "That which is" (= *to on*), and the term "blessedness" replaces the term "Mentality."

At the conclusion of a "hundred years" of preparation, Allogenes reports that he saw Autogenes, the Triple Male, Protophanes, Kalyptos, the Aeon of Barbelo, and the primal origin (*archê*) of the of the One without origin, that is, the Triple Powered One of the Unknowable One/ Invisible Spirit (57,29-58,26). One should probably understand this as Allogenes' ascent through the various levels of the Aeon of Barbelo up to and including the lowest aspect of the Triple Powered One, which would be "blessedness" or Mentality, since Allogenes still bears his earthly garment (58,29-30). The initial vision is culminated by his removal from the earthly garment to "a holy place" (58,31) characterized by the blessedness of "the knowledge of the Universal Ones" (59,2-3). Allogenes is now ready for "holy powers" revealed to him by the "luminaries of the Aeon of Barbelo" to allow him to "test what happens in the world" by a yet higher experience starting anew from the "holy place" (perhaps the lowest level of the Triple Powered One).

This implies two levels of knowing: One is achievable in the world, and is characterized by the actual vision of what was communicated only in the auditory revelations imparted by the emissary/revealer Youel, sufficing to know the realm of being and intellect in the Aeon of Barbelo up until the lower aspect of the Triple Powered One. The other is not achievable in the world, and is to be imparted by a special "primary revelation"

from the Luminaries of Barbelo's Aeon, and suffices to experience directly the realm beyond being and intellect, the upper levels of the Triple Powered One and possibly the Unknowable One itself. The first level of knowing is active and involves self-knowledge (58,38-59,3; 59,9-16); the second level of knowing is strictly speaking not knowledge at all, but is a non-knowing knowledge, an utter vacancy of the discursive intellect, a "learned ignorance" (59,30-35; 60,5-12; 61,1-4) called a "primary revelation of the Unknowable One" (59,28-29; 60,39-61,1). This notion is of course found in the *Chaldaean Oracles* (frg. 1 des Places) and in the *Parmenides* commentary (<Porphyry>, *In Parm.* II,14-17).

The ascent beyond the Aeon of Barbelo to the Unknowable One is first revealed to Allogenes by holy powers (59,4-60,12) and then actually narrated (60,12-61,22) by Allogenes in a way quite similar to the revelation, yielding what amounts to two accounts of the ascent. Having surpassed his active earthly knowledge and inclining toward the passive knowledge of the Universals (the Platonic intelligibles, 58,26-60,12), Allogenes attains first the level of blessedness (i.e. Mentality) characterized by self-knowledge (59,9-13; 60,14-18), then the level of Vitality characterized by an undivided, eternal, intellectual motion (59,14-16; 60,19-28), and finally the level of Existence, characterized by inactive "stillness" and "standing" (59,19-26; 60,28-37). At this point, Allogenes can no longer withdraw to any higher level, but only "to the rear because of the activities" (59,34-35; cf. Plotinus, *Ennead* III,8.9,29-32; VI,9.3,113); that is, Allogenes must avoid any further effort lest he dissipate his inactivity and fall away from the passivity, concentratedness, and instantaneousness of the primary revelation to follow (59,26-60,12; cf. 64,14-26; 67,22-38). Now Allogenes receives a "primary revelation of the Unknowable One" (59,28-29; 60,39,61,1) characterized by a non-knowing knowledge of the Unknowable One (59,30-32; 60,8-12; 61,1-4), which turns out to be an extensive negative theology (61,32-62,13; supplemented by a more affirmative theology, 62,14-67,20). On completion of the ascent and revelation, Allogenes'

appropriate response is to record and safeguard the revelation (68,16-23) and entrust its proclamation to his confidant Messos (68,26-end).

Clearly *Allogenes* is distinguished by a Platonically inspired visionary act of the individual intellect in which it assimilates itself to the hierarchy of ontological levels with which it was aboriginally consubstantial but from which it has become separated by life in the body. One undergoes the ascent according to a prescribed sequence of mental states: earthbound vision, ecstatic extraction from body (and soul) involving a transcending of even traditional Gnosis, silent but at first unstable seeking of the self, firm standing, and finally sudden ultimate vision consisting of an ignorant knowledge devoid of any content that might distinguish between subject and contemplated object. Each stage is characterized by increasing self-unification, stability and mental abstraction, a definite movement away from motion and multiplicity toward stability and solitariness.

The literary prototype of this experience is found in Plato's *Symposium* 210A-212A where Socrates recounts his path to the vision of absolute beauty as a "mystery" into which he had been initiated by Diotima of Mantinea. In such visionary mysteries, ultimate vision or *epopteia* was the supreme goal, tantamount to assimilating oneself to God insofar as possible (*Theatetus* 176B). This traditional Platonic quest is found not only in Plato, but also later in Philo of Alexandria (who however shunned the notion of assimilation to God), Numenius, Valentinus, perhaps Albinus (*Didasc.* 10.5.6; the *viae analogiae, negationis, additionis, and eminentiae*), Clement of Alexandria (*Strom.* 5.11.71), Origen (*Contra Celsum* 7.42) and especially Plotinus (*Ennead* VI,7.36). What is generally common to these visionary ascents is initial purification, usually through some form of instruction involving the use of analogies, negations, and successive abstraction until the contemplative mind has become absorbed in its single object (the One, the Good, the Beautiful etc.) at which point one "suddenly" sees the ultimate source of all these; here philosophy and intellection give way to ecstasy.

Particularly important for this visionary experience in Platonism and in the Sethian Gnosticism of the "Allogenes group" is the role of negative or apophatic theological predication. Traces of this are to be found in Albinus, in the gnostic system of Basilides (ca. 125 CE), in Plotinus and the later Neoplatonists, and of course in the Sethian treatises *Ap. John* and *Allogenes* which share a common apophatic tradition (BG 8502, 2: 23,3 26,13 = NHC II, 1: 3,18-25 = XI, 3: 62,28-63,23). It is most probable that the basic inspiration for all of these is Plato's *Parmenides* 137D-141E, according to which the non-existence of the One follows from the facts that it 1) is neither a whole nor has parts, 2) is not anywhere, neither in itself nor in another, 3) is neither at rest nor in motion, 4) is neither other than nor the same as itself or another, 5) is neither like nor unlike itself or another, 6) is without measure or sameness and so is neither equal to nor less than nor greater than itself or another, 7) is neither younger nor older nor of the same age as itself or another, 8) and has nothing to do with any length of time. Therefore, the One in no sense "is." One may compare Albinus (*Didasc.* 10.164,28-32 Hermann):

The first God is eternal, ineffable, self-complete, that is, not wanting in any respect, all-perfect, divinity, substantiality, truth, symmetry, and good. I say this not as defining these things, but as conceptualizing a unity in every respect ... he is ineffable, comprehended by mind alone ... since he is neither genus nor species nor difference. Nor can anything be attributed to him. Neither is he evil, for to say this is impermissible; nor is he good, which would imply his participation in something, particularly goodness. He is neither difference ... nor quality ... nor without quality since he has not been deprived of quality ... nor is he a whole possessing certain parts, nor is he the same nor different, since nothing has been attributed to him by which he can be separated from the others; nor does he move nor is he moved.

According to Basilides (*apud* Hippolytus, *Ref.* 7.20.221.1), the supreme God is a "nothing" at a time when there was nothing; it

cannot even be called ineffable even though we call it ineffable (since that would imply there was something to be called ineffable); there was nothing, neither matter nor substance nor insubstantiality; nothing simple nor composite nor imperceptible; no man, no angel or god; nothing perceptible nor intelligible; only the non-existent god without intelligence, perception, resolve, impulse or desire. H.A. Wolfson[10] has pointed out that this is not so much a negative theology in which an affirmative predicate is negated as it is a privative theology which denies the possibility of predication at all.

According to the material common to *Ap. John* and *Allogenes*, the Unknowable One is neither divinity nor blessedness (i.e. intellect) nor goodness, but is superior to these; neither boundless nor bounded, but superior to these; neither corporeal nor incorporeal, neither great nor small, neither a quantity nor a product nor a knowable existent, but superior to these; it shares in neither time nor eternity (*aiôn*); it does not receive from another; neither is it diminished nor does it diminish nor is it undiminished. The author of *Allogenes* (XI, 3: 61,32-62,27) prefaces this common material with more of the same from his own pen: the Unknowable One is "something" (a Stoic category) in that it exists and becomes or <lives> or knows although it <acts> without Mind or Life or Existence or non-Existence; it is not assayed or refined; it does not give or receive, neither of itself nor of another; it needs neither Mind nor Life nor anything else. The language of *Allogenes* is rather close to that of the *Parmenides* with its denial of the application of either a predicate or its negation to the Unknowable One. Indeed One may also compare Plotinus (*Ennead* VI,9.3,36-45):

Thus the One is neither something nor a quality nor a quantity nor an intellect nor a soul; neither is it moving nor even standing. It is not in place nor in time, but one of a kind by itself; rather it is formless before all form, before movement and before stability, since these relate to being and would make it many.

On the basis of the foregoing analysis, it seems virtually certain that the treatises of the "Allogenes group" derive the ontological structure of their transcendent world and the structure of the visionary ascent through it, as well as the Sethian negative theology applied to the Invisible Spirit, from sources that are ultimately at home in Platonism. These sources cannot be specified with precision, but seem to belong to the Middleplatonian corpus of the exegesis of certain key passages from Plato's dialogues, especially the *Timaeus*, the *Sophist*, the *Parmenides*, the *Symposium*, the *Theaetetus*, the *Republic*, and from reminiscences from Plato's "esoteric" teaching as reflected in Aristotle's *Metaphysics* and the reports on Plato's lecture(s) "On the Good." This is not to deny, of course, the influence of other sources of speculation, such as Jewish apocalyptic visionary literature and so on, but the essential structural ingredient is Platonic.

Many of the metaphysical systems described so far (the Sethian, especially that of the "Allogenes group," the Chaldaean, and those of Plotinus, Porphyry, and the *Parmenides* commentary) exhibit what H. J. Karma[11] has characterized as a four level metaphysics, deriving ultimately from the late Plato and his nephew Speusippus in the Old Academy. The systems of these men posit an ultimate ground of being beyond the transcendent realm of being itself, which latter properly begins with the realm of ideas and (ideal) numbers, followed by the World Soul as source of all movement, and finally by the sensible, corporeal world. Both Xenocrates and Aristotle reacted against what they saw to be an excessive transcendentalism in the systems of Plato and especially of Speusippus, retracting the transcendent ground of being back into the intellectual realm of pure being and so produced a three level metaphysics of a monadic intelligence containing the ideas as its objects of thought, followed by the World Soul and sensible world. After the metaphysically dry period of the New Academy, the three level metaphysic played a role in the Platonic metaphysics known to Cicero and Seneca and developed in the thought of Plutarch, Atticus and others. But in the first century BCE, the

four level metaphysic began to reemerge in Alexandrian Neopythagorean Platonism, especially in the circle of Eudorus. This reemergence was characterized by an increasing tendency toward withdrawal from society, world-rejection, asceticism and a return to the authority of ancient tradition (especially esoteric traditions, such as Plato's unwritten doctrine). The four level metaphysic, with its ultimate principle absolutely transcending the physical and even intellectual world, was increasingly adopted by philosophers such as Thrasyllus, Moderatus, Nicomachus and other arithmologists, Philo, Julian author of the *Chaldaean Oracles*, Plotinus and later Neoplatonists, and by many Gnostics, such as Basilides, Monoimus, the Valentinians, the Naasenes, Peratae, Docetics, Sethians and Archontics, and the system of the "Simonian" *Megale Apophasis*.

What is notable about this "Neopythagorean" Platonic metaphysics and distinguishes it from much of the former school Platonism is its great interest in schemes of the dynamic ontological derivation of lower principles from higher ones, coupled with a similar interest in arithmological speculation on the Pythagorean tetractys ($1 + 2 + 3 + 4 = 10$) as the key to outlining these schemes of derivation. In particular they wished to account for the origin of the realm of multiplicity (which could be expressed as ideal numbers and their phenomenal representations) from a sole primal and aboriginally existing unitary principle called the One or the Monad. Thus at some point the (androgynous) Monad became a (female) Dyad by a process of doubling (Theon of Smyrna, *Expositio* 27,1-7; 100,9-12 Hiller; Nicomachus, *Intro. Arith.* 113,2-10 Hoche; Sextus Empiricus, *Hyp. Pyrrh.* 3.153; *Adv. Math.* 10.261; Hippolytus, *Ref.* 4.43), or begetting (<Iamblichus>, *Theol. Arith.* 3,17-4,9 de Falco), or by division (<Iamblichus>, *Theol. Arith.* 5,4-5; 8,19-9,6; 13,9-14 de Falco), or by *ektasis* or progression from potentiality to actuality as in a seed (Moderatus *apud* Stobaeus, *Anth.* 1, .8.1-11; Nicomachus, *Intro. Arith.* 10,12-17 Hoche; Nicomachus *apud* <Iamblichus>, *Theol. Arith.* 3,1-8; 16,4-11 de Falco), or by receding from its nature (Moderatus *apud* Simplicius, *In Phys.* 230,34-231,27 Diels; Numenius, frg. 52 des

Places), or by flowing (Sextus Empiricus, *Adv. Math.* 3.19; 3.28; 3.77; 7.99; 9.380-381; 10.281). Hippolytus shows that certain Gnostics used the concept of the emanation (*probolê*, *proerchesthai*) of a Dyad preexisting in the Monad (the Valentinians, *Ref.* 6.29.5-6; the "Simonian" *Megale Apophasis*, *Ref.* 6.18.4-7). Among the Sethian "Allogenes group" one finds in addition to the Existence, Vitality, Mentality progression also the concept of self-extension (X, 1: 32,5-33,2; XI, 3: 45,22-24) and division (VII, 5: 121,25-123,14; combined with *ektasis*, VIII, 1: 80,1-20 and combined with withdrawal, X, 1: 9,1-21).

This sort of self-generation of primal principles from a preexisting unity characteristic of Neopythagorean arithmological speculation was also combined with Middleplatonian speculation on the divine intellect to produce a scheme in which the many arise from the One by a process of thinking, more specifically by the self-reflection of the One upon itself; this self-reflection or thinking then can be regarded as a being separately existing from the One and is called its Thought or Mind. This scheme is especially prominent in gnostic systems: in the "monistic" Valentinian system reported by Hippolytus (*Ref.* 6.29.5-6; cf. *Ref.* 6.42.4-5 [Marcosians]; *Exc. Theod.* 7.1; *Tripartite Tractate* NHC I, 5: 52,34- 77,25 [thinking, self-extension, etc.]; *Valentinian Exposition* NHC XI, 2: 22,1-25,21). Especially interesting is the "Simonian" *Megale Apophasis* (Hippolytus, *Ref.* 6.18.4-7): The great unlimited power, potentially a father, potentially contains his thought (*epinoia*) of which he becomes aware, thus objectivizing it as a separately existing entity (appearing to himself from himself he became two; he brought himself forth from himself). When the thought appears, it in turn sees its source which becomes father to it; knowing the father, the thought becomes mind (*nous*) which together with the thought produces the Logos.

In Sethianism, *Ap. John* (II, 1: 4,16-35) describes the appearance of Barbelo by the same process of self-reflection. This is a natural Neopythagorean Platonic interpretation of the rather more mythological and traditional Sethian speculation on the bisexual nature of the Man (the high deity in whose image

mankind is made) and Son of Man (the archetypal Adam) figures deduced from Genesis 1:26-27. Man is the monistic but bisexual supreme deity (odd numbers are male and even numbers are female, while "one" shares both natures since adding it to an odd number produces an even and vice versa). The Son of Man as his bisexual offspring can then be considered as the deity's wisdom (*sofia*) or thought (*pronoiam ennoia* or *epinoia*), and thus, in a convoluted way, as the Son in one aspect, and in another aspect as the Mother of the self-generated Son. The female or Mother aspect could, in arithmological terms, be associated with a Dyad (even, female), and the male aspect (odd) with a triad (cf. the Triple Male). These were then configured in a Father-Mother-Son triad, the female member of which was often called Pronoia or Ennoia or First Thought (Protennoia) in preference to the name Sophia, which was associated with the divine thought in demiurgical declination. Perhaps speculation on the divine name (the tetragrammaton YHWH) inspired Barbelo as the name for the female aspect of the divine thought. In turn the name Barbelo ("in four is God"), implying a tetrad, may have inspired the notion of the tetrad of names (Ennoia, Prognôsis, Aphtharsia and Aiônia Zôê) associated in *Ap. John* with the Mother Barbelo, and by analogy the development of another tetrad of names (Autogenes, Nous, Thelema and Logos) associated with the Son. Needless to say, in *Ap. John* the names, perhaps originally designating attributes of the Mother and Son, are regarded as separate hypostases or subordinate beings granted to Barbelo and the Autogenes Son by the Invisible Spirit when they praise him for their creation.

Three quarters of a century later, the "Allogenes group" still recognizes a tetrad (now named Kalyptos, Protophanes, the Triple Male and Autogenes) associated with Barbelo, while the tetrad associated with the Son has been dropped or at least lost specificity, since we hear now only of the "self-begotten ones" (plural) and the entities Metanoia, Paroikesis and Antitypoi as prominent entities below the level of Autogenes. However, the vacillation in the placement of the figure of the Triple Male gives the impression that the thought structure of the "Allogenes

group" has little room for tetrads, and basically thinks in terms of triads, as the doctrine of the Triple Powered One, expounded upon previously, suggests.

It seems to me that the most direct inspiration for the tripartite aspects of Barbelo, namely Kalyptos, Protophanes and Autogenes, interpreted respectively as the contemplated intellect (*nous noêtos*), contemplating intellect (*nous kathorôn*) and planning or demiurgic intellect (*nous dianooumenos*), is the system of Numenius. As for the doctrine of the Triple Powered One, we have seen that Numenius does not posit a supreme ground of being beyond intellect and true being, and thus espouses a three level metaphysic; but the *Chaldaean Oracles*, replete with its system of three transcendent triads and a primal entity, the Father, who is presumably beyond being, seems very close to the system underlying the "Allogenes group."^[12] In particular, Numenius' system is very close to the ontology of the Aeon of Barbelo in the "Allogenes group," while the three triads implicit in the Paternal Monad, the upper Hecate and in the dyadically transcendent Intellect in the system of the *Chaldaean Oracles* is very close to the ontology of the Triple Powered One of the "Allogenes group," especially in the way this triad is related to the Unknowable One and to the triadic structure of the Aeon of Barbelo.

In this connection, one ought also to mention the even earlier system of Moderatus. The system of Moderatus, who was active at the end of the first century CE, is a four level metaphysic (*apud* Porphyry *apud* Simplicius, *In Phys.* 230,24-231,27 Diels and Porphyry, *Vita Pythag.* 48-53; cf. also Joh. Stobaeus, *Anth.* 1.21 Wachsmuth). Moderatus posited a first One beyond all being and essence, followed by a second One who is true being, intelligible, and comprises the forms. The second One is called the Monad or unitary Logos which, acting as paradigm, is the Quality that limits the Quantity of a principle opposing it, called Multiplicity (also Speusippus' term for the Old Academic Indefinite Dyad). In fact, Moderatus conceives this Monad as a Permanence (*monê*) from which Multiplicity generates a system of monads (ideal numbers) by a Progression (*propodismos*) from

and a Return (*anapodismos*) to the Monad, an anticipation of the Neoplatonic doctrine of emanation in three phases of *monê*, *proodos* and *epistrofê*,^[13] not to mention a possible anticipation of the Sethian doctrine of the Triple Powered One as the medium through which the Aeon of Barbelo emanates from the Invisible Spirit.

We now conclude this lengthy exposition of the doctrine of the "Allogenes group" in its Platonic context by drawing some conclusions about its historical position in later Platonism. First, it should now be clear that *Allogenes* and *Zost.* are to be included among "the apocalypses of Zoroaster and Zostrianos and Nicotheos and Allogenes and Messos and those of other such figures" (Porphyry, *Vita Plot.* 16) read in Plotinus' circle and attacked and refuted, sometimes at great length, by Amelius and Porphyry himself in the period 244-269 CE.^[14] This allows one to date *Allogenes* (for whose priority in the group I have argued) around 200 CE, with *Zost.* and *Steles Seth* coming a bit later around 225 CE (Porphyry recognized *Zost.* as a spurious and recent work); *Marsanes*, on account of its doctrine of an unknown Silent one transcending even the Invisible Spirit, seems to be later yet, perhaps at the time of Iamblichus, who likewise posited an "Ineffable" one beyond even the Plotinian One.

Second, in his antignostic polemic (especially in *Ennead* II.9), Plotinus surely has certain of the tractates of the "Allogenes group" (especially *Zost.*), or versions of them, in view. According to the thorough survey of R. T. Wallis,^[15] Plotinus does not seem to attack the Sethian scheme of the unfolding of the divine world. He accepts the notion in *Allogenes* of learned ignorance (*Ennead* III,8.9-10; NHC XI, 3: 59,30-32; 60,8-12; 61,2-3; 61,17-19; cf. Porphyry, *Sent.* 25-26 Lambertz and the *Parmenides* commentary frgg. II & IV). He also accepts the notion that spiritual beings are simultaneously present in their entirety as "all together" in the Intellect (*Ennead* V,8.7-9; cf. "those who exist together," e.g. NHC VIII, 1: pp. 21; 87; 115-116). Also, his acceptance of the notion of the traversal of Vitality or Life from the One into the Intellect has already been

pointed out (*Ennead* III,8.11; cf. NHC XI, 3: 49,5-21).

On the other hand, Plotinus does not accept the strong partitioning of the Intellect characteristic of the "Allogenes group" (*Ennead* II,9). With even greater vehemence, he attacks doctrines found principally in *Zost.*, especially its teaching on Sophia (VII, 1: 9,16-11,9): the primal wisdom is "neither a derivative nor a stranger in something strange to it, but is identical with true being and thus Intellect itself" (*Ennead* V,8.5). He attacks the idea that Soul or Sophia declined and put on human bodies or that Sophia illuminated the darkness, producing an image (*eidôlon*) in matter, which in turn produces an image of the image. He scorns the idea of a demiurge who revolts from its mother (*Ennead* II,9.10) and whose activity gives rise to "repentances" (*metanoiai*), "copies" (*antitypoi*) and "sojourns" (*paroikêseis*, *Ennead* II,9.6; also the "alien earth" of II,9.11; cf. *Zost.*, VIII, §1_: 5,10 29; 8,9-16; 12,4-21). Plotinus is critical in general of the Gnostic's unnecessary multiplication of hypostases, rejects as out of hand conceptions such as a secondary knowledge that is the knowledge of yet a higher knowledge (*Ennead* II,9.1; cf. *Zost.* VIII, 1: 82,113), and completely ridicules their magical incantations (*Ennead* II,9.14; cf. VIII, 1: pp. 52; 85-88; 127; XI, 3: 53,32-55,11; VII, 5: 126,1-17; X, 1: 25,17-32,5).

Besides these attacks, it may be, as Wallis suggests, that his encounter with the Gnostics caused Plotinus to tighten up his own interpretation of Plato's *Timaeus* (especially 39E), for example in *Ennead* III,9.1 where he toys with a tripartition of the Intellect (rejected explicitly in II,9.6). In *Ennead* VI,6 "On Numbers," produced immediately after his antignostic treatise, he changes the order of the Being-Life-Mind triad applied throughout the rest of the *Enneads* to the unfolding of the Intellect from the One to the order Being-Mind-Life, and restricts this triad to the Intellect alone, perhaps in response to the Existence-Vitality-Mentality triad of *Allogenes*, which could easily be seen as an intermediate and thus unnecessary hypostasis between the high deity and its Intellect, Barbelo.

Finally, while the philosophical roots of Plotinus have been

recognized to lie certainly in Plato but also in the later Platonists such as Moderatus, Numenius, Ammonius and perhaps the author of the *Chaldaean Oracles* among others, his debt to the gnostic metaphysicians ought also to be recognized, as H. J. Kraemer[16] long ago pointed out in such detail. The contention of this paper is the same, except that it attempts to show that it is the "Allogenes group" of the Sethian gnostic apocalypses that had such an impact upon Plotinus and his successors, not only as catalysts that caused him to tighten up his thinking, but also as sources of doctrine insofar as these treatises built their systems upon those of previous Platonists and Neopythagoreans. Furthermore, this paper has urged the priority within the "Allogenes group" of the treatise *Allogenes*, although without the benefit of intensive analysis and comparison; the author of this work must in any case be understood as a Sethian but probably not professional school Platonist who was aware of first and second century metaphysical doctrine, perhaps in the form of written digests. The author's goal seems to have been to interpret the Sethian practice of visionary ascension derived from the traditional Sethian baptismal rite (as its vestigial terminology in *Zost.* amply demonstrates) in terms of Platonic ontology and contemplative technique, and also to develop further the scheme of the derivation of transcendent hypostatic beings already in evidence in *Ap. John* in directions suggested by Neopythagorean arithmological speculation on the production of the Many out of the One.

Finally, as apparently the first witness to the triads Being-Life-Mind and Existence-Vitality-Mentality, the author of *Allogenes* may have been an important contributor to the development of the Middleplatonist exegesis of passages from Plato's writings on the relation of intelligence to life and being such as *Timaeus* 39E and *Sophist* 248C-E, albeit probably without ever citing or perhaps even consulting those passages himself. It very may well be that *Allogenes* was the source of Plotinus' use of these triads, as well as that of Porphyry, particularly if the latter was the author of the *Parmenides* commentary, as Hadot has argued so weightily. In all events, I

hope to have shown that the "Allogenes group" and *Allogenes* in particular form an important new link in the transition from Middleplatonism to Neoplatonism.

NOTE: I no longer envisage the chronological priority of *Allogenes* within this text group, better categorized as "the Platonizing Sethian treatises"; it is probable that *Zostrianos* (or perhaps the *Three Steles of Seth*) is earliest, then *Allogenes*, then *Marsanes*, and finally the untitled text from the Bruce Codex.

[1]

See J.D. Turner, "Sethian Gnosticism: A Literary History of a Species of Christianized Gnosticism," in *Nag Hammadi, Gnosticism and Early Christianity* (Ed. C. W. Hedrick & R. Hodgson, Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1984).

[2] The passage is corrupt: "water of Life" has been substituted for a probable "water of goodness" under the influence of the former term at home in the Sethian baptismal rite (quite in line with the intention of the author of *Zost.*), and the terms "Existence" and "Divinity" have been reversed (*lege* "the water of Divinity, which is that of Existence, into which you shall be baptized in Kalyptos"). But the association of Blessedness with Mentality is clear. In *Allogenes* (58,7-26), it seems that *Zost.*'s more original equation of the triad Existence or Divinity, Blessedness and Perfection or Goodness with the triad Kalyptos, Protophanes and Autogenes has been disturbed by the addition of another figure, the Triple Male, to yield the equation of the Divinity, Blessedness and Goodness triad with that of Barbelo, Kalyptos and Autogenes, omitting Protophanes, who is also identified with the goodness of the Triple Male; both these latter are also identified as "perfect."

[3] "La métaphysique de Porphyre," in *Porphyre* (Entretiens sur l'antiquité classique XII, Vandoeuvres-Geneva: Fondation Hardt, 1960), 140-141 and *idem, Porphyre et Victorinus* (2 vols., Paris: Etudes Augustiniennes, 1968), 1.255-272.

[4] *Anon. Taurensis* frg. XII, 23-33 in W. Kroll, "Ein

neuplatonischer Parmenides Kommentar in einem Turiner Palimpsest," *Rheinisches Museum für Philologie* 47 (1892), 599-627; cf. P. Hadot, "Fragments d'un commentaire de Porphyre sur le Parménide," *Revue des Etudes Grecques* 74 (1961), 410-438; and *idem*, *Porphyre et Victorinus*, 2.104- 106 and references to discussion in vol. 1 in index, 2.145.

[5] W. Theiler, *Porphyrius und Augustin* (Halle: M. Niemeyer, 1933), 4-5.

[6] E. R. Dodds, "Numenius and Ammonius," in *Les sources de Plotin* (Entretiens sur l'Antiquité Classique V; Vandoeuvres-Geneva: Fondation Hardt, 1960), 1-33; cf. P. Merlan on Numenius, "Greek Philosophy from Plato to Plotinus" in *The Cambridge History of Later Greek and Early Medieval Philosophy* (Cambridge: The University Press, 1967), 96-106.

[7] M. Baltes, "Numenios von Apamea und der platonische Timaios," *Vigiliae Christianae* 29 (1975), 241-270.

[8] J. Dillon, *The Middle Platonists: 80 B.C. to A.D. 200* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977), 394-395.

[9] I append here some results of the analysis of H. Lewy, *Chaldaean Oracles and Theurgy: Mysticism, Magic and Platonism in the Later Roman Empire* (Recherches d'Archéologie, de Philosophie et d'Histoire XIII, Cairo: l'Institut Français, 1956).

[10] H. A. Wolfson, "Negative Attributes in the Church Fathers and the Gnostic Basilides," *Harvard Theological Review* 50 (1957), 145-156; cf. also J. Whittaker, "Neopythagoreanism and Negative Theology," *Symbolae Osloensis* 44 (1969), 109-125; *idem*, "Neopythagoreanism and the Transcendent Absolute," *Symbolae Osloensis* 48 (1973), 77-86; *idem*, "EPEKEINA NOU KAI OUSIA," *Vigiliae Christianae* 23 (1969), 91- 104; and M. Jufresa, "Basilides, A Path to Plotinus," *Vigiliae Christianae* 35 (1981), 1-15.

[11] H. J. Kraemer, *Der Ursprung der Geistmetaphysik: Untersuchungen zur Geschichte des Platonismus zwischen Platon und Plotin* (second ed.; Amsterdam: B. R. Greener, 1967), 193-369; cf. my "The Gnostic Threefold Path to Enlightenment: The Ascent of Mind and the Descent of

Wisdom," *Novum Testamentum* 22 (1980), 336-337.

[12] See the analysis of the relation of the *Oracles* and Numenius by E. R. Dodds, "Numenius and Ammonius," *op. cit. supra* and the ensuing discussion of his paper in the same work.

[13] Pointed out by J. M. Dillon, *The Middle Platonists*, *op. cit. supra*, 350-351.

[14] See C. Schmidt, *Plotins Stellung zum Gnosticismus und kirchlichen Christentum* (Texte und Untersuchungen zur altchristlichen Literatur 20, Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1901); J. H. Sieber, "An Introduction to the Tractate Zostrianos from Nag Hammadi," *Novum Testamentum* 15 (1973), 233-240; C. Elsas, *Neuplatonische und gnostische Weltablehnung in der Schule Plotins* (Berlin & New York: W. de Gruyter, 1975; J. M. Robinson, "The Three Steles of Seth and the Gnostics of Plotinus," in *Proceedings of the International Conference on Gnosticism: Stockholm, August 20-25, 1977* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1977), 132-142; B. A. Pearson, "The Tractate Marsanes (NHC X) and the Platonic Tradition," in *Gnosis: Festschrift für Hans Jonas* (ed. B Aland, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1978), 373-384; and my own articles cited above.

[15] R. T. Wallis, "Plotinus and the Gnostics," (23 pp., forthcoming).

[16] H. J. Kraemer, *Der Ursprung der Geistmetaphysik*, *op. cit. supra*, 223-264.