7 | Textual Fluidity and Multiple Versions in Monastic Textual Practice

In the past, scholars have viewed the existence of duplicate versions of a text in an archaeological find as a sign that it was not originally a single library, or even owned by the same people.[1] Why would you keep two copies of the same text, especially considering the expensive and time-consuming process involved in producing texts in antiquity? This chapter offers new readings of the existence of multiple versions of the 'same' texts in the Nag Hammadi collection and offers suggestions as to why it would have been useful to keep them in the same library.

Initial Reflections on 'Textual Fluidity'

The growing scholarly focus on 'textual fluidity' has brought many valuable insights and nuances to the study of how texts were read, understood and copied in antiquity.[2] The point of this methodological perspective is, in part, to problematise concepts regarding what constituted a text and the processes that contributed to the production of texts at the time. Today we regard a text as 'finished' when it leaves the author's hand and is published, printed and disseminated. It becomes fixed; an original has come to existence which even the author him/herself cannot disregard. If changes are made to the original, they are motivated, noted and problematised.

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[1] Painchaud and Kaler, 'From the *Prayer of the Apostle Paul*', 445–469, see esp. note 1.
[2] Lied and Lundhaug (eds.), *Snapshots of Evolving Traditions*.

If the original is copied or reproduced erroneously, or without permission, it is viewed as a breach of copyright. These features of texts and the way we view them and their originators are consequences of technical advancements in printing.[3] The facility to reproduce identical copies of a text on a large scale was not present in antiquity, a fact we must keep in mind when studying ancient textual culture.

These reflections are not to be taken as suggesting that the concepts 'author' or 'original' did not exist in antiquity in regard to texts. The fact that skilled copyists were held in high regard as professionals who could copy a text in a legible way with a minimum of errors indicates that the ancients did entertain these ideas.[4] The extreme care and investment Titus Atticus, a friend of Cicero, put into developing his famous book production business is a prime example of this. Atticus was known for producing exact and high-quality copies for his patrons but, as Wilson and Reynolds have shown by way of scrutinising the correspondence between Titus Atticus and Cicero, changes and additions to existing editions were made with great ease.[5] The textual world was much more 'fluid' in antiquity, something particularly apparent in certain genres. Much of the Judeo-Christian canon, for example, was produced by invoking the authority of people who most likely did not write the texts themselves, but whose religious authority was summoned by attaching their name to a text.[6] This must have made it much easier to emend, add and make changes to a text, at least before it reached anything near canonical status. Another contextual difference between ancient and modern textual culture concerns

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[3] Bart Ehrman and Bruce M. Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament: Its Transmission, Corruption, and Restoration* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005); Bart Ehrman, *Forged: Writing in the Name of God – Why the Bible's Authors Are Not Who We Think They Are* (San Francisco: HarperOne, 2011).

[4] L. D. Reynolds and N. G. Wilson, *Scribes and Scholars: A Guide to the Transmission of Greek and Latin Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 23–24.

[5] Reynolds and Wilson, *Scribes and Scholars*, 24.

[6] Ehrman, *Forged*, 28–51.

production. If a text gained a high standing in antiquity, and remained so for a long time, it was naturally copied more frequently and thus it was also increasingly likely for changes in nuance to creep in during the reproduction process. This fact has been discussed by Bart Ehrman in terms of the apostle Paul's epistles and can be applied to almost any popular text from antiquity that was copied generation after generation. Noticing variances in different versions most likely led to even more emendations being made. Social change and local differences led to the need to reinterpret and re-evaluate, and the writing of new versions and additions.

It was not unheard of for a new or a previously unknown version of a text ascribed to a famous person to appear long after their death, but even in antiquity people were aware of the existence of forgeries of famous authors. Thus, when we encounter texts that are ascribed to well-known people in the Nag Hammadi collection – for example, *The Prayer of the Apostle Paul* in Codex I, *The Apocalypse of Paul* in Codex V or a version Plato's *Republic* 588A–589B in Codex VI – we should not immediately interpret this to mean that these were actually considered to be written by their famous namesakes. Rather, it is more likely that invoking the legacy of their presumed authors reflects attempts to interpret influential ideas and give them new meanings.[7]

With these initial observations, we turn to the Nag Hammadi duplicates. Right at the outset we can establish that the kind of texts we possess in more than one copy are not texts attached to authors with great historical standing, like Paul or Plato, with long traditions of being copied (a possible exception is *The Apocryphon of John*).

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[7] On the specific case of Plato's fragments read in a monastic context, see Christian H. Bull, 'An Origenistic Reading of Plato in Nag Hammadi Codex VI', in *Studia Patristica LXXV*: vol. I: *Studia Patristica – Platonism and the Fathers – Maximus the Confessor*, ed. Markus Vinzent (Leuven: Peeters, 2017), 31–40.

The Nag Hammadi Duplicates and the 'Sub-groups' of the Codices

The Nag Hammadi collection contains five texts that appear in more than one version. *The Gospel of Truth* is preserved in two copies, in Codices I and XII (the latter in a very damaged state). *On the Origin of the World* is preserved in its entirety in Codex II, but the opening part of the text is also preserved on the last page of the so-called thirteenth codex, tucked into the binding of Codex VII. *The Apocryphon of John* appears in three codices: Codex II, Codex III and Codex IV, in one short and two long versions. We have two different copies of *The Holy Book of the Great Invisible Spirit*, in Codices III and IV, and, finally, two versions of *Eugnostos the Blessed*, in Codices III and V.

As noted in previous chapters, scholars have made it clear that the Nag Hammadi codices belong to different scribal sub-groups, based on evaluations of scribal hands and codicological aspects such as cover construction:

Codicological evidence (Robinson[8])	Scribal hand (Williams[9])
Group 1: Codices IV, V and VIII	Group A: Codices I, VII and XI
Group 2: Codices II, VI, IX and X	Group B: Codices IV–VI, VIII and IX
Group 3: Codices I, VII and XI	Group C: Codices II and XIII

It is noticeable that the copies found in the collection are all part of different sub-groups except for one: *On the Origin of the World*. This text is found in Codex II and also in a group of texts (usually termed Codex XIII) tucked into the cover of Codex VII.[10] Thus, since the

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[8] Robinson, 'The Construction of the Nag Hammadi Codices'.

[9] Williams, *Rethinking 'Gnosticism'*, 242–243.

[10] Williams has recently retracted the assessment that Codex II and XIII are from the same scribal team. See, Michael A. Williams and David Coblentz, 'A Reexamination of the Articulation Marks in the Nag Hammadi Codices II and XIII', in *The Nag Hammadi Codices and Late Antique Egypt*, ed. H. Lundhaug and L. Jenott (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2018), 427–456. However, Funk and Emmel have argued for this

texts of Codex XIII, according to estimates by Williams and others, were copied by the same people behind Codex II, and since Codex XIII was tucked into Codex VII, there were likely contacts between the scribal teams that produced Codices I, VII and XI and those who worked on Codex II, sub-groups that are recurrent in scholarship and taken as evidence that the Nag Hammadi texts should not be viewed as *one* collection. The existence of copies within the collection has also been used to argue in favour of this conclusion.

It has been presumed that one would not have made copies of texts that one already possessed. The fact that the Nag Hammadi collection contains several duplicates and one triplicate has encouraged scholars to conclude that even though the other material features of the texts – such as handwriting, production techniques and material – indicate a common origin, the duplicates suggest the opposite: that the codices were not utilised in the same context but placed as orders, copied and then disseminated.[11] There are indeed indications that this was the case in some instances, such as the scribal note in Codex VI between *The Prayer of Thanksgiving* and the last text, *Asclepius.* As Lundhaug and Jenott have argued convincingly, this codex was likely produced at the behest of a fellow monastic and the scribe who copied it was hesitant to copy a certain text (which one is unclear), suspecting that it was already in the possession of the monk placing the order.[12] This is what the scribe

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connection from other points of view: see, for example, Funk's linguistic analysis in 'The Linguistic Aspect of Classifying the Nag Hammadi Codices'; Stephen Emmel, 'The Nag Hammadi Codices Editing Project: A Final Report', *ARCE Newsletter* 104 (1978): 10–32. This is further discussed in Lundhaug and Jenott, *Monastic Origins*, 207–210. For an overview of the debate regarding the number of scribal teams and different subgroups of codices, see Lundhaug, 'Material Philology', 112–123.

[11] The clearest and most persuasive argument for this perspective is presented by Lundhaug and Jenott, *Monastic Origins*, where they argue for the texts being part of what they call book exchange networks (as noted in previous chapters). For a suggestion on which particular Pachomian monasteries were the source of the codices, see Bull, 'The Panopolis Connection'.

[12] Lundhaug and Jenott, *Monastic Origins*, 197–206.

wrote in between two texts in Codex VI, as a message to his fellow monk:

I have copied this one text of his. Indeed, very many of his (texts) have come to me. I have not copied them, thinking that they may (already) have come to you. For truly I hesitate to copy these ones for you since they may (already) have come to you, and the matter may burden you. For the texts of that one which have come to me are numerous.[13]

ⲡⲓⲟⲩⲁ ⲙⲉⲛ ⲗⲟⲅⲟⲥ
ⲛ̄ⲧⲁⲉⲓⲥⲁϩϥ̄ ⲛ̄ⲧⲁϥ ⲁϩⲁϩ ⲅⲁⲣ
ⲧⲟⲛ ⲛ̄ⲧⲁϥⲉⲓ ⲉⲧⲟⲟⲧ
ⲙ̄ⲡⲓⲥⲁϩⲟⲩ ⲉⲓ̈ⲙⲉⲉⲩⲉ ⲭⲉⲁⲩⲉⲓ
ⲉⲧⲛ̄ⲧⲏⲛⲉ ⲕⲁⲓⲅⲁⲣ ϯⲗⲓⲥⲧⲁⲍⲉ
ⲉⲓ̈ⲥϩⲁⲓ̈ ⲛ̄ⲛⲁⲓ̈ ⲛⲏⲧⲛ̄ ⲭⲉⲙⲉⲱⲁⲕ
ⲁⲩⲉⲓ ⲉⲧⲛ̄ⲧⲏⲛⲉ ⲛ̄ⲧⲉⲡϩⲱⲃ
ⲣ̄ϩ̄ⲓⲥⲉ ⲛⲏⲧⲛ̄· ⲉⲡⲓ ⲛⲁϣⲱⲟⲩ
ⲅⲁⲣ ⲛ̄ϭⲓⲛ̄ⲗⲟⲅⲟⲥ ⲉⲧⲁⲩⲉⲓ
ⲉⲧⲟⲟⲧ ⲛ̄ⲧⲉⲡⲏ

Yet, while making unnecessary copies might have been avoided, this does not mean that there were no practical and pedagogical benefits to having copies within a single library or that their existence indicates that the codices in which they are found could not have belonged to the same people. As will be argued here, there were in fact several practical and pedagogical reasons – other than book exchange networks – for making and keeping multiple versions in the same library. This suggests that, rather than identical duplicates being ordered of a text, they were rewritten, edited and copied for many reasons, and use could be made of the fact that a library at times contained several versions of a text. I explore some of these reasons below and place them in a monastic pedagogical context to show that copies were produced as a result of common monastic textual practices. We should not routinely presume that a text collection containing more than one copy of a text indicates that the texts were not the products and possessions of one and the same group of readers/writers/manuscript manufacturers.

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[13] NHC VI 65:8–14. Text by Douglas M. Parrott, in *Nag Hammadi Codices V,2–5 and VI,1*, ed. Parrott, 392. Trans. Lundhaug and Jenott, *Monastic Origins*, 197.

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Previous efforts have been made to interpret the fluidity of the Nag Hammadi texts, mainly by Hugo Lundhaug.[14] He has argued that several texts extant in the Nag Hammadi codices bear witness to forms of rewriting and editing that reflect the specific theological context in which they were copied, regardless of their deriving from earlier times – that is, a fourth-century Post-Nicene context.[15] These reflections inform the following examination of the copies found in the collection. What other reasons could there have been to make copies of a text – or rather making a new version with emendations and rewritings – apart from the need to fine-tune and update its theological relevance to match its immediate context? Before exploring this question, we should start by familiarising ourselves with textual practices in the specific context from which the Nag Hammadi texts derive: fourth-century Egyptian monasticism.

The Monastery as Training Ground for Textual Education

Monasteries were viewed for a long time as centres detached from the classical education system in antiquity.[16] Monks were thought to be engaged in a completely different kind of schooling from that valued in the outside world, with the spiritual pursuits of the ascetic separated from classical *paideia* of the city. The recent decades of scholarship into early Christian monasticism have radically

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[14] Lundhaug, 'Textual Fluidity'; Lundhaug, 'The Fluid Transmission of Apocrypha'; Lundhaug and Lied, 'Studying Snapshots'.

[15] For a discussion of *The Gospel of Philip* (NHC II) from this context, see Lundhaug, *Images of Rebirth*; but more recently Lundhaug, 'Textual Fluidity', in which he gives examples from *The Concept of Our Great Power* (NHC VI); *The Treatise on the Resurrection* (NHC I); and *Melchizedek* (NHC IX), texts where he argues one can find specific references to fourth-century theological debates. The most notable and obvious example is perhaps found in *The Concept of Our Great Power* which rejects the Anomoeans, a neo-Arian phalanx of the mid fourth century.

[16] Marrou, *A History of Education*.

changed this view, highlighting instead the continuation of classical *paideia* in the monasteries and effectively demolishing the dichotomy between city and desert, in terms of not only education, but also finances, social interactions and politics.[17] Henrik Johnsén, among others, has studied these relations in detail, pointing out some examples of the similarities in educational ideals and motifs found in monasteries and philosophy schools. These include withdrawal from the outside world, the idealisation of being uneducated in formal learning, engaging the mind and combatting passions, and forming one's inner person by repeating memorised passages.[18]

Thus, the monasteries that were founded in the Egyptian desert kept close ties with the 'outside' world in many respects. One way this was done was by providing a training ground for the teaching of lay people's children. Caroline Schroeder has shown that parents could send their children to the monks to be taught reading and writing, skills beneficial if one aimed to lead an exemplary Christian life.[19] Not all children sent to monasteries for education remained there, however, while others came as adults for that very purpose. Novice monks lacking the right educational background deemed necessary to undertake an ascetic life successfully were put through a strict pedagogical regimen,[20] which was the case not only in Egypt,

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[17] Pierre Rousseau, *Pachomius: The Making of a Community in Fourth-Century Egypt* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985); David Brakke, *Athanasius and Asceticism* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995); Cribiore, *Gymnastics of the Mind*; Larsen and Rubenson (eds.), *Monastic Education in Late Antiquity*.

[18] Henrik Rydell Johnsén, 'Renunciation, Reorientation and Guidance: Patterns in Early Monasticism and Ancient Philosophy', *Studia Patristica 55:3: Papers Presented at the Sixteenth International Conference on Patristic Studies Held in Oxford 2011*, ed. M. Vinzent and S. Rubenson (Leuven: Peeters, 2013), 76–94; see also Henrik Rydell Johnsén, 'The Virtue of Being Uneducated: Attitudes toward Classical *Paideia* in Early Monasticism and Ancient Philosophy', in *Monastic Education in Late Antiquity*, ed. Lilian Larsen and Rubenson, 219–235.

[19] Caroline T. Schroeder, *Children and Family in Late Antique Egyptian Monasticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 127–144.

[20] Schroeder, *Children and Family*, 127–144.

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but also in Cappadocia, Palestine and Antioch.[21] The curriculum began with learning the alphabet, then basic reading and writing. Reading exercises then followed. The most appropriate texts on which to practice were those from the Scriptures, chiefly Psalms, where one could find all the important maxims of life, not only to be studied but memorised, forwards and backwards.

The stories of monastic fathers were also part of the basic curriculum, as well as memorising lists of names of apostles and other patriarchs. Texts that threatened to challenge faith in God or introduce unsanctioned doctrines or narratives were considered unsuitable for novices, since their minds and convictions were not firm enough to keep from being led astray.[22] One part of basic training was to copy a text in order to improve one's penmanship.[23] As Lillian Larsen has shown, the sayings of the desert fathers and Scripture were employed much as Homer and other classical writings were utilised in classical education systems; the texts were copied, memorised, restructured and studied to learn grammar and rhetoric, as well as training in argumentation techniques.[24] The first stage of more advanced learning would involve reading gnomic sentences, listening to others read them and then paraphrasing and reformulating them in order to accentuate their different moral points. Maxims were also reformulated to fit an alphabetical order.[25] The end goal was always moral edification and strengthening the character and mind. Some, however, went further and engaged in more spiritually challenging tasks, such as, for

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[21] Caesarea: Basil, *Regulae fusius tractate* 15; Cappadocia: Jerome, *Letter* 107; Antioch: John Chrysostom, *Against the Opponents of the Monastic Life* III, 11–18. These are discussed in Larsen, '"On Learning a New Alphabet"'.

[22] Basil writes that 'myths' are unsuitable for novices. Basil, *Regulae fusius tractate* 15.

[23] Cribiore, *Gymnastics of the Mind*, 179.

[24] Lilian I. Larsen, 'Monastic Paideia: Textual Fluidity in the Classroom', in *Snapshots of Evolving Traditions*, ed. Lied and Lundhaug, 146–177; Lilian I. Larsen, '"Excavating the Excavations" of Early Monastic Education', in *Monastic Education in Late Antiquity*, ed. Larsen and Rubenson, 101–124.

[25] Larsen, '"On Learning a New Alphabet"', 69–74.

example, exploring the mystic and secret meaning behind the language of God and the angels (see Chapter 5). But not all were made for advanced study; in fact, some were quite unsuited to a monastic life. As Shenoute states with regard to some of his monastic recruits, even the 'thought of God' could not prevent certain people from behaving wickedly.[26]

For those who had what it took to pass through the elementary education offered to – or rather demanded of – the monks, more rigorous textual work was to be expected. The Greek alphabetical collection of *Apophthegmata Patrum* retains the following saying attributed to Abba Abraham:

> Abba Abraham told of a man of Scetis who was a scribe and did not eat bread. A brother came to beg him to copy a book. The old man whose spirit was engaged in contemplation, wrote, omitting some phrases and with no punctuation. The brother, taking the book and wishing to punctuate it, noticed that words were missing. So he said to the old man, 'Abba, there are some phrases missing.' The old man said to him, 'Go, and practise (ποίησον) first that which is written, then come back and I will write the rest.'[27]

This is an extraordinary exchange. Here, we not only encounter some of the above discussed textual practices in monasteries – such as copying and editing practices – we are also given a glimpse of the more advanced pedagogical dimensions attached to them. The young monk is not a novice, but a scribe. Abba Abraham produces a copy of a text for him (without punctuation!), having excluded some material. It appears that Abba Abraham did not deem the scribe advanced enough and encouraged him to study more in

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[26] From Shenoute's *On Monastic Vows*. See Janet Timbie, 'The Education of Shenoute and Other Cenobitic Leaders: Inside and Outside the Monastery', in *Education and Religion in Late Antiquity*, ed. P. Gemeinhardt, L. van Hoof and P. van Nuffelen (Farnham: Ashgate, 2016), 34–46.

[27] *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers*, trans. Ward, 34. The Greek text on which Ward's translation is based is from J. P. Migne, *Patrologiae*, vol. LXV (Paris, 1865), 132.

order to get access to the rest. Benedicta Ward, who has translated the above passage, renders the word ποίησον in the last sentence 'practice'. The verb here is ποιέω (in the aorist imperative) meaning 'create', 'produce' or, indeed, 'practice'. But when the object is a noun like τά γεγραμμένα (that which is written), it includes the meaning 'write' or 'solve', that is, to copy or understand what it is one reads/copies. Here we are allowed a rare glimpse of early monastic book production practices and the pedagogical processes attached to it.

According to Palladius' *Lausiac History*, the Pachomian rules stated that all monks were to undertake tasks having to do with reading and rehearsing Scripture, one of the rules of life a great angel gave Pachomius and that he used to set up his monastery. After implementing the rules Pachomius returned to the angel and complained that the task was too lenient, the number of verses and repetitions demanded by the monks were too few. To this, the angel answered, 'The sections of the Psalter which I have appointed [are indeed few], so that even the monks who are small may be able to fulfil the canons, and may not be distressed thereby. For unto the perfect no law whatsoever is laid down, because their mind is at all seasons occupied with God.'[28]

This passage is an indication of the pedagogical ideal at play in the Pachomian monastery. Everyone, even those at the very lowest level, was expected to study and rehearse the Scriptures. As mentioned in previous chapters, the monks in Pachomius' monasteries were divided into twenty-four classes, each designated with a letter of the Greek alphabet and tasked with a certain profession in the service of the monastery. There were cooks, blacksmiths, weavers, bakers, farmers and also – as Lundhaug and Jenott have pointed out previously[29] – those tasked with caring for and producing books, copyists.[30] Regardless of the profession they 'all learned the

[28] Palladius, *Lausiac History* I, 33, in *The Book of Paradise*, trans. Budge, vol. I, 216.
[29] Lundhaug and Jenott, *Monastic Origins*, 27–28.
[30] Palladius, *Lausiac History* I, 32.

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Scriptures by heart'.[31] Of the illiterate monk we read that 'even if he does not want to, he shall be compelled to read'.[32] But those on a higher level, 'the perfect' – a common term for advanced ascetics with high standing – were free to study more broadly. Pachomius is also said to have allowed books to be borrowed for a week at a time: 'if they seek a book to read, let them have it; and at the end of the week they shall put it back in its place for those who succeed them in the service'.[33] During the day books were held openly in a bookshelf, and at night they were taken down and locked in a case.[34] If a monk borrowed a book and brought it back to his dwelling, it was to be kept closed when not being read by tying fast the strings of the cover.[35]

It is clear from this brief sketch of monastic ideals concerning reading and writing that books and literacy were held in high regard in the burgeoning Egyptian coenobitism. The pedagogical practices in Pachomian monasteries were strict, as their rules indicate; however, for more advanced monks there do not seem to have been rules governing what could and could not be read. If a monk wanted a book, no one should stop him from reading it. And, as the angel told Pachomius about the advanced monks' reading and memorisation, 'no law whatsoever is laid down, because their mind is at all seasons occupied with God'.

Let us now turn to the question of the use of copies of one and the same text, with particular focus on the Nag Hammadi collection. What use would monks have to keep more than one version of these texts in their monastery?

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[31] Palladius, *Lausiac History* I, 32:12.

[32] *Precepts of Our Father Pachomius* 139, in *Pachomian Koinonia*, trans. Veilleux, vol. II, 166.

[33] *Precepts of Our Father Pachomius* 25, in *Pachomian Koinonia*, trans. Veilleux, vol. II, 149.

[34] *Precepts of Our Father Pachomius* 101.

[35] *Precepts of Our Father Pachomius* 100.

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The Nag Hammadi Texts in Light of Monastic Educational Practices

Practising Copying and Translation

The last text in the lost Codex XIII is *On the Origin of the World*, of which only the first ten lines remain; luckily, however, it is preserved in its entirety in Codex II. A third version has been found in the Coptic Manuscript collection of the British Library, although in a very fragmented state. The British Museum version, just like the Codex XIII version, was found tucked into the cover of another codex and has been identified as coinciding chronologically with the Nag Hammadi texts.[36] While the British Museum version differs slightly in dialect from the Nag Hammadi versions, they are in most other respects identical copies. It is interesting to note insofar as the ten lines of the Codex XIII version are concerned, that they differ from the full version in only the following two instances: ⲧϩⲏ/ⲧⲉϩⲏ (NHC XIII 50:3/ NHC II 97:26) and ⲛ̄ⲗⲉ/ⲗⲉ (NHC XIII 50:3/NHC II 97:27); the remainder is identical, letter for letter.[37] We cannot know why Codex XIII (and the British Museum version) was tucked into the cover of another codex. However, Michael Williams and Lance Jenott have argued convincingly that we should not presuppose that texts found inside the cover of a codex were discarded material chosen at random simply to act as stiffening material.[38] It is too much of a coincidence that a randomly chosen discarded text – *The*

[36] Walter. E. Crum, *Catalogue of the Coptic Manuscripts in the British Museum* (London: British Museum, 1905), 251–252 (no. 522); Christian Oeyen, 'Fragmente einer subachmimischen Version der gnostischen "Schrift ohne Titel"', in *Essays on the Nag Hammadi Texts in Honor of Pahor Labib*, ed. M. Krause (Leiden: Brill, 1975), 125–144.

[37] Curiously, Layton has opted to render the last letter (which is virtually unreadable in the facsimile edition of NHC XIII) as ⲡ, while the version in Codex II has a ⲧ.

[38] Michael A. Williams and Lance Jenott, 'Inside the Covers of the Codex VI', in *Coptica, Gnostica, Manichaica: Mélanges offerts à Wolf-Peter Funk*, ed. L. Painchaud and P.-H. Poirier (Québec: Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 2006), 1025–1052.

Trimorphic Protennoia – has so much in common with the overall topics of the texts between the covers.[39]

The same, however, is not as clear with *On the Origin of the World*, since what remains of this text is only the brief extract that happened to fit on the last page of *The Trimorphic Protennoia.* But *On the Origin of the World* was a well-known text and circulated in more than one copy between the fourth and fifth centuries. Another text we know for a fact was widely popular, for an even longer period of time – a text that Irenaeus had already refuted in *Against Heresies* in the second century and one that is also found in several copies of the Nag Hammadi collection – is *The Apocryphon of John.*

The Apocryphon of John is the only text that occurs three times in the Nag Hammadi collection. We have one short version of the text preserved in Codex III and two longer versions in Codex II and Codex IV.[40] As Layton observes, the chief difference – apart from the fact that the two long versions contain much material which is

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[39] Williams and Jenott argue that *The Trimorphic Protennoia* is a good fit with the overall theme of exploring the nature of the 'Great Power' mentioned throughout the different texts in Codex VI. They note the fact that it was placed in the front cover of the codex and works well as an introduction to the different topics discussed in the texts in between the covers: the role of the Demiurge, as well as the nature of oracular utterances and prophecy which is dealt with in *The Trimorphic Protennoia*, *Thunder: Perfect Mind*, *The Discourse on the Eighth and Ninth* as well as *The Perfect Discourse*. See Williams and Jenott, 'Inside the Covers of the Codex VI', 1025–1052.

[40] A detailed synoptic transcription and translation of all three versions, as well as the fourth version of the text found in the Berlin Codex (Codex Papyrus Berolinensis 8502), can be found in Waldstein and Wisse, *The Apocryphon of John*. For the argument that *The Apocryphon of John* – especially the parts containing material similar to the Enoch tradition on the myth of the watchers – would have appealed to monastic readers, see Cristian Bull, 'Women, Angels, and Dangerous Knowledge: The Myth of the Watchers in *The Apocryphon of John* and Its Monastic Manuscript-Context', in *Women and Knowledge in Early Christianity*, ed. Ulla Tervahauta, Ivan Miroshnikov, Outi Lehtipuu and Ismo Dunderberg (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 75–107.

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not part of the shorter version – is in phrasing and vocabulary, as the short one appears in a very different Coptic translation from the one found in the other two. For reasons having to do with translation techniques and phraseology, it would undoubtedly have been of interest for monks to study the texts. The two longer versions also show variance in Coptic dialect. The version in Codex IV is in standard Sahidic, whereas that in Codex II shows signs of Subachmimicisms.[41]

The most obvious difference between the two longer versions and the shorter version is that the former contains long excerpts from other works; for example, there is a hymn to Providence (NHC II, 30:11–31:25; NHC IV, 46:23–49:6) as well as an extract from a text called *The Book of Zoroaster* (NHC II, 15:27–19:10; NHC IV, 24:20–29:18), made up of long lists of the names of angels, Adam's body parts, and the way these two interrelate. These passages, particularly the excerpt from *The Book of Zoroaster*, could have been good material for copying exercises, as we know monks used different kinds of word lists when practising writing.[42] The monks might have kept several versions of *On the Origin of the World* for a similar reason: to use when practising copying techniques and translating.

The detailed differences between the texts could also have been studied as examples of how to formulate a sentence in different ways to achieve diverse rhetorical effects; those in the two long versions are of particular importance, since they follow each other almost verbatim. The differences are, nevertheless, there for anyone to see who could place the two texts next to each other. If someone were engaged in training in rhetoric and found rhetorical practice was improved by formulating the same words in different constellations of sentences, as we know monks did, the benefits of studying

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[41] Mainly in the way the alfa is changed to epsilon as well as the adding of an epsilon to the end of words which end with double consonant (Waldstein and Wisse (eds.), *The Apocryphon of John*, 5).

[42] Larsen, 'Monastic Paideia', 161.

the two long versions of *The Apocryphon of John* next to each other would be obvious. Let us take one example. The passage in question is at the very end of the text where Jesus takes leave of John and returns to heaven.

NHC II, 31:32–32:10	NHC III, 39:22–40:11	NHC IV, 49:13–28
ⲁⲩⲱ ⲁϥϯ ⲛⲁⲉⲓ ⲛⲁϥ ⲛϭⲓ ⲡⲥⲱⲣ ϫⲉⲕⲁⲁⲥ ⲉϥⲛⲁⲥⲁⲅⲟⲩ ⲁⲩⲱ ⲛϥⲕⲁⲁⲩ ϩⲛ ⲟⲩⲧⲁϫⲣⲟ ⲁⲩⲱ ⲡⲉϫⲁϥ ⲛⲁϥ ϫⲉ ϥⲥⲟⲩⲟⲣⲧ ⲛϭⲓ ⲟⲩⲟⲛ ⲛⲓⲙ ⲉⲧⲛⲁϯ ⲛⲁⲓ ϩⲁ ⲟⲩⲇⲱⲣⲟⲛ ⲏ ⲉⲧⲃⲉ ⲟⲩϩⲛⲉ ⲟⲩⲱⲙ ⲏ ⲉⲧⲃⲉ ⲟⲩⲥⲱ ⲏ ⲉⲧⲃⲉ ⲟⲩϣⲧⲏⲛ ⲏ ⲉⲧⲃⲉ ⲕⲉϩⲱⲃ ⲛⲧⲉⲓⲙⲉⲓⲛⲉ ⲁⲩⲱ ⲛⲁⲓ ⲁⲩⲧⲁⲁⲩ ⲛⲁϥ ϩⲛ ⲟⲩⲙⲩⲥⲧⲏⲣⲓⲟⲛ ⲁⲩⲱ ϩⲛ ⲧⲟⲩⲛⲟⲩ ⲁϥⲣ ⲁⲧⲟⲩⲱⲛϩ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ⲙⲡⲉϥⲙⲧⲟ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ⲁⲩⲱ ⲁϥⲉⲓ ϣⲁ ⲛⲉϥϣⲃⲣ ⲙⲁⲑⲏⲧⲏⲥ ⲁϥⲧⲉⲟⲩ ⲉⲣⲟⲟⲩ ⲛⲛⲉⲛⲧⲁⲡⲥⲱⲣ ϫⲟⲟⲩ ⲛⲁϥ

ⲓ̅ⲥ̅ ⲡⲉⲭ̅ⲣ̅ⲥ̅ ϩⲁⲙⲏⲛ ⲕⲁⲧⲁ ⲓⲱϩⲁⲛⲛⲏⲛ ⲛ ⲁ̅ⲡⲟⲕⲣⲩⲫⲟ̅ⲛ̅ | ⲕⲁⲓ ⲅⲁⲣ [ⲁⲓϯ ⲡⲁⲓ ⲛⲁⲕ] ⲉⲥϩⲁⲓⲥⲟⲩ ⲁⲩⲱ ⲛⲥⲉ ⲕⲁⲁⲩ [ϩⲛ ⲟⲩⲁ] ⲥⲫⲁⲗⲓⲁ· ⲧⲟⲧⲉ ⲡⲉϫⲁϥ ⲛⲁⲓ ϫⲉ [ϥⲥϩⲟⲩ]ⲟⲣⲧ ⲛϭⲓ ⲟⲩⲟⲛ ⲛⲓⲙ ⲉⲧⲛⲁ ⲧⲁⲁⲩ ⲉⲧⲃⲉ ⲇⲱⲣⲟⲛ ⲏ̂ ⲉⲧ[ⲃⲉ ϩⲉⲛϣⲧⲏⲛ ⲏ̂] ⲉⲧⲃⲉ ϩⲉⲛϭⲓ ⲛⲥⲱ ⲏ ⲉⲧⲃⲉ [ϩⲉⲛϭⲓⲛ] ⲟⲩⲱⲙ· ⲏ̂ ⲉⲧⲃⲉ ⲟⲩϩⲃⲥⲱ ⲏ ⲉⲧⲃⲉ ⲕⲉϩⲱⲃ ⲛⲧⲉⲉⲓⲙⲓⲛⲉ· ⲁϥϯ ⲉⲧⲟⲟ[ⲧϥ] ⲙⲡⲉⲉⲓⲙⲩⲥⲧⲏⲣⲓⲟⲛ ⲡⲁⲓ ⲛⲧⲉ[ⲩ]ⲛⲟⲩ ⲁϥⲣ ⲁⲫⲁⲛⲧⲟⲥ ⲉⲣⲟϥ· [ⲁϥⲁϩⲉ] ⲉⲣⲁⲧⲟⲩ ⲛⲛⲉϥϣⲃⲣ ⲙⲁⲑⲏⲧⲏⲥ ⲁϥ]ⲣⲁⲣⲭⲉⲥⲑⲁⲓ ⲉϣⲁϫⲉ ⲛⲙⲙⲁⲩ [ϩⲁ ⲛ]ϣⲁϫⲉ ⲛⲧⲁⲡⲥⲱⲧⲏⲣ ϫⲟⲟⲩ ⲉ[ⲣⲟϥ]

ⲡⲁⲡⲟⲕⲣⲩⲫⲟ̅ⲛ̅ ⲛ ⲓ̅ⲱϩⲁⲛⲛⲏ[ⲥ] | [ⲁⲩⲱ] ⲁϥϯ ⲛ[ⲁ]ⲓ ⲛⲁϥ ⲛϭⲓ ⲡⲥⲱⲧⲏⲣ ϫ[ⲉⲕⲁ] ⲁⲥ ⲉϥⲛⲁⲥⲁϩⲟⲩ ⲁⲩⲱ ⲛϥ̄ⲕⲁ[ⲁⲩ ϩⲛ] ⲟⲩⲧⲁϫⲣⲟ· ⲁⲩⲱ ⲡⲉϫⲁϥ ⲛⲁϥ [ϫⲉ ϥ]ⲥⲟⲩⲟⲣⲧ̄ ⲛϭⲓ ⲟⲩⲟⲛ ⲛⲓⲙ [ⲉⲧⲛⲁϯ ⲛⲁⲓ] ϩⲁ ⲟⲩⲇⲱⲣⲟⲛ ⲏ̂ ⲉⲧⲃⲉ ⲟⲩ[ϩⲛⲉ ⲟⲩ]ⲱⲙ· ⲏ̂ ⲉⲧⲃⲉ ⲟⲩⲥⲱ· ⲏ̂ ⲉ[ⲧⲃⲉ ⲟⲩ] ϣⲧⲏⲛ ⲏ̂ ⲉⲧⲃⲉ ⲕⲉϩⲱⲃ [ⲛⲧⲉ]ⲓⲙ[ⲓⲛⲉ] ⲁⲩⲱ ⲛⲁⲓ ⲁⲩⲧⲁⲁⲩ ⲛⲁϥ ϩⲛ ⲟⲩ [ⲙⲩ]ⲥⲧⲏⲣⲓⲟⲛ· ⲁⲩⲱ ⲛⲧⲉⲩⲛⲟⲩ [ⲁϥⲣ] ⲁⲧⲟⲩⲱⲛϩ̄ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ⲙⲡⲉϥⲙ̄ⲧ[ⲟ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ] ⲁⲩⲱ ⲁϥⲉⲓ ϣⲁ ⲛⲉϥϣⲃⲣ ⲙⲁⲑ[ⲏⲧⲏⲥ] ⲁϥϫⲱ ⲉⲣⲟϥ ⲛⲛⲉⲛⲧⲁⲡⲥⲱ[ⲣ ϫⲟ]ⲟⲩ ⲉⲣⲟϥ

ⲓ̅ⲥ̅ ⲡⲉⲭ̅ⲥ̅ ϩⲁⲙ ⲏ[ⲛ] ⲕⲁⲧⲁ ⲓⲱ[ϩ]ⲛ̄ ⲛ ⲁⲡⲟⲕⲣⲩⲫⲟⲛ |

And the Saviour presented these things to him that he might write them down and keep them secure. And he said to him: 'Cursed be everyone who will exchange these things for a gift, whether for food or drink, or for clothing or other such thing.' And these things were presented to him in a mystery. And finally he disappeared. And he went to his fellow disciples and gave the news to them concerning what the Saviour had told him.

Jesus Christ, Amen. The Apocryphon according to John[43]

For indeed, [I have presented these things to you] to write them down and to keep them [in] safety. Then he said to me: '[Cursed] be everyone who will exchange these things for a gift, whether of silver or gold, food or drink, for clothing or any such thing.' He entrusted this mystery to him. And immediately he disappeared from him. [He stood] before his fellow disciples and began to speak with them [about the] things which the Saviour had told him.

The Apocryphon of John

And the Saviour presented these things to him that he might write them down and keep them secure. And he said to him: 'Cursed be everyone who will exchange these things for a gift, whether for food or drink, or for clothing or other such thing.' And these things were presented to him in a mystery. And immediately he disappeared from him. And he went to his fellow disciples and told them what the Saviour had told him.

Jesus Christ, Amen.

The Apocryphon according to John

The versions in Codices II and IV are virtually identical, through-out the two manuscripts as well as here. There are, however, minor

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43 Texts and trans. Waldstein and Wisse, in Waldstein and Wisse (eds.), *The Apocryphon of John*, 174–177.

DUPLICATES AND MONASTIC TEXTUAL PRACTICE

differences, as expressed in the passage related here. The name John is abbreviated in the title of Codex IV, but kept in full in Codex II (Codex III has a different order and wording altogether) and the last two lines differ somewhat. While the version in Codex II retells the last disappearance of Jesus with the sentence: 'finally he disappeared' (ϩⲛ ⲧⲟⲩⲛⲟⲩ ⲁϥⲣ ⲁⲧⲟⲩⲱⲛϩ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ), Codex IV has 'immediately he disappeared' (ⲛ̄ⲧⲉⲩⲛⲟⲩ [ⲁϥⲣ̄]ⲁⲧⲟⲩⲱⲛϩ̄ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ). In the next sentence, Codex II writes that John 'gave news' (ⲧⲉ ⲟⲩⲱ) to the other disciples regarding Jesus' message, whereas Codex IV simply has the verb ⲭⲱ (speak/tell/relate).[44] These minor differences might seem insignificant when placed in relation to the version in Codex III, which not only differs in expression (ϣⲁⲭⲉ in this instance) but both includes details not contained in Codices II and IV and leaves out other details that are. If placed next to each other they could have been excellent school texts for practicing copying and nuances in translation and phrasing.

We know that *The Apocryphon of John* was read by monks, even in the sixth century. This is indicated by the fourth version of *The Apocryphon of John* found as the second text in Codex Papyrus Berolinensis 8502 (or Berolinensis Gnosticus, usually abbreviated BG). The cover of BG was inscribed with the words, ⲍⲁⲭⲁⲣ ⲁⲣⲛ ⲁⲃⲃⲁ, 'Zacharias, Archpresbyter, Abbot', and the cover contains a letter of introduction written by one monk on behalf of another.[45] The version in BG seems to be virtually identical to the version in Codex III, although one difference that can be observed concerns

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[44] What is more, as Waldstein and Wisse also notice, Codex IV has the wrong object marker ⲉⲡⲟϥ after the verb ⲭⲱ, it must have been ⲉⲣⲟⲟⲩ as in Codex III (which has the verb ϣⲁⲭⲉ) since the disciples who receive the speech are in the plural.

[45] Kurt Treu, 'P. Berl. 8502: Christliches Empfehlungsschreiben aus dem Einband des koptisch-gnostischen Kodex P.8502', *Archiv für Papyrusforschung* 28 (1982): 53–54; Myriam Krutzsch and Günther Poethke, 'Der Einband des koptisch-gnostischen Kodex Berolinensis 8502', in *Festschrift zum 150 jährigen Bestehen des Berliner Ägyptischen Museums*, ed. G. Poethke, U. Luft, and S. Wenig (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1974), 315–322.

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the way Greek loanwords have been treated. The Codex III version has kept more of these in the original while the BG version has a Coptic equivalent more often.[46] There is an even more striking example in two versions of *The Holy Book of the Great Invisible Spirit*, both preserved in the Nag Hammadi codices, that take different approaches to Greek loanwords.

The Holy Book of the Great Invisible Spirit is found in both Codex III and Codex IV. As Alexander Böhlig and Frederik Wisse observe in the Coptic Gnostic edition of the texts, the version in Codex III contains twice the number of Greek loanwords, whereas the version in Codex IV has, rather, ventured to render a Greek word with a Coptic equivalent.[47] What is striking is the frequency with which a Greek word appears in one place and then later in the text a Coptic equivalent is placed in its stead, or vice versa.[48] It is almost as if the scribe copying or translating these texts has compared his own translations/copies with other existing translations and made changes to introduce variation. The Greek original is retained while at the same time providing the reader with a Coptic explanation of the word's meaning later in the text – or the opposite: a Coptic word or phrase is attached to its Greek *Vorlage* later in the text, in a sense revealing the translation policy, perhaps pedagogically motivated. Monks engaged in translating and experimenting with translation would undoubtably benefit greatly from having more than one Coptic translation of a text being copied.

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[46] Where BG has kept the Greek οὐδέ (neither/nor), the version in NHC III has opted for a simple negation in Coptic (compare, for example, BG 24:9–11 to NHC III, 5:5–7).

[47] *Nag Hammadi Codex III,2 and IV,2*, ed. Böhlig and Wisse, 12–14. For example, NHC IV, 52:1 has ϣⲟⲣⲡ̅ⲛ̅ⲥⲟⲟⲩⲉ the Coptic, whereas NHC III has kept the original πρόγνωσις (42:10); or προελθεῖν in NHC III, 44:2–3 compared to ⲉⲓ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ in NHC IV, 54:3.

[48] See, for example, the use of προελθεῖν which appears interchangeably with the Coptic equivalent ⲉⲓ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ in the Codex III version. At the following places we find ⲉⲓ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ: 41:11–17, 49:15, 51:15, 52:6, 57:9, 62:13, 65:2. However, προελθεῖν is used to vary the phrasing in the following places (or vice versa): 41:7–13, 42:6–19, 43:8, 44:2–14, 49:13, 52:19, 53:2, 54:14–18, 55:1, 68:19.

The Gospel of Truth (NHC I,3 and XII,2): Reformulating Texts in Light of New Theological Trends

The Gospel of Truth is preserved in its entirety as the second tractate in Codex I. Previous scholars have viewed the text as the work of the famous Valentinus, while Irenaeus mentions that the Valentinians used a text they called 'the Gospel of Truth', but he does not state that the text was written by Valentinus.[49] However, in *Refutation of All Heresies* (the author of which is unclear)[50], we read that Valentinus had 'a Gospel of his own'.[51] The authorship of *The Gospel of Truth* will probably never be more than a hypothesis, but in all likelihood this text, too, like the other Nag Hammadi copies, was a very popular work.[52] The style and content of *The Gospel of Truth* is also enticing, mixing mythological exhortations with ethical and soteriological admonitions. It preaches the saving attributes of the knowledge of the Father of truth, given to us by his Name, the Son Jesus (NHC I, 38:6–32). Knowledge abolishes the reign of terror and forgetfulness represented by the character Error (ⲡⲗⲁⲛⲏ).[53] Knowledge enables reintegration into the Father, and the rest (ⲙ̄ⲧⲁⲛ) that that entails.[54] The text contains long exhortations on the differences between those who know (the children of light whom Jesus comes to save) and the

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[49] Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* III, 11:9.

[50] *Refutation of All Heresies*, trans. David Litwa (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2016), xxxii–xl.

[51] *Refutation of All Heresies* 4.

[52] For the arguments claiming that the text is Valentinian, see Einar Thomassen, *The Spiritual Seed: The Church of the 'Valentinians'* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 146–165. Thomassen categorises this text as what he calls an 'Eastern' Valentinianism. For a relevant critique of the division into East versus West doctrine, see Joel Kalvesmaki, 'Italian versus Eastern Valentinianism?', *Vigiliae Christianae* 62:1 (2008): 79–89.

[53] Geoffrey Smith has argued that this character is a version of Sofia, influenced by Ben Sira 24 and John's Prologue. See Geoffrey Smith, 'Constructing a Christian Universe: Mythological Exegesis of Ben Sira 24 and John's Prologue in the *Gospel of Truth*', in *Jewish and Christian Cosmogony in Late Antiquity*, ed. L. Jenott and S. Kattan Gribetz (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013): 64–84.

[54] NHC I, *The Gospel of Truth* 18:10–11, 24:30–32, 40:30–33.

material ones who do not recognise Jesus' divinity and are strangers to his message (NHC I, 30:32–31:14).

Previous scholars have observed the close similarities between Origen's theology and the *Gospel of Truth*.[55] Several other Nag Hammadi texts also reflect Origenisms, most likely due to the fact that they originated in similar contexts to those in which Origen was active.[56] We know that anti-Origenist trends began to intensify at the end of the fourth century, beginning with the appeals of Epiphanius and Jerome. Origen was banned at a council in Alexandria in 401, when Theophilus, threatened by riots, turned on Origen after having been a long-term supporter. Shortly after, monks associated with Evagrius Ponticus, who had died only two years before Origen was banned, were denounced as heretics. But Origen still enjoyed a large readership, and prominent names, including Rufinus and John Chrysostom, supported his legacy. To say the least, Origen and the theology associated with him were controversial topics within Eastern Christianity.[57]

So, why would Pachomian monks read texts smacking of Origen? As recent scholars have argued, Samuel Rubenson among them, Origen was instrumental in the development of early Christian

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[55] Geoffrey Smith, 'Anti-Origenist Redaction in the Fragments of the *Gospel of Truth* (NHC XII,2): Theological Controversy and the Transmission of Early Christian Literature', *Harvard Theological Review* 110:1 (2017) 46–74.

[56] Lundhaug, *Images of Rebirth*. See also the evidence suggesting that the theology reflected in *The Tripartite Tractate* directly relates to the doctrine of free will that Origen rejects in his *Peri Archon*. See Linjamaa, *The Ethics of* The Tripartite Tractate, 146–156. For more on the relation to Origen's theology and NHC I, see Jenott and Pagels, 'Antony's Letters'.

[57] Elizabeth Clark, *The Origenist Controversy: The Cultural Construction of an Early Christian Debate* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992); Samuel Runbenson, 'Antony and Ammonas, Conflicting or Common Tradition in Early Egyptian Monasticism?', in *Bibel, Byzanz und Christlicher Orient: Festschrift für Stephen Gerö zum 65 Geburtstag*, ed. D. Bumazhnov, E. Grypeou, T. B. Sailors and A. Toepel (Leuven and Paris: Peeters, 2011), 185–202.

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monasticism in Egypt.[58] The Alexandrian exegetical tradition which Origen had a part in developing – along with figures such as Clement of Alexandria – applied classical *paideia* and attributed it to Christian texts and practices. As we have seen above, the ideals of classical *paideia* continued in Egyptian monasticism, and this was in line with traditions Origen had instigated. However, many of Origen's doctrinal takes became controversial, and stories describing the life of Pachomius suggest that he vehemently rejected Origen. But was this really the case?[59] Pachomius' monasteries were already established when the first Origenist controversy began, while Pachomius had passed away a generation earlier, in 348. The sayings of the great monastic fathers (including Pachomius) were chiefly written during and after the controversy, so it should not surprise us that anti-Origenist passages have crept into works that were foundational for the monastic movement. It is understandable that the authors of the *Vitas* would have jumped at the opportunity to place a patriarch of high standing on their side in the theological debates of their own time.

What is more, it is well known that the *Vita* genre borders on legend, and at times the tactics used to discredit one's theological adversaries are even humorous. One story preserved in the *Ascetica* has Pachomius welcoming a group of Origenist anchorites into his monastery and, as he greets them, he is taken aback by their foul stench. Pachomius is puzzled by the fact that the strangers, whose appearance is tidy, emit such a filthy odour. As they leave Pachomius retires and meditates on the reason for the smell. He

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[58] Samuel Rubenson, 'Origen in the Egyptian Monastic Tradition of the Fourth Century', in *Bibliotheca ephemeridum theologicarum Lovaniensium*, ed. W. A. Bienert and U. Kühneweg (Leuven: Peeters, 1999), 319–337; Samuel Rubenson, 'Why Did the Origenist Controversy Begin? Re-thinking the Standard Narratives', *Modern Theology* 38:2 (2022): 318–337.

[59] For example, Palladius, *The Monks of Tabenna* VII (in *The Book of Paradise*, trans. Budge, vol. I, 447–448). Ammonius and Abba Benjamin were, on the contrary, said to have read Origen with great interest (Palladius, *Lausiac History* I, 11–12, in *The Book of Paradise*, trans. Budge, vol. I, 154–155).

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receives a vision and is told by an angel that the vulgar smell comes from their souls, which have been sullied by erroneous theological convictions associated with Origen. Pachomius hurries to catch up with his departing guests and tells them to throw Origen's texts in the river if they value their eternal souls.[60] This is a fabulous heresiological story, but it is not only the creative way that Pachomius handles his theological opponents that leaves us wondering about the accuracy of its attribution to Pachomius. James Goehring has argued on the basis of Armand Veilleux's analysis that the *Ascetica* originated from an anti-Origenist setting in Lower Egypt.[61] What is more, the Coptic *Vita* tradition associated with Pachomius does not include anti-Origenist sentiments such as those which fill the *Ascetica* and the Greek *Vita* tradition, also originating from Lower Egypt.[62]

Whatever the famous archimandrite may actually have thought of Origen, it is not at all strange that, fifty years later, some monks in the monasteries founded by Pachomius questioned aspects of Origen's theology. Geoffrey Smith has hypothesised that the version of *The Gospel of Truth* in Codex XII was rewritten to rid it of possible accusations of Origenist theological positioning in the version in Codex I. The Codex XII version is shorter (and in Sahidic dialect), and more to the point, the Codex I version (in Subachmimic) contains fuller descriptions and additional elaborations. Furthermore, as Smith argues, the version in Codex XII has been shortened for a very specific reason: to fit a new anti-Origenist climate. In one passage referring to the coming of the Saviour, for example, the Codex XII version has removed

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[60] *Ascetica* 7; *Pachomian Koinonia*, trans. Veilleux, vol. II, 28–29.
[61] James E. Goehring, 'Producing Pachomius: The Role of Lower Egypt in the Creation, Reception, and Adaptation of the Pachomian Vita Tradition', in *Wisdom on the Move: Late Antique Traditions in Multicultural Conversation*, ed. S. Ashbrook Harvey, T. Arentzen, H. Rydell Johnsén and A. Westergren (Leiden: Brill, 2020), 35–53; *Pachomian Koinonia*, trans. Veilleux, vol. I, 317.
[62] Goehring, 'Producing Pachomius', 46–47.

a reference to some people being unable to see the 'likeness' (ⲉⲓⲛⲉ) of the Saviour.[63] This has been done because of the word's association with the debate concerning 'likenesses and images' involving Origen.[64] Anti-Origenists rejected the idea that humans had lost the image of God at the fall of Adam, which Origen claimed. In another example offered by Smith of a passage that has been shortened in Codex XII to rid it of Origenist-sounding theology, Codex I has the Son emanating from the Father (37:7–18) – creating a hierarchy within the Godhead, which anti-Origenists refuted – while Codex XII tones down the hierarchy between Father and Son (60:18–28).[65]

Smith's suggestions are thought-provoking and convincing. They clearly indicate that the owners of the codices were willing to redact, rework and change texts to suit the needs of new theological climates. But what, if Smith's analysis is correct, would the monks have done with the longer 'Origenist version' of *The Gospel of Truth* after having rewritten it to suit theological changes in the milieu? The codices were found together, so they were not simply discarded. What of the other texts in the collection that also included Origenist-sounding language? The fact is that monks kept and read texts for a number of reasons, not only to agree with the tractates of the theologically likeminded. Edification could be attained in many ways. One reason theologically challenging texts would have been of use, again, was for pedagogical purposes and for the value they still contained.

We know, for example, that gnomic sentences appealed to monks, and these are a marked characteristic of *The Gospel of Truth*, which has short gnomic sentences scattered throughout the narrative, along with quotes from Scripture mixed with unidentified allusions and allegories. Most of the gnomic sentences concern

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[63] NHC I, 30:34–31:6; NHC XII, 53:26–29.

[64] Smith, 'Anti-Origenist Redaction', 58–61.

[65] Smith, 'Anti-Origenist Redaction', 62–65.

the nature of salvation and the path toward it. The treasure of true salvation is described as a 'will which has not yet been opened, for the fortune of the deceased master of the house is hidden',[66] or as like 'having become intoxicated, (then) turned from one's drunkenness and having found oneself, and restored what is one's own'.[67] Salvation also inevitably entails the loss of some who are not able to attain it. However, one should not grieve, because, 'like people who have moved from a neighbourhood, if they have some dishes around which are not good, they usually break them. Nevertheless, the householder does not suffer a loss, but rejoices, for in the place of these defective dishes there are those which are completely perfect.'[68] When salvation finally comes, it is like 'a great disturbance occurring (among the dishes), for some are emptied, others filled: some are mended, others were removed; some were purified, still others were broken'.[69] Once saved, the following section of *The Gospel of Truth* implores readers to stay on the right path in a series of striking imperatives: 'Do not return to eat that which you have vomited, that which you have expelled. Do not be moth-eaten. Do not be worm-eaten, for you have already shaken

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[66] NHC I, 20:15–17: ⲛ̄ⲟⲩⲇⲓⲁⲑⲏⲕⲏ ⲉⲙ̄ⲡⲁⲧⲟⲩⲏⲛ ⲁⲣⲁⲥ ⲉⲥϩⲏⲡ ⲛ̄ϭⲓ †ⲟⲩⲥⲓⲁ ⲙ̄ⲡⲉⲛ ⲙ̄ⲡⲛⲉⲓ· ⲉⲛⲧⲁϩⲙⲟⲩ. Text and trans. Harold W. Attridge and George W. MacRae, modified, in *Nag Hammadi Codex I*, ed. Attridge, 86–87.

[67] NHC I, 22:16–20: ⲛ̄ⲟⲩⲉⲉⲓ· ⲉⲁϥϯϩⲉ ⲁϥⲙⲁϩϥ̄ ⲁⲃⲁⲗ ϩⲙ̄ ⲡⲉϥϯϩⲉ ⲉⲁϥⲙⲁϩϥ̄ ⲁⲣⲁϥ ⲟⲩⲁⲉⲉⲧϥ̄· ⲁϥⲧⲉϩⲟ ⲙ̄ⲡⲉⲧⲉ ⲛⲟⲩϥ ⲁⲣⲉⲧⲟⲩ ⲡⲉ· Text and trans. Attridge and MacRae, modified, in *Nag Hammadi Codex I*, ed. Attridge, 90–91.

[68] NHC I, 25:25–35: ⲛ̄ϩⲁⲉⲓⲙⲉ ⲉⲁⲩⲡⲱⲛⲉ ⲁⲃⲁⲗ ϩⲛ̄ ϩⲛ̄ⲙⲁ ⲉⲩⲛ̄ⲧⲉⲩ ⲙ̄ⲙⲉⲩ ⲛ̄ϩⲉⲛⲥⲕⲉⲩⲟⲥ· ⲛ̄ϩⲣⲏⲓ̈ ϩⲛ̄ ϩⲛ̄ⲧⲟⲡⲟⲥ ⲉⲛⲁⲛⲟⲩⲟⲩ· ⲉⲛ ⲛⲉⲩⲁⲩⲟⲩⲁⲃⲟⲩ· ⲁⲩⲱ ⲙⲁϥϯ ⲁⲥⲓ ⲛ̄ϭⲓ ⲡⲛⲉⲛ ⲙ̄ⲡⲛⲉⲓ ⲁⲗⲗⲁ ϣⲁⲥⲣⲉϣⲉ· ϫⲉ ⲛ̄ϩⲣⲏⲓ̈ ⲅⲁⲣ ϩⲛ̄ ⲡⲙⲁ ⲛ̄ⲛⲓⲥⲕⲉⲩⲟⲥ ⲉⲑⲁⲩ· ⲛⲉⲧⲙⲏϩ ⲛⲉⲧⲉϣⲁⲩϫⲁⲕⲟⲩ ⲁⲃⲁⲗ. My translation. Translation inspired by and text based on what is provided by Attridge and MacRae, in *Nag Hammadi Codex I*, ed. Attridge, 94–95.

[69] NHC I, 26:8–15: ⲟⲩⲛⲁϭ ⲛ̄ϣⲧⲁⲣⲧⲣ̄ ⲁϥϣⲱⲡⲉ ⲛ̄ϩⲣⲏⲓ̈ ϩⲛ̄ ⲛ̄ⲥⲕⲉⲩⲟⲥ ϫⲉ ϩⲁⲉⲓⲛⲉ ⲁϩⲟⲩϣⲟⲩⲱⲟⲩ ϩⲛ̄ⲕⲁⲩⲉ ⲁϩⲟⲩⲙⲁϩⲟⲩ ϫⲉⲥ ϩⲛ̄ⲕⲁⲩⲉ ⲁϩⲟⲩⲥϩⲛⲏ ⲧⲟⲩ· ϩⲛ̄ⲕⲁⲩⲉ ⲁϩⲟⲩⲡⲁⲛⲟⲩ ϩⲁⲉⲓⲛⲉ ⲁϩⲟⲩⲧⲟⲩⲃⲁⲩ ϩⲛ̄ⲕⲉⲕⲁⲩⲉ ⲁϩⲟⲩⲡⲱϣⲉ ⲙⲁⲉⲓⲧ. My translation, inspired by and based on the text by Attridge and MacRae, in *Nag Hammadi Codex I*, ed. Attridge, 94–95.

it off. Do not be a dwelling place for the devil, for you have already destroyed him.'[70]

There is a plethora of other gnomic statements that give the narrative a very poetic and enigmatic flavour.[71] Unfortunately, most of them are only preserved in the long version in Codex I. A few, however, remain in the fragmented version in Codex XII: for example, the following one, likening saved people to jars filled with ointment:

NHC I, 36:17–26

The ointment is the mercy of the Father, who will have mercy on them. For those whom he has anointed are those who are perfect. For the filled vessels are those which are usually used for ointment. But when an anointing is finished, the vessel is usually empty, and the cause of its deficiency is the consumption of its ointment.

πιτωϩⲥ̄ ⲡⲉ ⲡⲛⲁⲉ· ⲙ̄ⲡⲓⲱⲧ· ⲉⲧⲉϥⲛⲁⲛⲁⲉ ⲛⲉⲩ· ⲛⲉⲛⲧⲁϥⲧⲁϩⲥⲟⲩ ⲇⲉ ⲛⲉ ⲛⲉⲉⲓ ⲛ̄ⲧⲁϩⲭⲱⲕ ⲁⲃⲁⲗ· ⲛ̄ⲥⲕⲉⲩⲟⲥ ⲅⲁⲣ ⲉⲧⲙⲏϩ, ⲛⲉⲧⲉϣⲁⲟⲩⲧⲁϩⲥⲟⲩ· ⲡⲥⲁⲡ ⲇⲉ· ⲉⲧⲉ ⲡⲧⲱϩⲥ̄ ⲛⲟⲩⲉⲉⲓ· ⲛⲁⲃⲱⲗ ⲁⲃⲁⲗ· ϣⲁϥϣⲟⲩⲟ· ⲟⲩⲉϩⲛ̄ ⲧⲗⲁⲉⲓϭⲉ ⲁⲧⲣⲉϥⲣ̄ ϣⲧⲁ ⲡⲉ ⲡϩⲱⲃ ⲉⲧⲉ {ⲙ̄}ⲡⲉϥⲧⲱϩⲥ̄· ⲛⲁⲃⲱⲕ

NHC XII, 59:21–30

[For the ointment is] the mercy of the Father. Therefore, [he will] have mercy on them. They received the [ointment,] i.e. they

ⲡ[ⲓⲧⲱϩⲥ ⲅⲁⲣ ⲡⲉ] ⲡⲛⲁⲉ ⲛ̄ⲧⲉ ⲡⲉ[ⲓⲱⲧ ϥⲛⲁⲛ]ⲁϩ ϭⲉ ⲛⲁⲩ ⲁⲩϫⲓ ⲙ̄ⲡ[ⲓⲧⲱϩ ⲥ ⲉⲧⲉ ⲡⲁⲉ]ⲓ ⲡⲉ ⲁⲩ[ⲭ[ⲱⲕ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ⲛ̄ ⲥⲕⲉⲩⲟⲥ] ⲅⲁⲣ ⲉⲧⲙ[ⲏϩ, ⲭⲓ ⲙ̄ⲡⲓ ⲧⲱϩⲥ ϩⲟ]ⲧⲁ ⲛ ⲅⲁⲣ

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[70] NHC I, 33:14–21: ⲙ̄ⲡⲣ̄ⲥⲱⲧⲉ ⲁⲣⲁⲩ ⲁⲟⲩⲁⲙⲟⲩ· ⲙ̄ⲡⲣ̄ⲣ̄ ⲭⲁⲗⲉⲥ ⲙ̄ⲡⲣ̄ⲣ̄ ϭⲛ̄ⲧ ϫⲉ ⲁⲧⲉⲧⲛ̄ⲟⲩⲱ ⲉⲣⲉⲧⲛ̄ⲟⲩϫⲉ· ⲙⲙⲁϥ ⲁⲃⲁⲗ ⲙ̄ⲡⲣ̄ϣⲱⲡⲉ ⲉⲣⲉⲧⲛ̄ⲟⲉⲓ ⲛ̄ⲧⲟⲡⲟⲥ ⲙ̄ⲡⲇⲓⲁⲃⲟⲗⲟⲥ ϫⲉ ⲁⲧⲉⲧⲛ̄ⲟⲩⲱ ⲉⲣⲉⲧⲛ̄ⲟⲩⲱⲥϥ̄ ⲙⲙⲁϥ. Text and trans. Attridge and MacRae, modified, in *Nag Hammadi Codex I*, ed. Attridge, 94–95.

[71] See, for example, the long passages likening the human state with a dream (beginning at 28:32); or the likeness of God's peoples with the sweet smell emitting from the perfume of God (beginning at 33:33).

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became perfect. For full [vessels receive ointment.] For if ointment [is dispersed from a vessel, it becomes] empty. The cause [that brought about the lack] is the dispersion [of the ointment].[72]

ⲉϥ[ϣⲁⲛⲃⲱⲗ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ⲛ̄ϭⲓ]ⲡⲓⲧⲱϩⲥ̣ [ⲛ̄ⲟⲩⲥⲕⲉⲩⲟⲥϥϣⲟⲩⲉ]ⲓ̣ⲧ· ⲧⲗⲟⲉⲓϭⲉ̣ [ⲉⲧⲣⲉϥⲣ̄ⲛ̄ⲟⲩⲭⲣⲉ]ⲓ̣ⲁ ⲡⲃⲱⲗ ⲉ[ⲃⲟⲗ ⲙ̄ⲡⲓⲧⲱϩⲥ].

This is a very cryptic passage and the meaning is somewhat unclear. The ambiguous implication of the gnomic sentence about the different vessels is preserved in the rewritten short version (which in this passage is not much shorter at all). It appears that the Codex XII version has tried to make it clear that the people become perfect by the power of the salvation of God (here represented by the metaphor of being anointed). In Codex I it seems as if God chooses to anoint those who are destined for salvation, that is, 'the perfect'. This could be, yet again, an instance where the monks who rewrote the text chose to shift *The Gospel of Truth* away from theologically question-able views. The discussion of the nature of human free will very much hinged upon people's ability to deserve salvation, rather than being born with it. A deterministic view of the world can be detected in several texts in Codex I, chiefly in *The Tripartite Tractate*, but also in the long version of *The Gospel of Truth*.[73]

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[72] The reconstruction of the Codex XII here presented, as well as its translation, is by Geoffrey Smith, in Smith, 'Anti-Origenist Redaction', 71–72. Text and trans. of NHC I, 36:17–26 also from Smith's article but follow closely that of Attridge and MacRae, in *Nag Hammadi Codex I*, ed. Attridge, 96–97.

[73] See Linjamaa, *The Ethics of* The Tripartite Tractate, 150–151, passim; Jörgen Magnusson, 'The Gospel of Truth as the Gospel of the Saved Saviors', *Gnosis: Journal of Gnostic Studies* 6:1 (2021): 31–48. For another comparison between the fragments and the full version in Codex I, see the discussion regarding, for example, the word *Pleroma* (fullness) in Katrine Brix, 'Two Witnesses, One Valentinian Gospel? The Gospel of Truth in Nag Hammadi Codices I and XII', in *Snapshots of Evolving Traditions*, ed. Lied and Lundhaug, 126–145.

Free will in these texts meant just what *The Gospel of Truth* in Codex I indicates, that one is a jar full of ointment destined for salvation. This controversial opinion is mitigated and made less clear in the version in Codex XII, although we know from the above discussion on monastic views of higher education that some were of the opinion that not all had the ability to attain perfection; the shape of their very disposition made them unable to keep from manifesting a deceitful nature. This time, however, the longer version does not reflect Origenism, because Origen was one of the first and most opinionated advocates of the doctrine of free will, which *The Gospel of Truth* questions in the above passage. It seems, thus, that the editing of *The Gospel of Truth*, the production of a shorter and more concise version of the text, could have been motivated by a number of changes in the theological climate, not only anti-Origenism.

These aspects of the copies reflect the well-established fact that monks did not only read texts for edification, but copied them, rewrote them and rephrased enigmatic sentences to practice the art of textual manoeuvrings, to fine-tune their moral compasses and meet new theological challenges.

Eugnostos the Blessed *(NHC III,3 and V,1): Practising Editorial Work*

Perhaps the most noteworthy text appearing in more than one copy in the Nag Hammadi collection is that of *Eugnostos the Blessed*, which appears in two versions, one in Codex III and the other in Codex V. But that is not all. It also makes up the main part of another text, *The Wisdom of Jesus Christ*, in Codex IV, reworked by the addition of a new framing narrative. Thus, one could claim that *Eugnostos the Blessed* has been preserved in more than three copies in the Nag Hammadi collection. *The Wisdom of Jesus Christ* is also found in a version in BG, which we know – as discussed above – was used in a monastic milieu.

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  Previous studies on *Eugnostos the Blessed* have assumed, since it does not mention Jesus, that it is a so-called Gnostic text. The editorial work that went into fitting *Eugnostos the Blessed* into *The Wisdom of Jesus Christ* has thus been viewed as reflecting an attempt to 'Christianise' an otherwise non-Christian text.[74] It is not at all unreasonable to suppose that *Eugnostos the Blessed* retained such popularity (indicated by the two copies of the text) that it triggered the production of a new text, a long version of *Eugnostos the Blessed* that better suited a changing readership. But to state that this is because the owners wished to 'Christianise' the text is to simplify the matter somewhat. As Douglas Parrott, the editor of the text for the Coptic Gnostic series, has noted, there seems to be a symbiosis between these three texts, with the two versions of *Eugnostos the Blessed* anticipating that included in the extended version of *The Wisdom of Jesus Christ*.[75] If we put aside discussion of the relation between Gnosticism and Christianity – a discourse that has dictated much of the scholarship on the relation between these texts – and simply view the texts in an Egyptian monastic setting, it becomes more understandable that *The Wisdom of Jesus Christ* was a reworked version of *Eugnostos the Blessed*, a way for the readers of the latter to add what they thought it lacked. *Eugnostos the Blessed* strikes a chord with several key Egyptian religious tenets of the Ptolemaian period, as Parrott notices, such as the depiction of the original first creation by a single being, creating for himself four pairs or powers making up an Ogdoad.[76] Adding Christ to this Egyptian system would have served to mitigate the tensions between a long Egyptian tradition on the way out and the new religion (in comparison)

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[74] These inquiries beg the question what actually makes a text Christian? The Book of Psalms, Genesis and many other texts that certainly do not mention Jesus are not viewed as texts that would question the readers' Christian identity. We should be careful not to employ too rigid categories as to what makes a text Christian or non-Christian.

[75] *Nag Hammadi Codices III,3–4 and V,1*, ed. Douglas W. Parrott (Leiden: Brill, 1991), 4.

[76] *Nag Hammadi Codices III,3–4 and V,1*, ed. Parrott, 11.

on the rise. For a new and growing social phenomenon like Egyptian coenobitism, it would undoubtably have been helpful to learn how Christianity could be squared with Egyptian religious tenets. Highlighting a long and pristine Egyptian culture is a key feature in many of the other Nag Hammadi texts, such as the two Hermetic texts as well as Sethian material.

There are other striking features of *Eugnostos the Blessed*. Louis Painchaud has argued convincingly that the text retains several key likenesses to another text in the Nag Hammadi collection: *On the Origin of the World*.[77] Painchaud not only points out similarities in mythological characters appearing in both treatises, as well as their functions,[78] but also notes parallels in lexical and compositional aspects.[79] He suggests that *On the Origin of the World* was meant to be read first to 'alienate' the reader from the creator God of Genesis and introduce a higher being, which is then portrayed in *Eugnostos the Blessed*. The accuracy of Painchaud's hypothesis aside – an interesting suggestion worth further thought and study – the conclusions reached concerning the relation between the two texts support the argument advanced here, that there would have been ample reason for keeping these codices in the same library, even though Codices II and XIII (containing *On the Origin of the World*) and Codices III and V (containing *Eugnostos the Blessed* and, we might add, *The Wisdom of Jesus Christ*) are usually identified

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[77] Louis Painchaud, 'The Literal Contacts between the Writing without Title *On the Origin of the World* (CG II,5 and XIII,2) and *Eugnostos the Blessed* (CG III, 3 and V, 1)', *Journal of Biblical Literature* 1114:1 (1995): 81–101.

[78] Painchaud, 'The Literal Contacts', 83–87.

[79] Both texts, Painchaud argues, are organised following a rhetorical pattern, extant since Aristotle, which divides a composition into four main sections: I Exordium (exordium, προοίμιον); II Narration (narratio, διήγησις); III Proof (probatio, demonstratio, πίστις, ἀπόδειξις); IV Peroration (peroratio, ἐπίλογος). These four sections also contain lexical similarities which make it likely that the two texts were not merely following a standard rhetorical principle, but actually originated from the same textual milieu (Painchaud, 'The Literal Contacts', 83–87).

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as belonging to different sub-groups, as with most of the copies. Adding to this the intricate relation between *Eugnostos the Blessed* and *The Wisdom of Jesus Christ* (NHC IV), we are more than justified in drawing the conclusion that the texts derived from very dynamic and lively textual milieux, where editorial and codicological processes were important tools for keeping the texts relevant.

Eugnostos the Blessed also contains several editorial differences that would have made the versions interesting to read side by side. As Parrott has noted, both versions of *Eugnostos the Blessed* follow each other closely, but *Eugnostos the Blessed* in Codex V contains at least fourteen occasions where it has fuller descriptions compared to the version in Codex III.[80] In some places, details are also left out. For example, at the beginning of the text, both versions state that previous interpreters have reached erroneous conclusions regarding the governance of the world and that these come in three forms: some state that the world is governed by itself, some claim it is by providence and still others by fate. The Codex V version lacks the explanation that these are 'philosophers' (ⲛⲉⲫⲓⲗⲟⲥⲟⲫⲟⲥ) (NHC III, 70:15), a note that also appears in *The Wisdom of Jesus Christ* (NHC III, 92:20–21). The Codex V version also excludes some apophatic language at the outset pertaining to God. These are minor differences that are found throughout the texts, where the version in Codex III can be said generally to follow *The Wisdom of Jesus Christ* more closely than that in Codex V. However, the Codex V version contains some longer passages left out of both *The Wisdom of Jesus Christ* and *Eugnostos the Blessed* in Codex III. This is exemplified by a passage that expands upon the relationship between the highest God and the creatures under him:

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[80] *Nag Hammadi Codices III,3–4 and V,1*, ed. Parrott, 17.

NHC III, 83:2–10

From the consenting of those I have just mentioned, thoughts appeared in the aeons that exist. From thoughts, reflections; from reflections, considerations; from considerations, rationalities; from rationalities, wills; from wills, words.[81]	ⲉⲃ[ⲟⲗ ϩⲛ̄ ⲧⲉ]ⲩⲥⲩⲛⲫⲱⲛⲏ ⲉⲓⲥ ⲛ̄ⲧⲁⲉⲓⲣ ϣⲣ̄ⲡ̄ ⲛ̄ϫⲟⲟⲩ ⲁⲩⲟⲩⲱⲛϩ ϩⲛ̄ ⲛⲁⲓⲱⲛ ⲉⲧⲕⲏ ⲉϩⲣⲁⲓ̈ ⲛ̄ϭⲓ ⲛ̄ⲉⲛⲛⲟⲓⲁ· ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ϩⲛ̄ ⟨ⲛ̄⟩ ⲉⲛⲛⲟⲓⲁ ⲛⲉⲛⲟⲩⲙⲏⲥⲓⲥ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ϩⲛ̄ ⲛⲉⲛⲟⲩⲙⲏⲥⲓⲥ ⲛⲉⲫⲣⲟⲛⲏⲥⲓⲥ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ϩⲛ̄ ⲛⲉⲫⲣⲟⲛⲏⲥⲓⲥ ⲛ̄ⲗⲟⲅⲓⲥⲙⲟⲥ· ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ϩⲛ̄ ⲛ̄ⲗⲟⲅⲓⲥⲙⲟⲥ ⲛⲉⲑⲉⲗⲏⲥⲓⲥ· ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ϩⲛ̄ ⲛⲉⲑⲉⲗⲏⲥⲓⲥ ⲛ̄ⲗⲟⲅⲟⲥ·

NHC V, 11:6–20

Now from the consent of those who have just been mentioned, thoughts appeared in aeons that were mentioned earlier. And from thoughts, thinkings; and from thinkings, teachings; and from teachings, counsels; and from counsels, wills, and from wills, words. Now, they have other names. Thoughts are called 'gods'; thinkings, 'lords', teachings are 'angels'; counsels are 'angels', wills are 'words'.[82]	ⲇⲉ ϩⲙ̄ ⲡⲓϯⲙⲉ[ⲧⲉ ⲛ̄ⲧⲁⲩ] ⲉⲧⲁⲩⲣ̄ϣⲟⲣⲡ̄ ⲛ̄ϫⲟⲟⲩ [ⲁⲩⲟⲩⲱⲛϩ] ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ⲛ̄ϭⲓ ϩⲉⲛⲉⲛⲛⲟⲓⲁ [ϩⲛ̄ ϩⲉⲛⲉⲱⲛ] ⲉⲁⲩⲣ̄ ϣⲟⲣⲡ̄ ⲛ̄ϫⲟⲟⲩ ⲉⲃⲟ[ⲗ ⲇⲉ ϩⲛ̄] ⲛⲓⲉⲛⲛⲟⲓⲁ ⲛⲓⲙⲉⲉⲩⲉ· ⲉ[ⲃⲟⲗ ⲇⲉ ϩⲛ̄] ⲛⲓⲙⲉⲉⲩⲉ ⲛⲓⲥⲃⲟⲟⲩⲉ· ⲉⲃ[ⲟⲗ ⲇⲉ ϩⲛ̄] ⲛⲓⲥⲃⲟⲟⲩⲉ ⲛⲓϣⲟϫⲛⲉ· ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ⲇⲉ ϩⲛ̄ ⲛⲓϣⲟϫⲛⲉ ⲛⲓⲟⲩⲱϣ· ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ⲇⲉ ϩⲛ̄ ⲛⲓⲟⲩⲱϣ ⲛⲉ ⲛⲓϣⲁϫⲉ· ⲟⲩⲛ̄ⲧⲁⲩ ⲇⲉ ⲛ̄ϩⲉⲛⲕⲉⲣⲁⲛ· ⲛⲓⲉⲛⲛⲟⲓⲁ ⲇⲉ ϣⲁⲩⲙⲟⲩⲧⲉ ⲉⲣⲟⲟⲩ ϫⲉ ⲛ̄ⲛⲟⲩⲧⲉ· ⲛⲓⲙⲉⲉⲩⲉ ⲇⲉ ϫⲉ ⲛⲓ[ϫⲟ]ⲉⲓⲥ· ⲛⲓⲥⲃⲱ ⲛⲉ ⲛⲓⲁⲅⲅⲉⲗⲟⲥ· ⲛⲓϣⲟϫⲛⲉ ⲛⲉ ⲛⲓⲁⲅⲅⲉⲗⲟⲥ· ⲛⲓⲟⲩ[ⲱ]ϣ ⲛ̄]ⲉ ⲛⲓϣⲁϫⲉ·

These passages explain the cognitive processes attached to each step of the creation of the aeon of the Father. *The Wisdom of Jesus Christ* does not include this passage, and the elaboration which Codex V offers at the end of the passage is not included in the version in Codex III. Apart from differences in vocabulary, the version from V attaches the cognitive hierarchy – 'thought-

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81 Text and trans. Parrott, in *Nag Hammadi Codices III,3–4 and V,1*, ed. Parrott, 120.
82 Text and trans. Parrott, in *Nag Hammadi Codices III,3–4 and V,1*, ed. Parrott, 120–122.

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thinking-teaching-counsel-will-word' – to a hierarchy containing the agents 'gods-lords-angels-words'. Directly following these passages, *Eugnostos the Blessed* contains a numerical expansion of creation. We read that there are twelve powers – six male and six female – who reveal another 72 powers, who in turn reveal 5 powers each, making up a total of 360 powers, a collective attached to the concept 'will'. The 360 powers are attached to the 360 days of the year, divided into twelve months, and an uncountable number of angels, moments and hours. *The Wisdom of Jesus Christ* has left out these elaborations and instead added passages with much less detailed information concerning the nature of the structure of the heavens and its relation to the cosmos.[83] These are aspects of *Eugnostos the Blessed* which would have spoken to an Egyptian audience, according to Parrott, which *The Wisdom of Jesus Christ* presents in a more acceptable Christian rendition.

   Placing the different versions next to each other would have enabled many interesting differences to surface. A context in which it would have made sense to copy, edit and preserve several different versions of the same text in the way we here see is that of an early Egyptian monastic community, containing individuals with many different relations to the Egyptian context in which they existed, on different levels pertaining to spiritual maturity.

Conclusion

At the end of the fourth century, Pachomian monasteries housed several hundred monks at each site, with numerous sites in the vicinity of what today is the modern town of Nag Hammadi. As we

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[83] A few pages are missing from the Nag Hammadi version of *The Wisdom of Jesus Christ*, so we have to rely on the version preserved in BG to see how *The Wisdom of Jesus Christ* replaced the numerical passages in *Eugnostos the Blessed*.

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have seen, Pachomian monasteries had the practice of leaving books out for monks to borrow. The most obvious benefit of keeping more than one copy of a text in a library is that it can be read by more than one person at one time. Considering that a number of the monks must have been proficient, since reading ability was obligatory, it is not unfathomable that more than one monk in a vast monastic association such as the Pachomian one would have been interested in reading these texts at a time. We know that several of them were popular in fourth-century Egypt, particularity those extant in copies, all of which (except *The Gospel of Truth*) are also found elsewhere in other Coptic or Greek manuscripts. Considering that monks in all likelihood spoke to each other about what they read (at least to those belonging to the same Pachomian letter-group), interest would have spread, leading to copies, redactions and new editions with additions and modifications. In short, it would have been handy to keep more than one copy, especially of particularly popular texts.

The fact that these copies are chiefly found in different scribal sub-groups could be an indication that they were produced within different Pachomian monasteries in close proximity to each other, as Christian Bull, for example, has recently suggested.[84] If we presume that the texts were produced and used in one or several of the monasteries in the area in which they were found, a monk could within a day's walk visit any of other handful of Pachomian monasteries situated between the monastery in Thbew in the west and Tabennis in the east (what is today Nag Hammadi is located in between these sites).[85] Thus, we should presume that books were borrowed and exchanged between monasteries of the same federation, especially those close to each other.[86]

[84] Bull, 'The Panopolis Connection'.
[85] For a study of the geography of early Pachomian monasticism, see Lefort, 'Les premiers monasteres Pachomiens'.
[86] For more, see Lundhaug and Jenott, *Monastic Origins*, passim.

As we have seen, however, there is a multitude of other benefits to keeping copies that have to do with the pedagogical ideals and practices attached to the textual culture of Egyptian monasticism. We have seen that the texts would have been suitable for comparison, for copying and translation practice, studying maxims and gnomic sentences, and were most likely redacted in light of challenges met by new theological trends. Since most of the texts dealt with above contain material that went beyond universally accepted texts like Psalms and the sayings of the desert fathers that the monks were told to memorise, they would most likely have been overseen by more advanced monks. As indicated by the story of Abba Abraham, as well as Pachomius' rule concerning 'the perfect', spiritually developed monks would have been allowed to study these texts even if some would have been classified as potentially dangerous. As suggested by another of the Pachomian rules, we are told that those monks who were gatekeepers of their monasteries' texts should not deny a monk who came asking to read one. However, the hierarchy within the Pachomian monastery was strict and included many levels (possibly up to twenty-four), and more inexperienced readers would have been supported by their elders. These deliberations endorse previous suggestions made by Lundhaug and Jenott that the Nag Hammadi texts would most likely have belonged to a more spiritually developed class of Pachomian monks.[87]

The above considerations are just a small sample of the multitude of interrelations and editorial shifts found among the different Nag Hammadi texts. I have argued that the Pachomian monastic context would fit the many types of textual usage suggested by comparisons of the different copies in the collection. They would have served the monks well in

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[87] Lundhaug and Jenott, *Monastic Origins*, 180–183.

developing their skills in textual editing and general knowledge of the religious world within which they served.

For our purposes, it is especially interesting to note that among the Nag Hammadi texts we find an extract from a work which in other manuscripts has been identified as belonging to St Antony. It is also found inserted into *The Teachings of Silvanus* in Codex VII.[88] In this extract from the tradition of St Antony, readers are told to remain critical at all times, not to trust vain praise and to guard their secrets. What better way to end this survey of the textual practices that can be attached to the Nag Hammadi copies? Thus, by way of Nag Hammadi Codex VII, here is some advice from St Antony:

> Do not give your sentence using wicked words, for any wicked person harms his heart. For only a foolish person goes willingly to his destruction, while a wise person knows his way. A foolish man does not guard against speaking mystery. A wise man does not throw every word about, but he will evaluate those who listen. Do not throw around words in the presence of those whom you do not know. Keep a multitude of friends, but not counsellors. First, put your counsellor to the test, for do not pay respect to anyone who is persuasive.[89]

Antony's words are echoed in both the Pachomian pedagogical ideal and the advice one would have expected to be directed to

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[88] This has been shown by Wolf-Peter Funk, 'Ein doppelt überliefertes Stück spätägyptischer Weisheit', *Zeitschrift für Ägyptische Sprache und Altertumskunde* 103 (1976): 8–21.

[89] NHC VII, *The Teaching of Silvanus* 97:3–22: ⲘⲠⲢ︦ϯ ⲚⲞⲨϢⲀϪⲈ ⲘⲠⲞⲚⲎⲢⲒⲀ ϨⲚ︦ ⲦⲈⲔ⳥ⲦⲚⲰⲘⲚ· ⲢⲰⲘⲈ ⲄⲀⲢ ⲚⲒⲘ ⲘⲠⲞⲚⲎⲢⲞⲤ ⳩Ⲣ︦ⲂⲖⲀⲠⲦⲈⲒ ⲘⲠⲈϤϨⲎⲦ· ⲞⲨⲢⲰⲘⲈ ⲄⲀⲢ Ⲛ︦ⲀⲐⲎⲦ ϢⲀϤⲂⲰⲔ ⲞⲨⲀⲀϤ ⲈϨⲞⲨⲚ ⲈⲠⲈϤϢⲞⲢⲠ︦ ⲞⲨⲢⲰⲘⲈ ⲆⲈ Ⲛ︦ⲤⲞⲪⲞⲤ ϤⲤⲞⲞⲨⲚ Ⲛ︦ⲦⲈϤϨ︦Ⲓ︦Ⲏ· ⲞⲨⲢⲰⲘⲈ ⲆⲈ Ⲛ︦ⲀⲐⲎⲦ ⲘⲀϤϨⲀⲢⲈϨ ⲈϢⲀϪⲈ Ⲙ︦ⲘⲨⲤⲦⲎⲢⲒⲞⲚ· ⲞⲨⲢⲰⲘⲈ Ⲛ︦ⲤⲞⲪⲞⲤ ⲘⲀϤⲚⲈϪ ϢⲀϪⲈ ⲚⲒⲘ ⲈⲂⲞⲖ ⲀⲖⲖⲀ ϤⲚⲀϢⲰⲠⲈ Ⲛ︦ⲢⲈϤϤⲈⲰⲢⲒ Ⲛ︦ⲚⲈⲦⲤⲰⲦ︦Ⲙ︦· ⲘⲠⲢⲚⲈϪ ϢⲀϪⲈ ⲚⲒⲘ ⲈⲂⲞⲖ ⲈⲔϨⲢⲎ ⲈϨⲞ︦Ⲩ ⲈⲚⲈⲦⲔ︦ⲤⲞⲞⲨⲚ Ⲙ︦ⲘⲞⲞⲨ ⲀⲚ· ⲔⲀ ⲞⲨⲘⲎⲎϢⲈ ⲚⲀⲔ Ⲛ︦ϢⲂⲎⲢ ⲀⲖⲖⲀ Ⲛ︦Ⲣ︦Ⲙ︦Ⲛ︦ϢⲞϪⲚⲈ ⲀⲚ· ⲀⲢⲒⲆⲞⳡⲒⲘⲀⳅⲈ Ⲛ︦ϢⲞⲢⲠ︦ ⲘⲠⲈⲔⲢ︦Ⲙ︦Ⲛ︦ϢⲞϪⲚⲈ· ⲢⲰⲘⲈ ⲄⲀⲢ ⲚⲒⲘ ⲈϢⲀϤⲔⲰⲢϢ︦ Ⲙ︦ⲠⲢⲦⲀⲈⲒⲞϤ· My trans., text by Birger A. Pearson, in *Nag Hammadi Codex VII*, ed. Pearson (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 310, 312.

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a monk about to undertake the reading of a vast array of texts and ideas such as those presented in the Nag Hammadi collection.[90]

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[90] The word used for here for 'counsellor' (ϣⲟϫⲛⲉ) is the same as that associated with the angels described in the cognitive and divine hierarchy in *Eugnostos the Blessed* (Codex V). This is also the word used throughout the Nag Hammadi texts in association with the Demiurge's archons 'taking council' (ϣⲟϫⲛⲉ) with one another in order to concoct a plan to fool humans. For two examples, see *The Apocryphon of John* (NHC II, 19:19–21; 20:23–34); *Hypostasis of the Archons* (NHC II, 89:3; 92:4–9). It was at times hard to distinguish between demons and angels, or a friendly person whose shape a demon had taken to fool you. This is a common theme in monastic literature. In light of this, Antony's advice is particularly relevant for the monks who venture to read texts that threaten to lead them astray.