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**Apostles, Long Dead ‘Heretics’, and Monks:
Noncanonical Traditions on Angels and Protoplasts
in Two Late Antique Coptic Apocalypses (7th-8th Century CE)**

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1. Introduction

By the time the two texts I am going to discuss were composed, Egypt had had a long history and enjoyed an uninterrupted reputation as the quintessential land of *theosebeia*, acquaintance with the divine, and mystery, things and writings *apokrypha* (cf. respectively Herodotus 2,37; Porphyrius, *Abst.* 4,9; Jamblichus, *Myst.* 6,7). This proves to be no less true for Coptic Egypt in some sense: in what follows I intend to put under focus two late Antique Coptic apocalypses dealing in one way or another with piety and godly behavior, knowledge of hidden things, and ‘secret’ books or traditions: namely *The Mysteries of John, Apostle and Virgin* (= MystJ; *clavis coptica* 0041) and *The Investiture of Abbaton* (= Abbat; *clavis coptica* 0405). As a matter of fact, as we will see, the production of these writings amounted to a massive and sometimes clumsy interweaving of Biblical, early Jewish and early Christian ‘apocryphal’ or ‘heretical’ traditions aimed at fitting them into a single narrative to be read, multiplied and divulged for salvation’s sake and for more concrete devotional needs.

First, I will introduce the texts under scrutiny and search for the literary traces that they themselves as literary artifacts bear of their own production environment. Then, I will make the attempt to highlight the ‘apocryphal’ traditions on angels and primeval human beings that both writings evidently rework into their own texture. The main questions of the sources and the Christological and soteriological agenda will be addressed. Lastly, I will gather the evidence in its entirety and draw some conclusions on the polemical stances and ideological strategies at stake in the redaction of such writings.

2. The Horizontal Axis: a Quick Look at a Coptic Monastic Library and its Siblings

Abbat is transmitted only in Sahidic by BL Or. 7025 (981 CE) and attributed to Timothy of Alexandria;¹ MystJ is witnessed in Sahidic by BL Or. 7026 (1006 CE), which also transmits the *Life of Pisenthius*, as well as in Bohairic by a tiny parchment fragment from the Monastery of St. Macarius in Wadi el-Natrun (Cairo, Inv. Nr. 47), corresponding approximately to BL Or. 7026 Fol. 15a-16a.²

¹ Coptic text and English translation in E.A.W. Wallis Budge, *Coptic Martyrdoms etc. in the Dialect of Upper Egypt*, London, 1914, vol. 1, pp. 225-49 (text) and 474-96 (translation). New English translation and elaborated introduction in A. Suci (with I. Saweros), ‘The Investiture of Abbaton, the Angel of Death. A New Translation and Introduction’, in T. Burke and B. Landau (eds.), *New Testament Apocrypha. More Noncanonical Scriptures*, Grand Rapids, 2016, vol. 1, pp. 534-54 (*Appendix*: Kitāb al-īdāh 9 at 546-54). Dutch translation: P. Oussoren and R. Dekker, *Buiten de vesting. Een woord-voor-woord vertaling van alle deuterocanonieke en vele apocriefe bijbelboeken*, Vught, 2008, pp. 461-72. Italian translation: M. Erbetta, *Gli apocrifi del Nuovo Testamento*, Turin, 1981, vol. 3, pp. 472-81. L. Moraldi, *Apocrifi del Nuovo Testamento*, Turin, 1994, vol. 3, pp. 427-30, offers just a summary of the work. In quoting from this writing and the excerpt from the *Kitāb al-īdāh* criticizing it I follow the numbering system devised by Suci and Saweros for their English translations. My own English translation of the passage from the *Investiture of Abbaton* referred to in this article (par. 3.1) is to be found in the *Appendix*.

² Coptic text and translation in E.A.W. Wallis Budge, *Coptic Apocrypha in the Dialect of Upper Egypt*, London, 1913, pp. 59-74 (text) and 241-57 (translation). The Bohairic fragment was published by H.G. Evelyn White, *The Monasteries of the Wadi 'N Natrûn 1: New Coptic Texts from the Monastery of Saint Macarius*, New York, 1926, p. 51. Budge’s translation was reprinted in J.M. Court, *The Book of Revelation and the Johannine Apocalyptic Tradition*, Sheffield, 2000, pp. 132-63. A. Alcock published online a more recent, original English translation (<https://alinsuciu.com/2013/09/16/guest-post-anthony-alcok-the-mysteries-of-john-the-evangelist/>);

Both codices were copied in Esna and then donated to the Monastery of St. Mercurius at Edfu.³ As to the date of the two works, the former may be dated in its present form to the 8th century CE, the text itself without its new title possibly being a century earlier; the latter was probably written in the 6th-7th century – even if a date as late as the end of the 7th century or the beginnings of the 8th cannot be ruled out, as Tito Orlandi suggests in the *Corpus dei Manoscritti Copti Letterari* (CMCL).⁴

The library of the Edfu monastery preserved the following codices at least, all datable between 974 and 1053/56 CE:⁵

Pierpont Morgan MS M633: *Martyrdom of the Seven Sleepers of Ephesus; Life of St. Phif the Anchorite*

BL Add. 37534: Greek *Life and Miracles of Saints Cosmas and Damianus*; Greek hymn to the archangel Michael

BL Or. 6781: Theodosius of Alexandria, *On the Archangel Michael*

BL Or. 6782: *Dormition of John*; title of a lost homily of Gregory of Nazianzus, *On the Archangel Michael*; Epiphanius of Cyprus, *On the Holy Virgin*; Cyril of Alexandria, *On the Holy Virgin*

BL Or. 6783: *Passion of Eustathius and Theopistus; Life of Cyrus the Anchorite*; Flavianus of Antioch, *On Demetrius and Peter of Alexandria*; Ephrem, *Works; History of John of the Golden Gospel*

BL Or. 6784: Cyril of Jerusalem, *On the Holy Virgin*

BL Or. 6799: Cyril of Jerusalem, *On the Cross*

BL Or. 6800: Pisenthius of Keft, *Panegyric of Onophrius*

BL Or. 6801-6802: texts for St. Mercurius' Day

BL Or. 6803: *Apocalypse of John*

BL Or. 6804: *Apocalypse of Bartholomew*

BL Or. 6805: old Nubian literary work dealing with the life of Saint Mena

BL Or. 7021: Theodosius of Alexandria, *On the Archangel Michael*

BL Or. 7022: texts on St. Victor's Day

BL Or. 7023: John Chrysostom, *On the Archangel Raphael; Apocalypse of Paul*

BL Or. 7024: John Chrysostom, *Encomium of John the Baptist* (also known under the title: *The Glory of the Precursor*); Pachomius, *Catecheses*

BL Or. 7025: Timothy of Alexandria, *Investiture of Abbaton*

BL Or. 7026: *The Mysteries of John, Apostle and Virgin; The Life of Pisenthius*

BL Or. 7027: Papnoute, *History of the Monks*; Demetrius of Antioch, *On the Virgin*

last access: 08/13/2018), which is hopefully soon to be followed by H. Lundhaug and L. Abercrombie, 'The Mysteries of John. An Introduction and Translation', in T. Burke and B. Landau (eds.), *New Testament Apocrypha. More Noncanonical Scriptures*, Grand Rapids [forthcoming]. I would like to thank Hugo Lundhaug and Lloyd Abercrombie for sending me a pre-publication copy of their translation. An Italian translation can be found in Erbetta, *Gli apocrifi*, pp. 417-424. Russian translation: E.B. Smagina, 'Мистерии Иоанна, Апостола И Святого Девственника [The Mysteries of John, The Apostle and Holy Virgin]', *Вестник ПСТГУ III: Филология* 2015. Вып. 5 [St. Tikhon's University Review, Series 3, Volume 5] (45), pp. 97-110. In quoting from this work, I follow the numbering system which I myself devised for the publication in AcA III. My own English translations of the passages from the *Mysteries of John* referred to in this article (parr. 3.2 and 3.3) are to be found in the *Appendix*.

³ See B. Layton, *Catalogue of Coptic Literary Manuscripts in the British Library Acquired since the Year 1906*, London, 1987, pp. 135-136 and 190-192 (nrs. 121 and 160).

⁴ Unfortunately, we cannot be certain about the chronology of these texts, as they do not have many hints to offer that may help determine their time of composition. As a matter of fact, J.M. Court, *The Book of Revelation*, pp. 132-163, esp. 134-136, goes even so far as to assume an 11th century origin for *The Mysteries of John*; on their part, Lundhaug and Abercrombie, 'The Mysteries of John', point out that any speculation as to its original date of authorship remains tentative. I owe relevant insights into this problem to informal talks with E. Grypeou and J. Doehorn: my own understanding of the formation of the works under focus has greatly benefited from these conversations.

⁵ I combine the lists in T. Orlandi, 'Les manuscrits coptes de Dublin, du British Museum et de Vienne', *Le Muséon* 90 (1976), pp. 323-338, esp. 330-331, and Lundhaug and Abercrombie, 'The Mysteries of John', n. 4.

BL Or. 7028 (+ 6780 + Washington Free Gallery MS 2): Celestine of Rome, *Miracles of the Archangel Gabriel*; Theophilus of Alexandria, *On the Holy Virgin*

BL Or. 7029 (+ f. 21): *History of the Monks of Aswan*; Athanasius of Alexandria, *Catecheses*; Timothy of Alexandria, *On the Archangel Michael*

BL Or. 7030: Theodore of Antioch, *On the two Theodores*

BL Or. 7558: different fragments

BL Or. 7597 (?): *Catechesis of Psote*; homily of Severus of Antioch, *On the Archangel Michael*

How did this and other monastic libraries alike come to burgeon in Islamic Egypt at the threshold of the 2nd millennium (9th-11th century CE)? The pointed words of T. Orlandi on the topic are still probably one of the best introductions to this stage of Coptic literature and book production:

Almost all this material reflects in the most accurate way the historical period when the use of texts was almost exclusively liturgical [...]. Texts were mostly read during religious gatherings which possibly, but not necessarily climaxed in the Eucharistic ceremony (*synaxeis*); but it should be kept in mind that as we can infer from the evidence at our disposal, such gatherings took the place of any other cultural and perhaps even recreational event for contemporary Christians, inasmuch as – I believe – public events taking place outside the church were increasingly controlled and directed by Islamic authorities. The same authorities however allowed, and in Egypt they even promoted, the great popular feasts in honor of Christian saints. [...] Texts were chosen from the pre-existing material, or redacted as original literary products, so as to integrate each other and form a sort of wide anthology following the liturgical year. At the same time, texts were provided with titles as well as with pertinent beginnings and endings, which could even have nothing to do with the original destination of the work in hand. Texts were then variously grouped and copied on codices, mostly parchment codices, by professional scribes (usually monks), the clients being pious people, who then donated the codices to churches and monasteries. All this information was reported on the last page of the codex in the so-called colophon, together with other annotations or prayers. The codices consisted of quires [...] stitched together and bound with at times luxurious covers in worked leather.⁶

2.1. The Literary Surface

Let us get back from the libraries to the texts themselves as single works and as a literary genre: both *Investiture of Abbaton* and *Mysteries of John* purport to relate two revelations, or ‘apocalypses’, received and written down by apostles. With a significant difference: *Investiture of Abbaton* has a homiletic framework, dealing among other things with the ‘historical’, i.e. legendary, circumstances

⁶ “Quasi tutto questo materiale rispecchia nel modo più fedele l’epoca in cui l’uso dei testi era quasi totalmente liturgico [...]. Essi erano infatti per lo più letti durante le riunioni religiose culminanti, ma non necessariamente, nella cerimonia eucaristica (*synaxeis*), ma occorre tener conto che queste riunioni, a quanto si può dedurre, tenevano il posto di ogni altra riunione culturale e forse anche ricreativa per i cristiani dell’epoca, anche perché (noi crediamo) le manifestazioni pubbliche che si svolgevano fuori della chiesa erano sempre più controllate e dirette dall’autorità islamica. Essa invece permetteva, ed in Egitto anche favoriva, le grandi feste popolari in onore dei santi cristiani. [...] Perciò i testi vennero scelti dal materiale preesistente, ovvero creati originalmente, in modo da integrarsi l’un l’altro in una specie di grande antologia modellata sullo svolgersi dell’anno liturgico. Contemporaneamente, vennero rivestiti di titoli e di inizi e finali appositi, che potevano anche non aver nulla a che vedere con l’originaria destinazione. I testi venivano trascritti a gruppi di diversa entità su codici, per lo più in pergamena, da scribi di professione (normalmente monaci) a cura di persone pie che ne facevano poi dono a chiese e monasteri: tutto questo veniva segnalato nell’ultima pagina insieme con altre annotazioni o preghiere nel cosiddetto “colofone”. I codici erano formati di quaderni [...] cuciti insieme e rilegati con copertine anche lussuose in pelle lavorata” (T. Orlandi, *Omèlie Copte* [Turin, 1981], pp. 19-21, esp. 20-21; English translation by me). More on this and the immediately preceding phases of Coptic text and manuscript production – covering approximately the 7th through the 9th century CE – in T. Orlandi, ‘The Future of Studies in Coptic Biblical and Ecclesiastical Literature’, in R. McL. Wilson (ed.), *The Future of Coptic Studies*, Leiden, 1978, pp. 143-163; id., *Omèlie*, 14-17 and 23-24; id., ‘Gli apocrifi copti’, *Augustinianum* 23 (1983), pp. 57-71, esp. 58-59 and 63-71; P. Buzi, *Titoli e autori nella tradizione copta. Studio storico e tipologico*, Pisa, 2005, pp. 107-126; Ead., *La Chiesa copta. Egitto e Nubia*, Bologna, 2014, pp. 73-79.

of the supposed rediscovery in Jerusalem of the hitherto-hidden apostolic document. This document is then quoted in its full length, being a dialogue of the risen Jesus with the twelve. Meanwhile, *Mysteries of John* has no such homiletic equivalent and sets out right from the start as a 3rd-1st person report of John of Zebedee's post-resurrection dialogue with Christ and the heavenly journey and visions following it.

To Alin Suciu and his groundbreaking monograph we owe the actual 'rediscovery' and identification of the apostolic memoir, this literary genre so dear to Coptic authors, be it embedded in a pseudo-patristic sermon or not.⁷ Besides the formal and thematic features common to these writings as a genre and acutely studied by Suciu⁸, specific genre 'borders' between apocalypse and homily are frequently crossed and genre 'norms' transgressed by the indiscriminate intermingling of the same rhetorical techniques, literary formulas, and recurring motifs from text to text, be they properly labelled as homilies or apocalypses.

Such redactional devices blur *ipso facto* too-sharp distinctions between these two genres. I offer here a brief sample of passages, just so as to document and highlight their literary and ideological hybridization in Coptic literature.⁹

1) *From Homilies to Apocalypses, from Apocalypses to Homilies.*

a. Calling on stage and directly addressing biblical characters: cf. Ps.-Peter of Alexandria, *On Baptism* 4.8-9 (Orlandi, *Omēlie*, 30-2); Ps.-Theodosius of Alexandria, *On the Feast of Baptism* 2,1-3.22,1-4 (Orlandi, *Omēlie*, 205.230-32); Ps.-Athanasius of Alexandria, *Encomium of the Archangel Michael* 17; Benjamin of Alexandria, *Exegesis on John 3* (Orlandi, *Omēlie*, 269) with *Glory of the Precursor* 13-16;¹⁰

b. formulas praising John for being worthy of laying his holy hand(s) on Jesus' head to baptize Him: cf. *Glory of the Precursor* 10,24 and 30 with Ps.-Peter, *On Baptism* 4-6 (Orlandi, *Omēlie*, cit., 30-31) and *On the Feast of Baptism* 21,3 (Orlandi, *Omēlie*, cit., 230);

c. reports of ecstatic experiences and revelations occur frequently in homilies: Ps.-Peter of Alexandria, *On Baptism* 27.29-30 (Orlandi, *Omēlie*, 269); Ps.-Athanasius of Alexandria, *On Michael's Day* 33-37 (Orlandi, *Omēlie*, 66-7) with par. 37 probably betraying some acquaintance with the *Apocalypse of Paul*; 43-48 (Orlandi, *Omēlie*, 60-70);

d. historical surveys, prophecies *ex eventu* and lists of coming woes are embedded in homilies: Ps.-Athanasius of Alexandria, *Exhortations to the Clergy* 31-66 (Orlandi, *Omēlie*, 81-91).

⁷ A. Suciu, *The Berlin-Strasbourg Apocryphon. A Coptic Apostolic Memoir*, Tübingen, 2017, pp. 5-10, 72, 91-108, 125-7. Similarly, already J.L. Hagen, 'The Diaries of the Apostles: 'Manuscript Find' and 'Manuscript Fiction' in Coptic Homilies and Other Literary Texts', in M. Immerzeel and J. van der Vliet (eds.), *Coptic Studies on the Threshold of a New Millennium. Proceedings of the Seventh International Congress of Coptic Studies, Leiden, 27 August – 2 September 2000*, Leuven, 2004, vol. 1, pp. 349-367.

⁸ Suciu, *The Berlin-Strasbourg Apocryphon*, pp. 108-120. I still agree with Suciu in including *Mysteries of John* under the label "apostolic memoirs", as an atypical member of this group (Lundhaug and Abercrombie, *The Mysteries of John*, cit., n. 20).

⁹ I have collected more examples in the notes to my forthcoming translation.

¹⁰ See also *Encomium of John* 1,3 (the homilist comes and stands amidst his public) and *Exegesis on John 3* (the homilist plays the role of John who has just been called upon and exhorted to come). German translation of the *Glory of the Precursor*: W. Till, 'Johannes der Täufer in der koptischen Literatur', *Mitteilungen des deutschen archäologischen Instituts. Abteilung Kairo* 16 (1958), pp. 310-332, esp. 327-330; French translation: A. Boud'hors, 'Éloge de Jean-Baptiste', in F. Bovon and P. Geoltrain (eds.), *Écrits apocryphes chrétiens*, Paris, 1997, vol. 1, pp. 1553-1578, esp. 1571-1574; English translation: P.L. Tite, 'An Encomium on John the Baptist. A New Translation and Introduction', in Burke and Landau (eds.), *New Testament Apocrypha*, vol. 1, pp. 233-246. In quoting from this work, I follow the numbering system devised by Tite for his own translation.

2) Recurring Motifs: The Art of Refrain.

- a. The Nile flooding, the dew, and the crops: *Mysteries of John* 4.6-7.14; Athanasius of Alexandria, *Exhortations to the Clergy* 58-59.66,153 (Orlandi, *Omèlie*, 88. 91); Ps.-Proclus, *On the Twenty-Four Elders* 23,1 (74 MARESCA)¹¹;
- b. Michael's prayers and his intercession on behalf of mankind: *Mysteries of John* 4; Ps.-Athanasius of Alexandria, *On the Feast of Michael* 49 (Orlandi, *Omèlie*, 70); Ps.-Athanasius of Alexandria, *Exhortations to the Clergy* 66,154 (Orlandi, *Omèlie*, 91); Ps.-Proclus, *On the Twenty-Four Elders* 22,7-11 (*ibid.*);
- c. Michael's role in the rise of Nile: *Mysteries of John* *ibid.*; Ps.-Athanasius of Alexandria, *On the Feast of Michael* 48 (Orlandi, *Omèlie*, 70); Ps.-Athanasius of Alexandria, *Exhortations to the Clergy* 66,153 (Orlandi, *Omèlie*, 91). Cf. also Ps.-Proclus, *On the Twenty-Four Elders* 23,1 (*ibid.*);
- d. The "Aeons of Light" and their arrangement as object of investigation and vision: *Investiture of Michael* 2 (CSCO 225, 2,10-15); Ps.-Stephen, *Investiture of Gabriel* 2 (CSCO 225, 61,9-2) and *Mysteries of John* 3. Michael as the head and commander of the "Aeons of Light": *Mysteries of John* 3 and Eustathius of Thrace, *Encomium of the Archangel Michael* 2,24 (112 CAMPAGNANO)¹²;
- e. Jesus tearing his own flesh into small pieces as source of the Eucharistic bread: cf. *Mysteries of John* 4,12 with Ps.-Peter of Alexandria, *On Baptism* 21 (Orlandi, *Omèlie*, 35);
- f. the baptism of John as baptism undergone by the Creator himself: see above 1. *From Homilies to 'Apocalypses'*, point b;
- f. the baptism of John as baptism undergone by the Creator himself: see above 1. *From Homilies to 'Apocalypses'*, point b;
- g. description of the dreadful appearance of Death and his messengers as an appeal to repentance: *Investiture of Abbaton* 4,7 and 9,4-7; Theophilus of Alexandria, *On Repentance* 103-104 (Orlandi, *Omèlie*, 70); Benjamin of Alexandria, *Exegesis on John* 44 (Orlandi, *Omèlie*, 280).

3) Switching the Stage: Earth in Heaven, Heaven on Earth.

- a. Gathering a heavenly and earthly *synaxis*: cf. *Mysteries of John* 1; *Glory of the Precursor* 9,2; 12,1.13-16; 15,1; Ps.-Stephen, *Investiture of Gabriel* 2-3.7.8 (CSCO 225, 61-63; 71,19-24; 77,5-26) with Ps.-Peter of Alexandria, *De Baptismo* 28-29 (Orlandi, *Omèlie*, 37); Ps.-Athanasius of Alexandria, *On Michael's Feast* 18 (Orlandi, *Omèlie*, 63); Ps.-Athanasius of Alexandria, *Exhortations to the Clergy* 17 (Orlandi, *Omèlie*, 77); Eustathius of Thrace, *Encomium of the Archangel Michael* 2,18-24 (112 CAMPAGNANO);¹³

¹¹ Ps.-Proclo di Cizico, *Encomio dei ventiquattro vegliardi*, in A. Campagnano et al. (eds.), *Quattro omelie copte. Vita di Giovanni Crisostomo; Encomi dei 24 vegliardi (Ps. Proclo e Anonimo); Encomio di Michele Arcangelo, di Eustazio di Tracia*, Milano, 1978, pp. 45-82.

¹² Ps.-Eustazio di Tracia, *Encomio di Michele arcangelo*, in Campagnano et al. (eds.), *Quattro omelie copte*, pp. 105-172.

¹³ A. Boud'hors ('Éloge', 1572, n. to 138,20-30) has correctly pointed out that literary representations of heavenly gatherings such as we find in the *Glory of the Precursor* must be read against analogous scenes painted in monastic churches, "où saints et apôtres sont alignés dans un ordre assez strict, de part et d'autre d'un personnage centrale". On the participation of the whole heavenly world at church gatherings in honor of saints and angels or at eucharistic meals see also Ps.-Eustathius of Thrace, *Encomium of the Archangel Michael* 2-14 and Ps.-Cyril of Alexandria, *Exegesis on the Apocalypse* 10. Both the literary and the pictorial traditions aim to materialize the heavenly liturgy in the middle of earthly cult and to include the monks or the human assembly in the worship service taking place before God as praise-fellows of forefathers and model figures from the past as well as of angelic hosts and *vice versa*: see B. Dümmler, 'Bilder in der Wüste: Fragen zu Funktion und Deutungen von *Maïestas*-Darstellungen in ägyptischen Klöstern', in D. Bumazhnov (ed.), *Christliches Ägypten in der spätantiken Zeit*, Tübingen, 2013, pp. 231-259, and D. Frankfurter, *Christianizing Egypt. Syncretism and Local Worlds in Late Antiquity*, Princeton, NJ 2018, pp. 167-71 and 202-6.

b. Dismissing men, angels and their Lord with a peace greeting: cf. *Investiture of Abbaton* 4,1-3¹⁴ and *Glory of the Precursor* 20¹⁵ with Ps.-Athanasius of Alexandria, *Exhortations to the Clergy* 17 (Orlandi, *Omèlie*, 77).

2.2. Inside Literature: Exploring the Context

The sample of references sketched here has hopefully shown that Coptic homilies and apocalypses often build on a common patchwork of traditions, formulas, rhetorical techniques and topics, intruding homiletic elements into a purportedly revelatory text or *vice versa* integrating ‘apocalyptic’ motifs and themes into a supposedly patristic homiletic work.¹⁶ We now turn to a brief description of the more or less explicit *Sitz im Leben* of such a complex redactional interplay and literary enterprise.

I have already quoted extensively Tito Orlandi’s general assessment of the formation of Coptic libraries in Islamic Egypt. First-hand evidence validating his conclusions specifically as regards the works under scrutiny comes from the texts themselves and their paratexts. On the one hand, we saw that *Glory of the Precursor* and *Investiture of Abbaton* are transmitted by codices copied in Esna and later donated to and stored in the Monastery of St. Mercurius in Edfu;¹⁷ on the other hand, both writings do seem to aim among other things at supporting and enhancing the production and dissemination of books to be donated to churches, sanctuaries and monasteries for liturgical use (cf. respectively 16,4 and 2,4; 4,7; 9,8-9).¹⁸ The Coptic colophon of BL Or. 7026 speaks more generically of the manuscript as a donation to the Monastery of St. Mercurius, meant for public readings and dedicated to the “profit” and the “assurance” of the listeners (BL Or. 7026 Fol. 83a, ll. 2-6). Especially *Mysteries of John* must have proved itself profitable and edifying enough to enjoy some diffusion, since it travelled downstream and was ‘translated’ into Bohairic as well as being kept in a northern monastery.

Furthermore, Suciù collected and discussed more external evidence pointing at the *Sitz im Leben* of the literary genre to which our works belong: the veneration and festival celebration of saints or angels featured in the Coptic apostolic memoirs (e.g. *Abbaton*; the Four Living Creatures; Pilate) is

¹⁴ This passage results from a combination of Jesus’ farewell discourses according to Mk 16,16-18; Mt 28,19-20; Joh 14,12,27; 16,33; 20,19-23.

¹⁵ On the peace greeting as Jesus’ last words before the disciples set on their mission see EvMar (BG 1) p. 8,11-9,4 and EpAp 51 (AcA I/2 1092,5 MÜLLER). Cf. Ps.-Stephen, *Investiture of Gabriel* 10 and *Encomium of John* 8,4 (spoken by the archangel Gabriel).

¹⁶ On the form and development of Coptic homilies the reference works are to my knowledge by M. Sheridan: ‘A Homily on the Death of the Virgin Mary Attributed to Evodius of Rome’, in Immerzel and van der Vliet (eds.), *Coptic Studies on the Threshold of a New Millennium*, vol. 1, pp. 393-405; ‘Rhetorical Structure in Coptic Sermons’, in J.E. Goehring and J.A. Timbie (eds.), *The World of Early Egyptian Christianity: Language, Literature, and Social Context. Essays in Honor of D.W. Johnson*, Washington, D.C., 2007, pp. 25-48; ‘The Encomium in the Coptic Literature of the Late Sixth Century’, in P. Buzi and A. Camplani (eds.), *Christianity in Egypt: Literary Production and Intellectual Trends. Studies in Honor of T. Orlandi*, Rome, 2011, pp. 443-464.

¹⁷ See above and n. 3.

¹⁸ See also the Bohairic version of the *History of Joseph the Carpenter* quoted in Suciù, *The Berlin-Strasbourg Apocryphon*, p. 122. For some book donors cf. the colophons of *Investiture of Abbaton* (BL Or. 7025, Fol. 32b), *Mysteries of John* (BL Or. 7026, Fol. 83a), *Investiture of Gabriel*, and *Sermo de cruce et latrone* attributed to Theophilus of Alexandria (M595; *Clavis Coptica* 0395). The Coptic text of this last homily has been edited by A. Suciù, ‘Ps.-Theophili Alexandrini *Sermo de Cruce et Latrone* (CPG 2622): Edition of Pierpont Morgan M595 with Parallels and Translation’, *Zeitschrift für Antikes Christentum* 16 (2012), pp. 181-225. In Ms. inv. no. provv. 8548, still unpublished and preserved in the Museo Egizio, Turin, a donation by a woman to the *topos* (monastery) of S. John the Baptist in This/Thinis is explicitly mentioned. I owe this reference to Prof. Paola Buzi (La Sapienza – Università di Roma), to whom my sincere thanks go. More generally on private donation to churches and monasteries in Late Antique and Islamic Egypt see E. Wipszycka, *The Alexandrian Church. People and Institutions*, Warsaw, 2015, pp. 365-376, esp. 370-371.

well attested in Egypt;¹⁹ such cults sometimes ignited polemical debates concerning their legitimacy and the production and use of the related genre as devotional literature in churches and monasteries.²⁰

Suciu's inferences draw on his investigation of the available sources and can be summed up here as follows: this growing literary corpus "was destined to serve liturgical purposes" by tracing "the origins of some liturgical feasts of the Egyptian church" and catechetical instructions back to apostolic and patristic times, i.e. to the authority of Jesus himself, of his immediate followers and of Church Fathers including revered Alexandrian bishops of the past; as Coptic apostolic memoirs began to be composed (no earlier than the mid fifth century CE) some church authority must have inspired and coordinated these efforts.²¹

3. The Vertical Axis: a Diachronic Commentary

Having posed and assessed the classical introductory questions (authorship; date and place of composition; literary genre; production and circulation milieu and redactional tendencies), I will now look at which narratives *Investiture of Abbaton* and *Mysteries of John*, as individual texts, deploy: with respect to the first angelic beings and the human protoplasts, and with respect to the secret knowledge Adam and Eve were taught *qua* sacred tradition as an inheritance meant to verse their descendants in such topics as how to make a living after the Fall and the redemption of humanity. I have selected three thematic clusters to investigate in greater detail: the origins of the Angel of Death, also being an etiology of the rule of physical death over all things earthly and human (Text 1 in the Appendix); the creation of Eve as exegetical *vexata quaestio* (Text 2 in the Appendix); the 'invention' of wheat and agriculture as revelation to the starving Adam (Text 3 in the Appendix). Obviously, my selection is arbitrary, as clusters and test cases relating to traditions on the protoplasts might be multiplied almost at will. Going through each one of them however would exceed the limits of this paper. Therefore, I leave them to the reader's own curiosity and, what is most important, to future scrutiny.

3.1. The Birth of Death

Chapters 5,1 to 6,5 in the *Investiture of Abbaton* interweave three narrative threads of primordial events and figures into a coherent plot of the beginnings of the cosmos as we now know it. The three threads are: a) the story of Adam's creation; b) the story of Satan's fall; c) the story of the investiture of Muriel as the angel of Death, Abbaton. Let us unravel the plot and look at each of its constituent threads as a single unit of traditions.

a. *Investiture of Abbaton* 5,3 introduces on stage the prelapsarian Adam as a glorious creature made of virgin, i.e. the purest, earth, which was a common motif in Jewish and Christian literature (e.g. Philo, Op 136-137; Josephus, Ant I 34; Iren., *haer.* III 21,10 and *dem.* 11; Ath. (?), *descr. BMV*; Ephr., *Diatess.* 2,2; Chrys., *hom. 2 mut. nom.* 3 and *nativ.* 2). Such pure clay however refuses to be seized by the first of the angels sent on this mission by God himself and cries out that, by willingly accepting to be formed into a man, it will lend itself to the most abominable crimes and sins which man is going to commit as an earthly being (*Investiture of Abbaton* 5,4-6). Analogous prophecies of impending doom are put on God's lips in *Investiture of Michael* 3 (CSCO 225, 8,9-10 MÜLLER) after the creation of man, but were also well-known in Jewish and Islamic traditions as protest cries on the part of angels or divine hypostases against God's decision to make man: see BerR 8,4-5 (57,10-58,27

¹⁹ Suciu, *The Berlin-Strasbourg Apocryphon*, pp. 126-128.

²⁰ Suciu, *The Berlin-Strasbourg Apocryphon*, pp. 124-125. J. Dochhorn, 'Mythen von der Einsetzung des Erzengels Michael in der koptischen Literatur', in Bumazhnov (ed.), *Christliches Ägypten*, pp. 23-42, focuses more specifically on *Investiture* literature and the debates relating to it.

²¹ Suciu, *The Berlin-Strasbourg Apocryphon*, pp. 125, 123, 128-138.

FREEDMAN); *Chronicle of Jerahmeel* 6,3-4 (14,30-15,5 GASTER); Al-Tabari, *Chronicae* 86-87 (I 257,19-258,28 ROSENTHAL). In *Investiture of Abbaton* they seem to have coalesced with the motif of the earth crying for all the sins committed upon it (cf. Gen 4,10-11; 1 Hen 6,4-6; 8,4; 9,2-3; VisPaul 6; *Corp.Herm.* fr. 23,59-61 [IV, 19,20–20,13 NOCK–FESTUGIÈRE]). Similarly, the *Chronicle of Jerahmeel* 6,6 (15,28-31) has the earth refusing to be seized as it foresees the curse placed upon it because of human beings.

Nor is Abbat *traditionsgeschichtlich* isolated in relating that Adam lay inanimate on earth before God's breath was blown into his nostrils (cf. IV Esr 3,4-5; Iren., *haer.* I 24,1; HA NHC II,4 88,4-6). OW 81 NHC II,5 115,10-11 and later Al-Tabari, *Chronicae* 89-91 even report the same time indication as *Investiture of Abbaton* 5,12: Adam had lain forty days before he was given life. Such timing probably stems from older Jewish *haggadah*: according to Jub 3,9 and VitAd 54 Adam entered Paradise only forty days after he was created. As far as Adam's crowning and enthronement are concerned, it may suffice here to recall the Syriac *Cave of Treasures* 2,17-19. For that matter, rabbinic tradition refers to more than one crown on Adam's head.²²

Just like the interpolated *Life of Adam and Eve* and *Apocalypse of Moses*, on which it relies, the whole story of Adam's creation, fall and subsequent expulsion from Paradise is interspersed with episodes and details which either have Jesus as main character or allude to Him.²³

Some of the episodes and the details have exact counterparts in the Christian interpolations in the two aforementioned writings, e.g. the prophecy of Christ's coming, incarnation and passion in the year 5550 since the creation of the world, meant to bring Adam back into Paradise (cf. *Investiture of Abbaton* 8 with VitAd 42-43, where God reveals all this to Seth, who then goes and informs his father living by now outside Eden).²⁴

Other interpolated and rewritten sections do not have similar counterparts, and parallels must be sought elsewhere in Coptic literary production: in *Investiture of Abbaton* 5,12-15 Jesus acts as guarantor for Adam and resolves God's doubts and objections about the latter's creation, just as in *Investiture of Michael* 3. This role of His as guarantor is also briefly alluded to in *Mysteries of John* 4,8. The sole pertinent difference between the two texts lies in the fact that *Investiture of Michael* envisages just Adam's conversion leading him to know God, whereas *Investiture of Abbaton* hints at Adam's reintegration into his *archè*, once again following closely, or more probably even reproducing, the text of ApcMos: here in chapter 39 God promises Adam to bring him back to his original prelapsarian condition of rule (*archè*) over the created world by installing him on the throne of the one who had deceived him, that is, Satan / the serpent (on Adam sitting originally on a throne cf. *Investiture of Abbaton* 5,16). The starting point of the 'crisis' forcing Jesus' intervention in both texts – the Father wavers on His decision to make Adam – echoes Jewish traditions about God's hesitations in creating/giving life to man and the resulting debates with angels or divine attributes (see BerR 8,4-5).

In *Investiture of Abbaton* 5,14 God blows thrice into Adam's body. This act should probably be interpreted as a symbolical allusion to Adam's enlivenment by the power of the Holy Trinity. The very same detail is reported in Ps.-Theodosius of Alexandria, *Encomium to John* 4,1-2 and 16,2; whereas *Investiture of Michael* 3 has at least God and Christ breathing into Adam's nostrils (cf. already Iren., *haer.* IV *prol.* 4, IV 20,1 and v 1,3.5,1-6,1.28,4 on the Son and the Spirit as God's hands fashioning man according to Gen 1,26). Notwithstanding the different number of persons of the Holy Trinity involved in the process, this further correspondence between the two *Investitures* must not be

²² Cf. SEZ 4 (179 FRIEDMANN) and the passage from an unknown *midraš* quoted in L. Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews*, 8th edn., Philadelphia, 1968, vol. 5, p. 78, n. 21. On the elevation of the newborn Adam see G.A. Anderson, 'The Exaltation of Adam and the Fall of Satan', in G.A. Anderson et al. (eds.), *Literature on Adam and Eve. Collected Essays*, Leiden et al., 2000, pp. 83-110.

²³ J. Doehorn, *Die Apokalypse des Moses*, Tübingen, 2005, pp. 287-288, n. 1. 308-309, n. 5. 310-312, n. 12, has already highlighted the main parallels in detail and outline between the version of the story of Adam's fall transmitted by *Investiture of Abbaton* and ApcMos.

²⁴ See also Syriac *Cave of Treasures* 5,7-9.12-13. M.E. Stone, *The Angelic Predictions in the Primary Adam Books*, in Anderson et al. (eds.), *Literature*, pp. 111-131, offers a dense commentary on this pericope in the *Life of Adam and Eve*.

ignored or underestimated, as *Investiture of Abbaton* explicitly understands itself as within the *Investiture* genre (cf. 1,4 and 4,7).

b. In its general outline the story of Satan's refusal to worship the newly created Adam and his consequent spoliation and fall to earth matches essentially with the classical versions we have of this myth both in and outside Coptic and Christian tradition. Just to mention a few, VitAd probably being the more or less direct source of the *Investiture*: 4Q381 10-11; VitAd 13-16; ApcSedr 5,1-6; QuaestBarth 4,52-56; *Investiture of Michael* 3; Ps.-Stephen, *Investiture of Gabriel* 9; Syriac *Cave of Treasures* 20,1-23,7; BerRbt 9 (cf. Ramon Martí, *Pugio Fidei* 5,1); Quran 2,34; 7,11-13; 15,26-35; 17,61-63; 18,50; 38,71-78.²⁵

Many single details are not without parallels either. Let us briefly review them.

The title *protoplasma* (*Investiture of Abbaton* 6,1) is appended to Satan as early as Tat., *orat.* 7,4-5, and its use is later widespread in Coptic writings (e.g. *Investiture of Michael* 3 and Ps.-Chrysostomus, *Encomium of the Four Living Beings* 7,9).²⁶ Besides in our text, Satan is also well attested in Coptic tradition as first *archistrategos* of the heavenly army (*Investiture of Michael* 3 and Ps.-Chrysostomus, *Encomium of the Four Living Beings* 7). According to *Investiture of Abbaton* 6,3-4, as a general he holds in his hand a list of the names of the angels under his command: modeled after the enrollment lists in use among human armies,²⁷ a "book of the names of the armies" of all saints and the elect is already mentioned in 1QM XII 2 as being preserved in God's heavenly abode.

In Coptic literature several different angelic beings are held responsible for stripping, bruising and casting Satan the *archistrategos* down to earth.²⁸ *Investiture of Abbaton* 6,5 has a great Cherub doing the dirty job, as do *Investiture of Michael* 3; Ps.-Stephen, *Investiture of Gabriel* 9; Ps.-Chrysostom, *Encomium to the Four Living Beings* 10,5-6. Yet unparalleled, to my knowledge, is a central detail in the circumstances preceding and leading to the Cherub's intervention: *Investiture of Abbaton* relates that no angel can wrest the enrollment list from Satan's hand as God wanted, so God orders that a sharp knife be brought and the upper and lower part of the document protruding from Satan's fist be cut off (6,2-4). If it is unparalleled in stories of Satan's fall, the motif of wresting written documents from Satan's hand and then tearing them to pieces is still documented in Jewish legends.²⁹

c. According to *Investiture of Abbaton* 5,3-12, God sends seven angels to Eden, one after another, to bring Him virgin soil with which to create Adam: all of them fail upon hearing the oath the earth swears in the name of God, foreseeing all the evil and pollution that will come from Adam and his descendants. As cruel and tyrannical as he is, Muriel, the eighth angel, scorns the terrible oath and dares to grab the clay and bring it back to God to fashion and enliven.³⁰ After Satan's and Adam's fall Muriel will be promoted to ruler over the sons of men and the physical world as the angel of death, and as such, his name will be changed into Abbaton (9,3-6). *Motiv- and traditions-geschichtlich* the story has its counterparts both in Jewish and in Islamic sources: in the former (*Chronicles of Jerahmeel* 6,6) only one angel, Gabriel, dares to make an attempt; in the latter (Al-Tabari, *Chronicae*

²⁵ On the history of the myth and tradition of Satan's fall see J. Doehorn, 'Der Sturz des Teufels in der Urzeit. Eine traditions-geschichtliche Skizze zu einem Motiv frühjüdischer und frühchristlicher Theologie mit besonderer Berücksichtigung des Luzifermythos', *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche* 109 (2012), pp. 3-47. More specifically on Ez 28 as 'Biblical source' of this myth in its different versions see G.A. Anderson, *Ezekiel 28, the Fall of Satan and the Adam Books*, in Anderson et al. (eds.), *Literature*, 133-147.

²⁶ Further evidence from Coptic literary tradition in Doehorn, 'Mythen von der Einsetzung', pp. 36-37.

²⁷ See Josephus, *Ant* XII 47; Tacitus, *Hist* II 94,1; Polyæn. 3,3; Gr. Nyss., *v. Mos.* II 147; Lyd., *de magistratibus populi romani* II 11.

²⁸ More on this point in J.L. Hagen, 'The Great Cherub' and His Brothers. Adam, Henoah and Michael and the Names, Deeds and Faces of the Creatures in Ps.-Chrysostom, *On the Four Creatures*', in N. Bosson and A. Boud'hors (eds.), *Actes du huitième congrès international d'études coptes, Paris, 28 juin – 3 juillet 2004*, Leuven, 2007, vol. 2, pp. 467-480.

²⁹ See H. Schwarzbaum, *Studies in Jewish and World Folklore*, Berlin, 1968, esp. pp. 278-279.

³⁰ The tyrannical attitude of (the angel of) Death enabling him to succeed where others have failed can be traced back to TestAbr (L) 15,1.11-15; 16,4; 17,13, where the other who fails is none but Michael. As a whole the anthropogonic myth related in *Encomium of Abbaton* finds a further echo and a re-elaboration in a Coptic and Arabic *Dormitio Mariae* attributed to Prochorus: see Suciú, 'The Investiture of Abbaton', p. 532.

87) three angels, Gabriel, Michael, and the unnamed angel of death are charged one after another with the task to provide God with clay, two of them failing because of fear of the oath, the third succeeding and finally being invested by God as the angel of death.³¹ In another Christian text, QuaestBarth 4,53, according to the G version God sends only Michael to get soil for fashioning Adam's body, whereas in C He dispatches all four archangels, thus including, presumably, both Michael and Gabriel. This work however does not mention any angel of death involved in the enterprise, nor refers to any obstacle faced by the angels in their quest. *Investiture of Abbaton* does not mention names except for that of its 'hero', the angel of death, Muriel-Abbaton; this despite the fact that one of its main sources, the *Testament of Abraham*, explicitly compares Michael's failure to Death's success on another mission from God (see *infra*, n. 30). This discrepancy, along with the aforementioned parallel passages and traditions, leads me to suppose that originally the first envoys in the story did bear names, which are probably to be sought among the mightiest angels in service around God's throne (Michael? Gabriel? Gabriel and Michael? the four archangels?). The names were then erased by the author of *Investiture of Abbaton* for reverence's sake. Numbers probably underwent some adjustments as well, thus confirming the secondary character of Abbat's version of the story. Seven angelic failures, as *Investiture of Abbaton* relates (presupposing the number of the *protoktistai*?), does not look 'original': according to *Mysteries of John* 4,17 Adam fasted seven days instead of the traditional forty, in order that the day his fasting ended should coincide with the eighth day of the week, Sunday, when eucharistic bread is broken and distributed (see *infra*, 2.3.); much in the same way, Muriel succeeds after a series of seven failures, i.e. he is the eighth, with all the Christological implications involved in such a ranking even just by contrast.³²

Last but not least, it is not irrelevant to point out that the description of Abbaton as king, on his fire-throne suspended in the middle (*Investiture of Abbaton* 9,5), echoes 'Hermetic' depictions of the Great Demon in the middle overseeing and judging the souls of man and the dead (cf. *Asclepius* NHC VI,8 p. 76,22–28 and CH 1,24; fr. 7,1-2; fr. 23,62) as well as 'Gnostic' portrayals of the so-called Demiurge ruling the worldly abyss (s. e.g. *Ap. John* NHC II,1/IV,1 p. 10,9-26 and *Orig. World* NHC II,5 p. 104,23-106,11), and the earlier and later Jewish throne visions that coalesce into them (cf. Ez 1,4-26; 1 En 14,18-19; Dan 7,9; Apc 4,2.5; ApcAbr 18,3.13; TestAbr [L] 12,4-5 and 13,2-4)..³³

3.2. The Hidden Eve: 'Apocryphal' and 'Gnostic' Sources

Taken as a whole, chapters 7-9 in the *Mysteries of John* show a good general acquaintance with 'apocryphal' texts on Adam. Of the very body of the protoplast, *Mysteries of John* has precise

³¹ See M. Gaster, *The Chronicles of Jerahmeel*, Prolegomenon by H. Schwarzbaum, New York, 1971, esp. Prolegomenon pp. 15-19,26-27,109, with nn. 102 and 108, and Introduction pp. lxii-lxiii. The English translation of the passage from the *Chronicles*, which is of relevance here, is printed at pp. 15-16. Cf. also Suciú, 'The Investiture of Abbaton', pp. 530-531 and n. 22 (with further bibliography). Due to the overarching analogies between *Investiture of Abbaton* and Islamic sources it is still an open question whether the former depends on the latter, as Schwarzbaum assumed, or both Coptic and Muslim accounts rely on similar traditions, as Suciú posits: see Suciú, 'The Investiture of Abbaton', ib. On *Investiture of Abbaton* and its relationship to *Teezâza Sanbat* see J. Doehorn, "Menschenschöpfung und urzeitlicher Teufelsfall in Überlieferungen der Falascha. Der erste Teil von Teezâza Sanbat in der von Halevy veröffentlichten Version," in T. Nicklas et al. (eds), *The Other Side: Apocryphal perspectives on Ancient Christian "Orthodoxies"*, Göttingen, 2017, pp. 193-223.

³² This is not however the only possible reconstruction. In a private talk following my presentation, J. Doehorn suggested that the nameless version of *Investiture of Abbaton* might actually represent the oldest phase we can reach in the transmission of such Angel of Death material: according to his hypothesis, the names of the failing angels were added later in Jewish and Islamic traditions. In my view TestAbr (L) 15,1.11–15; 16,4; 17,13 and the consensus of all sources in naming either directly or indirectly God's angelic envoys dispatched to get Him some soil with which to fashion Adam still appear to settle the question.

³³ On the 'Gnostic' – or pre-'Gnostic' – myth of the Demiurge and its further reverberations in Coptic *Investiture* literature see Doehorn, 'Der Sturz des Teufels', pp. 27-28 and 45-46, and id., 'Mythen von der Einsetzung', pp. 28-29 and 41-42. On Ezekiel's throne vision (Ez 1) and its Jewish exegesis as sources for 'Gnostic' demiurgic traditions see M. Idel, *Qabbalah. Nuove prospettive*, Milan, 2012, pp. 228-237 (or. ed.: *Kabbalah. New Perspectives* [New Haven, 1988]).

measures to offer: Adam was twelve cubits tall, six cubits wide, and three cubits thick (7,20). Philo of Alexandria (Op 136.140) and ApcAb 23,5 had mentioned Adam's enormous size (cf. later BerR 8,1; 21,3; 24,2, and bHag 12a), but they had given no detailed measures. *Mysteries of John* employs the term "righteousness" in reference to Adam's primitive conditions almost as an equivalent to the more usual "glory" (cf. 1 QS 3,20 and 4,14-15.22-23; ApcMos 20-21; ApcAd NHC v,5 p. 64,9-10.24-29). The metaphor by which God strips Adam of his former condition, be it named glory or righteousness, is common to ApcMos 20 and *Mysteries of John* 7,18-19; 9,3. In *Mysteries of John* 9,1-5, staring down at the nails of his feet, Adam is overcome by grief and tears as his nails are a sign of his former righteousness: when it left him from head to toe,³⁴ vanishing righteousness opened the door to suffering from cold and heat, afflicting human nails before any other part of the body (cfr. 7,21 and 9,2-3). Now, according to VitAd 34 and ApcMos 8 God inflicted seventy plagues on Adam's body after the Fall "from the top of his head, of his eyes and of his ears down to the nails of his feet"; ApcMos 24 adds that pain caused by cold and heat came to be as a result of Adam's sin; the Syriac *Cave of Treasures* 5,21-23 encapsulates the penalty in the statement that the new garments of skin covering Adam and Eve brought about every sort of bodily pain.³⁵ That Adam should have looked down at the nails of his feet as a reminder of his primordial state probably presupposes on the part of our author some knowledge of the Jewish tradition in which the newly created Adam was covered by a white, shining skin made of nail-like horn (s. BerR 20,12 and PRE 14 [98,7-10 FRIEDLÄNDER, with n. 6]).

To my knowledge, the comparison of Adam's body with pure alabaster (*Mysteries of John* 7,19-20) is unprecedented, and as such stands out from the many details documented both here and elsewhere: I wonder whether the choice of such a *comparatum* on the part of our author is to be labelled as Egyptian *Lokalkolorit* meant to stress Adam's original flawlessness, or if it should be traced back to the notion of alabaster as the material of God's throne / the mountain of Eden, as dwelling-place of His glory (cf. 1 Hen 18,8 and 24,3-25,6).

The next chapter of *Mysteries of John* (Fol. 12b-13a) handles the exegesis of Gen 1,27 and 2,21-22, and *de facto* addresses the problem of how to harmonize the two different accounts of the creation of man. This chapter is probably to be considered as a redactional, disruptive insertion into the argumentative flow of a pre-existing text. The earlier text would seem to have consisted of the discussion on Adam's primordial righteousness, gigantic stature and alabaster-like skin, and the description of the impact which the Fall had on his body as well as of the traces which his sin has left on human physiology: as a matter of fact, chapter 9 picks up where chapter 7 left off, and the allocution "Pay attention to the sign (to be found) in the sons of man!" in 9,1 fits better into its literary and logical context if we skip or erase the intervening chapter 8.

As to the possible sources of this addition, both Philo and the rabbis (see respectively Op 134 and BerR 8,1) discussed the interpretation of the two creation narratives in order to solve their apparent inconsistency, so acutely felt when they were compared to each other; as did later Christian exegetes.³⁶ This being said, *Mysteries of John* advances the solution that in the end there was only one simultaneous creation, insofar as Eve was "hidden" in Adam's side from the start: God conceived of fashioning Eve as He was already working on Adam and thereby formed a single human being, only later to be physically and sexually doubled. The explanation seems to be built around a re-elaboration of the motif of Eve concealed in Adam *qua* divine thought as we read in many 'Gnostic'

³⁴ "To / including the tips of his fingers" is my own proposed correction of "except for the tips of his fingers" transmitted by the manuscript: the mechanical corruption from $\Upsilon\Delta\text{Ν}\Theta\text{ΤΗ}\Upsilon$ to $\Upsilon\Delta\text{Τ}\text{Ν}\Theta\text{ΤΗ}\Upsilon$ is quite easy to explain; moreover, if Adam's nails were exempted from God's punishment and thus preserved their former impassability, why would they get cold and hot as the seasons change? and why would Adam look at them and cry remembering his lost righteousness? As an external parallel, VitAd 34 further corroborates my conjecture. As a matter of fact, E.W. Budge and A. Alcock both seem to read $\Upsilon\Delta\text{Ν}\Theta\text{ΤΗ}\Upsilon$ instead of the *textus traditus* $\Upsilon\Delta\text{Τ}\text{Ν}\Theta\text{ΤΗ}\Upsilon$, as far as one can judge from their translations, but neither of them offers any explanation whatsoever for his choice.

³⁵ On the punishment of Adam in Adamic traditions see G.A. Anderson, 'The Punishment of Adam and Eve in the Life of Adam and Eve', in Anderson et al. (eds.), *Literature*, pp. 57-81, and Dochorn, *Apokalypse*, pp. 230-249.

³⁶ See U. Bianchi (ed.), *La 'doppia creazione' dell'uomo negli Alessandrini, nei Cappadoci e nella gnosi*, Rome, 1978.

writings (see *Ap. John* NHC II,1 p. 20,14-21,16; 22,15-23,14; *Hyp. Arch.* 6-8 NHC II,4 pp. 88,10-89,17; *Apoc. Adam* NHC II,5 p. 64,6-29). But that is probably not the whole truth, or in other words, the ‘Gnostic’ motif is just one development of a tradition that exists even earlier than, and outside of, ‘Gnostic’ writings: traces of an analogous equivalence established between “creating man, male and female” and “creating Adam and *showing* him his side, his wife” (italics mine) may in fact be detected in much older passages such as Jub 2,14 and 3,8; later on, according to Rabbi Levi as quoted by Rabbi Joshua from Siknin in BerR 18,2, Gen 2,22 says that God “formed” (*ybn*) Eve from Adam meaning that He “meditated” (*htbwnn*) upon what part of Adam’s body He should fashion the woman from.

3.3. Adam, Jesus and the ‘Invention’ of Wheat

The long narrative put in the mouth of the Cherub in *Mysteries of John* 4 purports to function as a double-sided etiology: it aims both to unveil the circumstances that led to the ‘invention’ of wheat, and to explain why oaths on it, should they be broken, will be severely prosecuted. Both lines of ‘argument’ concur to demonstrate that the Son of God is to be equated with water, wheat, the seed and God’s throne. The explanation of the gravity of oaths on said entities is thus one and the same when it comes to sanction transgressions against any of them.³⁷

Introduced by a probable quotation from the Coptic *Vision of Paul*,³⁸ the etiological legend itself as narrated by the angel follows broadly the narrative we can read in VitAd 1-2.4.6-8.13-16.22.³⁹ It should go without saying that variations and additions are to be expected. Among the latter one may count the mention of Christ’s role as guarantor for Adam when God gave life to the latter (cf. Ps.-Timothy, *The Investiture of Abbaton* 5,12-14 and Ps.-Stephen, *The Investiture of Gabriel* 2); the reduction of Adam’s penitence to a period of eight days from the original 40/47 (cf. VitAd 6 and 17 with *Mysteries of John* 4,17), which is tantamount to saying that Adam quit fasting and ate on Sunday; the most material and concrete details on the ‘production’ of wheat as ingredient of the eucharistic bread (cf. Ps.-Peter of Alexandria, *De Baptismo* 21,2-3).

On this last point, the reader learns that the seed of wheat is nothing else but a mix of Christ’s and God’s ground flesh, sealed in the middle with the light-seal that God had used to seal the “aeons of light”.⁴⁰ Coptic eucharistic bread is actually stamped with a cross in the middle, surrounded by the formula “Holy God, Holy Mighty One, Holy Immortal” on the round edge of the bread.⁴¹ Our text probably presupposes some kind of connection between such praxis and the *tetragrammaton* or any nominal formation based upon the divine name, such as the name Jesus itself. In Coptic literary tradition this name can be referred to as a component of the seal of all creation.⁴² Along these lines,

³⁷ On Jesus Christ as water in Coptic tradition cf. LibBarth 9,2 and Ps.-Stephen, *Investiture of Gabriel* 3,7; as the throne of God: Ps.-Theodosius of Alexandria, *Encomium of John the Baptist* 9,7. Mt 5,34 had forbidden the reader to swear on heaven, “because it is the throne of God”. ApcMos 19 has Eve swear an oath to Satan by the throne of God, the Cherubs and the tree of life.

³⁸ Cf. 4,2 (“Before God created heaven and earth, waters already existed”) with BL Or. 7023, Fol. 20a (“Before God created heaven and earth, nothing existed but waters only”), the only manuscript available to date of the Coptic *Visio Pauli*, also deriving from the Monastery of St. Mercurius in Edfu (see *supra*). It bears noting that both the Greek and the Latin versions of the *Vision of Paul* have here different texts to offer. For more possible echoes of the *Visio Pauli* in *Mysteries of John* cf. MystJ 3,6 and BL Or. 7023, Fol. 19a // VisPaul(gr) 21; 6,3 and VisPaul(gr) 45; 7,5 and VisPaul(gr) 24; 7,11 and 21a-23b.

³⁹ Whereas in ApcMos 29 Adam is granted access to Paradise one last time after the Fall to gather other plants’ seeds to live on. According to Jub 3,15-16 the angels versed Adam in agriculture while Adam was still in the garden of Eden. On the etiology of agriculture in VitAd see J. Doehorn, ‘Adam als Bauer oder: die Ätiologie des Ackerbaus in Vita Adae 1-21 und die Redaktionsgeschichte der Adamviten’, in Anderson et al. (eds.), *Literature*, pp. 315-346.

⁴⁰ The expression “aeons of light” sounds of Manichaean origin: cf. *Keph.* 2,20,15 and 23,1-10; *Man. Psal.* 134,1-33; 136,13-53; 144,1-32.

⁴¹ Archbishop Basilios, ‘Eucharistic Bread’, *The Coptic Encyclopedia* 4 (1991), pp. 1062-1063; the liturgical use of such formulas may be seen as early as Ps.-Dioscorus of Alexandria, *Encomium of Macarios* 56.

⁴² See *Encomium of John the Baptist* 21,2: as it comes to account for the meaning of the name “Johannes” as seal of the world, Jota is said to stand for Jesus, Omega for Father, Alpha for Unity, Nun for both the Spirit and the aeons of light, Eta for Emmanuel, Sigma

in LibBarth Jao occurs as a name of Jesus (6,1); Jesus is described as a single entity assembled out of seven aeons (9,2); the name of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Spirit is inscribed in seven points on Adam's body (14,2).⁴³

Be that as it may, by means of the aforementioned redactional interventions the 'apocryphal' story of Adam's hunger, fasting and feeding undergoes a deep-ranging, undisputedly Christological and eucharistic turn aimed to legitimize a contemporary baking practice as rooted in the actions and revelations of God and Christ Themselves.

4. Intersecting the Axes: Old and New 'Heretics' and the Production of Coptic Apostolic Memoirs

Crossing the synchronic and diachronic evidence we have been collecting thus far, we are now in a better position to make some final inferences about the production of the texts we have analyzed, the 'apocryphal' hypotexts or pre-existing traditions involved, and the cultural environment surrounding it. For the sake of clarity, I present such provisional conclusions as bullet points:

- A) Our brief survey of two texts, *The Investiture of Abbaton* and *The Mysteries of John*, highlighted that their 'apocryphal' texture in relating episodes of primordial history depends on multiple sources, written or not: Adamic legends mainly taken from the (Jewish?) *Life of Adam and Eve* and the *Apocalypse of Moses*;⁴⁴ angelological traditions of Jewish and Hermetic, Gnostic and Manichaean origins as well as specifically Gnostic *mythologoumena* – whether still known to the authors of the texts as such or not; earlier Christian 'apocalypses'.⁴⁵ Next to them – and possibly constituting a link in the chain of transmission – the literary influence exerted by such works as the *Cave of Treasures* (translated into Coptic probably before 750-760 CE) and the *Visio Pauli* should probably be analyzed in greater detail in the near future, where textual evidence allows it of course.⁴⁶ As names, expressions, whole passages, ideas and topics in *The Investiture of Abbaton* and *The Mysteries of John* are in fact paralleled in other Coptic texts of about the same period, one may wonder whether they had by then coalesced into a sort of common cluster of themes, literary motifs and formulas, into a shared 'language', let's say, to

for Savior. Accordingly, Ps.-Stephen, *The Investiture of Gabriel* 7, defines John "baptizer of the aeons of Light". On sealing as a metaphor for baptism see Clem. *Ecl.* 13,9 and *Exc.* 80,3; 83; 86,2; Bas. *Eun.* 2,22 (PG 29,620D); [Bas.] *Struct. hom.* 1 (PG 30,33B); [Ath.] *Sabell.* 8 (PG 28,109C); Chrys. *Hom. 3.7 in 2Cor* (PG 10,454B).

⁴³ On "seal of Truth" as a divine name and the sealing of the world in Jewish tradition see M. Idel, *Il figlio nel misticismo ebraico*, Verona, 2013, pp. 44-45 and 118-119 (or. ed.: *Ben: Sonship and Jewish Mysticism* [London, 2007]).

⁴⁴ Dochhorn, *Apokalypse*, p. 288 n. 1, considers "erst recht" *Investiture of Abbaton* as "von der Ape Mos mittelbar abhängig". For the Coptic fragments of the *Vita Adae* see J.-C. Haelewyck, *Clavis Apocryphorum Veteris Testamenti (Corpus Christianorum)*, Turnhout, 1998, p. 7; A.-M. Denis et collaborateurs, *Introduction à la littérature religieuse judéo-hellénistique*, Turnhout, 2000, vol. 1, pp. 16-17; S.J. Gathercole, 'The Life of Adam and Eve (Coptic Fragments)', in R. Bauckham et al. (eds.), *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha: More Noncanonical Scriptures*, Grand Rapids et al., 2013) vol. 1, pp. 22-27, esp. 24.

⁴⁵ On Jewish and Christian apocalyptic literature as a source of inspiration for the production of new texts in Late Antique Egypt see also E. Grypeou, 'Höllenreisen und engelgleiches Leben: Die Rezeption von apokalyptischen Traditionen in der koptisch-monastischen Literatur', in Bumazhnov (ed.), *Christliches Ägypten*, pp. 43-54.

⁴⁶ As far as the former text is concerned, readers may profit from the works of A. Su-Min Ri and A. Toepel: the former published the text and French translation of the two Syriac recensions of the *Cave of Treasures* (CSCO 486-487, 1987) as well as a rich commentary on this writing (CSCO 581, 2000); the latter dedicated a whole monograph to Adam and Seth legends in the *Cave of Treasures* and their sources (*Die Adam- und Seth-Legenden im syrischen Buch der Schatzhöhle*, Leuven, 2006). A still later Copto-Arabic text, the *Conflict of Adam and Eve with Satan*, to which Alin Suciú has recently attributed a previously alleged fragment of the *Life of Adam*, "is largely based on the story of Adam and Eve from the *Cave of Treasures*" (A. Suciú, 'Note on the Alleged Arabic Manuscript of the Life of Adam', *Journal of Theological Studies* 69/1 [2018], pp. 96-100 [quotation: 98]). One more pseudo-patristic homily containing extensive extracts from the *Cave of Treasures* is known to exist in Coptic: see Suciú, *The Berlin-Strasbourg Apocryphon*, pp. 78-79 and n. 23 (with further literature).

be drawn upon in Coptic monastic milieus when forging homilies and re-inventing an apostolic *Urtext*.⁴⁷

- B) Sources are not simply registered: that is, reused and copied, if written, or committed to writing if oral – as one might in fact easily expect. Rather, they are interpolated and rewritten so as to fill Christological, eschatological and liturgical gaps in official accounts of sacred history. In one case we may even detect the influence of Coptic eucharistic baking practice on the remodeling of the older story of Adam’s penitence. As a Coptic text puts it, commenting upon this process in response to a hypothetical objection to additions to the Gospel text:

The wool provided for the purple cloth of the king, before its mixtures, with which it is dyed, are applied to it, can be made useful by being fabricated into clothing and being worn as one pleases. Yet when it is worked upon and dyed in colorful mixtures, it becomes exceedingly brilliant and becomes radiant clothing, so that the king wears it. Thus, the holy gospels, when he who will be ordained a shepherd acts according to their words and reveals them, become illuminated exceedingly. And they are very brilliant in the heart of those who listen. Indeed, the king will not find fault if beautifully crafted plaits are added to his garments, but he will commend those who have added them exceedingly, so that everyone might praise the garment because of the plaits which are on it. Thus, the Lord Jesus will not find fault with us if we add a few embellishments to the holy gospels, but he will commend us all the more and bless those who bear fruit through them.⁴⁸

This emic image of remembering and re-narrating ‘Bible’ material as the making and enrichment of a garment lends itself to a comparison with the modern notion of *Bible in progress* and the shift of theoretical paradigms in the study of ‘apocryphal’ traditions, as advanced by, among others, P. Piovanelli.⁴⁹

- C) As we have just seen, such ‘sartorial’ work was not a neutral literary enterprise. It was certainly not perceived as such by contemporaries. Legends and stories were collected, retrieved and narrated anew to fit changed historical circumstances and liturgical needs, even to the point of transforming book production into a saving act and indulging in some kind of self-propaganda, as it were. This move did not go uncontested but rather ignited fierce polemics – or conversely it was resorted to as a result of fierce polemics already ignited. As J. Dochorn demonstrated, the idea that Michael occupied Satan’s place after the latter’s fall, and the literary works relating the story of how it actually happened along the lines of Adamic legends (esp. VitAd 11-17), were linked in some branches of Coptic monastic tradition with earlier heretics or heresies: among them one may count unknown or yet-undeciphered names like Henotes and Sietes, but also notorious bad guys like Isidore, probably Basilides of Alexandria’s son, and

⁴⁷ Hence such newborn clichés and conventions could be moved at will from one text to another as building blocks, and often end up constituting gross and clumsy interpolations into pre-existing works: cf. Ps.-Chrysostomus, *De resurrectione et apostolis* 37-38 with Ps.-Chrisostomus, *Glory of the Precursor* 8,4-9,2 in light of Suciú’s remarks on the Sahidic *additum* to the final part of the *Apocalypse of Paul* (Suciú, *The Berlin-Strasbourg Apocryphon*, p. 114).

⁴⁸ Ps.-Evodius of Rome, *Homily on the Passion and Resurrection* 40-42. English translation taken from “Rhetorical Structure,” 46. This text is quoted *in extenso* also in Suciú, *The Berlin-Strasbourg Apocryphon*, pp. 123-124, as a sign of its importance for understanding the emic conception – as anthropologists would say – of such literature in our sources.

⁴⁹ P. Piovanelli, ‘*Rewritten Bible or Bible in Progress?* La réécriture des traditions mémorielles bibliques dans les Judaïsme et le Christianisme anciens’, in *Apocryphités. Études sur les textes et les traditions scripturaires du Judaïsme et su Christianisme anciens*, id., Turnhout, 2016, pp. 25-42. Cf. also the category “Books useful for the Soul” proposed and developed by the late F. Bovon, ‘Beyond the Canonical and the Apocryphal Books, the Presence of a Third Category: The Books Useful for the Soul’, in *The Emergence of Christianity: Collected Studies III*, id., Tübingen, 2013, pp. 147-160. It bears noting that the image used by the Coptic homilist is still productive in modern, scientific research on apocrypha: see right from the title L. DiTommaso et al. (eds.), *The Embroidered Bible: Studies in Biblical Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha in Honour of Michael E. Stone*, Leiden et al., 2017, which unfortunately I have not yet been able to thumb.

Mani's followers.⁵⁰ More generally the *Kitāb al-īdāh* sees the Devil himself at work in the author of the *Investiture of Abbaton*, with all the people arranging a feast for the angel of death (9,1.25). As a result one might quite naturally wonder whether naming a revered Father of the Church and an apostle as the respective authors of a homily and of two apparently lost revelatory texts, or pointing instead at (long-dead) heretics as sources for opponents' teachings were not among Coptic literati's (i.e. mainly monks') deliberate choices, *de facto* mirroring each other and aiming to counter pretensions or allegations advanced by the opposite front. In which case not only would (contested) pseudoepigraphy turn out to be an attempt "of the emerging Coptic church to mold an identity for itself" by demonstrating "that the Egyptian Christians are the real heirs of the orthodox tradition", but it would also prove an integral part of a polemical strategy perfectly at home in the long intra-Coptic debate surrounding the production and diffusion of the apostolic memoirs.⁵¹

⁵⁰ Dochhorn, 'Mythen von der Einsetzung', pp. 32-35. Cf. Ps.-Athanasius, Homily on Luke 35-36, where Carpocrates (= Carpocrates, the 2nd-century Alexandrian 'gnostic' teacher) shows up in Nicea stating that Jesus was born after a 7-month pregnancy and thus arguing – in the eye of the redactor – against the full humanity of the Incarnation. For more 'heretical' doctrines attributed to Carpocrates in Coptic literature see A. Le Tiec, 'Remarques à propos des fragments coptes 159-160, 302-304, conservés à l'IFAO du Caire: une homélie copte sur la Vierge Marie attribuée à Cyrille de Jérusalem', in A. Van den Kerchove and L.G. Soares Santoprete (eds.), *Gnose et manichéisme. Entre les oasis d'Égypte et la Route de la Soie: Hommage à Jean-Daniel Dubois*, Turnhout, 2016, pp. 683-698, esp. 692-694.

⁵¹ Suciū, *The Berlin-Strasbourg Apocryphon*, pp. 75-95, 124-125, 128-129 (quotation: 129).

Appendix

1. The Birth of Death

Investiture of Abbaton (CC 0405):

(BL Or. 7025) 5.(1) “And it happened, as my Father made the heaven and the earth, and all the creatures that are in them, he spoke and they all arose, Angels, Archangels, Cherubs, Seraphs, Thrones, Rulers, Powers, all the Dominions, and the whole heavenly host. He also made the earth and the animals alike, reptiles, cattle, **(Fol. 9b)** birds and all the creatures that move on it. In the east he planted a garden, **(2)** but he saw that the whole world was a wasteland, because there was nobody to cultivate it. So my Father said: ‘Let us make man like ourselves, according to our image, that he may praise us day and night and they understand that it is the hand of the Lord that created all this. For I am before it was.’ **(3)** Then my Father commanded an angel: ‘Go to the land of Eden at my desire and my command, and bring me virgin soil, that I may make man like ourselves **(Fol. 10a)**, according to our image, and he may incessantly praise us day and night!’ The angel went to the land of Eden, obeying to my Father’s command, and stood upon the clay. He stretched out his hand to take the clay and bring it to my Father, **(4)** but immediately the clay cried out and said in a loud voice: ‘I swear to you on the one who sent you to me: you shall not take me to him, that he may mold me to become a man and a living soul, and thus great sins may arise from me! **(5)** Many fornications, blasphemies, envies, hates, and quarrels will come to pass because of him, many murders and bloodsheds will be committed by him **(Fol. 10b)**: **(6)** before my time comes, I will be thrown to dogs and pigs, in pits and wells, and in river waters. At last, after all such things, I will be delivered to the punishments and tormented day and night. Therefore, leave me alone lying here at my ease!’ **(7)** As the Angel of the Lord heard these words, he became afraid of my Father’s name, turned away, and went back to my Father. The Angel said, ‘My Lord, as I heard your frightening name, I was not able anymore to bring you the clay.’ **(8)** Immediately, my Father commanded a second angel and sent him to the clay, and a third afterwards, and so on until the seventh, but none of them was able to get close to the clay **(Fol. 11a)** because it swore to them great, frightening oaths. **(9)** When my Father saw that no one had been able to bring him the clay, he sent the angel Muriel to it saying: ‘Go to the land of Eden at my command and bring me virgin clay, that I may make a man resembling us, according to our image, and he may incessantly praise us day and night!’ **(10)** As the Angel of the Lord went to the clay, he stood by extremely mighty and confident, empowered by the Lord’s command. He stretched out his hand to take it, and immediately the clay cried out in a loud voice: ‘I swear on the one **(Fol. 11b)**, who created heaven and earth and all the beings that are in them: you shall not get close to take me to God!’ **(11)** But Muriel was not afraid of my Father’s name as he heard it, and so he did not have any compassion for the clay: he approached and seized it with tyrannical cruelty. **(12)** Then, he brought it to my Father. My Father rejoiced over it, took the clay from the hands of the angel and created Adam resembling us, according to our image. He left him lying for forty days and forty nights without giving him breath, and each day complaining: ‘Many **(fol. 12a)** sufferings expect man, if I give him breath.’ I said to my Father: ‘Give him breath, and I will pledge for him!’ **(13)** My Father said to me: ‘My beloved Son, if I give him breath, you will have to descend to the world and endure great sufferings for him, in order to save and restore him to his original rule.’ I replied: ‘Give him breath! I will pledge for him, descend into the world, and carry out your command.’ **(14)** As he decided to give man breath, he took the book and wrote down his descendants who will enter the kingdom of heaven **(Fol. 12b)**, as it is

written: 'These, whose names are written in the book of life from the foundation of the world.' In this way he gave him the breath of life: he blew a living breath three times into his face saying: 'Live, live, live!', according to the type of my divinity. **(15)** Immediately man came to life and became a living soul, resembling God, according to his image. When Adam arose, he threw himself down before the Father and said: 'My lord and my God, **(Fol. 13a)** you made me come to being out of nothing!' **(16)** Thus, God installed him on a great throne, and put a splendid crown and a royal diadem on his head. After these things, my Father commanded every order in heaven to come and worship Adam, whether Angels or Archangels. So the whole heavenly host came, worshiped first God and then Adam, saying: 'Greetings, you, likeness and image of God!' **6.(1)** The order of the First Creature showed up as well to worship Adam. My Father said to him: 'Come, you too, and worship my likeness and my image!' **(Fol. 13b)**. Blind haughtiness and impudence seized him, and he replied: 'It is fitting for him to come and worship me, because I am before he came to being!' **(2)** When my Father noticed his blind pride and saw that his malice and mischief had reached full measure, he ordered all heavenly hosts saying: 'Come and take the roll from the hand of the proud one, strip off his armor and throw him down to earth, because his time has come!' **(3)** For he was the greatest of them all and led them: as a king entrusts his army to a general, and the latter leads it, holding in his hand the written names of the soldiers, **(4)** so it was with this wicked one and the written names of the angels were in his hand. The Angels assembled against him, but they were not able to take the roll from him. So, my Father ordered to bring a sharp knife and cut off the roll this side and that. Nonetheless, what was left in the palm of his hand could not be taken from him. **(5)** Immediately, my Father commanded a great Cherub, and he struck and threw him down from heaven to earth **(Fol. 14b)** because of his pride: the Cherub broke his wings and his rib, and weakened him. But those that he took down with him became devils together with him.

2. The Hidden Eve: 'Apocryphal' and 'Gnostic' Sources

Mysteries of John (CC 0041)

(BL Or. 7026) 7. (19) I asked him: "My lord, what was the righteousness clothing him he was stripped of?" 20 He answered: "When God created Adam, Adam was twelve cubits tall, six cubits wide, and three cubits thick: he was like flawless alabaster. 21 But after he had eaten from the tree, his body became smaller and thinner, and the righteousness which he had on disappeared and left him, down to the tip of his fingers, his nails: do not they turn cold in winter and hot in summer?" **8.** (1) I kept asking the cherub **(Fol. 12b)**: "My Lord, when God created Adam, did he create Eve with him too or not? For I have heard that God created Adam and Eve together from the beginning, (2) but I further hear that God brought a deep sleep over Adam and, as he fell asleep, he took a rib out of him, fashioned it into a woman and filled Adam's side with flesh in its place. (3) Did the Creator then make two bodies as a single body?" (4) He answered to me: "Listen and I will disclose everything to you! (5) When God created Adam, he created Eve together with him as a single body, for, as the Lord worked on Adam, the idea of Eve was already there with Adam **(Fol. 13a)**. (6) That is the reason why two bodies came into being from a single body; God however did not separate them from each other immediately. (7) When God brought the deep sleep over Adam and he lay down and fell asleep, only then did he take Eve out of him, and she became his wife, (8) for she was hidden in his left side since the time God created him. **9.** (1) Pay attention to the sign on the sons of men!" I asked him: "My Lord, which sign is on the sons of men?" (2) The cherub said to me: "When the frost comes upon the earth, the nails are the first part of the human body that turns cold. (3) For, as God stripped Adam **(Fol. 13b)** of the righteousness that clothed him, his nails were the first to turn cold. (4) Adam burst into tears, crying to the Lord: 'Woe to me, my Lord! When I

was still keeping the commandments of God, before I ate from the tree, my whole body was white as my nails!’ (5) Therefore, whenever Adam would look at his nails, he would weep and mourn.”

3. Adam, Jesus and the ‘Invention’ of Wheat

Mysteries of John (CC 0041)

(BL Or. 7026) 4. (1) I further said to the cherub: “I have heard that God made heaven and earth and also that he made the water in the beginning.” (2) The cherub replied: “Listen to me and I will disclose everything to you! Before God created earth and heaven, the waters were already there. No one knows their creation except God alone. (3) That is the reason why neither the one who swears falsely in the name of the water nor the one who commits a perjury by the grain of wheat will be forgiven: one and the same sanction applies to both!” (4) I said to the cherub: “My lord, I want you to explain to me such a provision concerning the grain of wheat, disclosing to me where the grain of wheat was found in the beginning, that it may be sown and men may live on it.” (5) The cherub told me: “Listen to me and I will disclose everything to you! When God created Adam, he placed him in the garden of delight and commanded him, speaking in this manner **(Fol. 4b)**: ‘From every tree in the garden you may eat, except for the tree of knowledge of good and evil. From it you shall not eat! The day you will eat from it, you will surely die!’ (6) But the devil envied him, because he saw the great glory that surrounded him. Even the sun and the moon, the two great stars, would come every day to worship Adam, before rising over the earth. (7) The devil went and led Adam and his wife astray, and so they were driven from Paradise and banished to the land of Eilat. (8) Adam plunged into trouble: after that he became hungry and found no food like that the two of them were used to eat every day in Paradise. **(Fol. 5a)** Deeply grieving, he cried out to the Lord, and the Son of Goodness had pity on him, for he had guaranteed for Adam. (9) He spoke with his good Father, the Lord of the angels and the spirits: ‘Behold, the man we created according to our likeness and image has become hungry. Father, I have pity on him: if it is your will, do not let him starve!’ (10) So the Father of Mercy answered and said to his beloved Son: ‘If you have taken pity on the man we have created, who has neglected our order, then go and give him your flesh to eat. For you guaranteed for him.’ (11) The Son of Goodness answered and said to his Father: ‘Blessed be your word! **(Fol. 5b)** I will do what you have told me’. (12) The beloved Son left his Father’s presence and took a small piece out of his right side, a piece of his divine flesh, rubbed it down to a round shape and brought it to his Holy Father. (13) His Father asked him: ‘What is this?’ He answered: ‘This is my flesh, like you told me’ Then his father said to him: ‘All right, my Son! Wait for a while and I will give you a piece of my invisible body!’ 14 His Father himself took a piece of his own body, and fashioned it into a grain of wheat; then he took the seal of light which he had sealed the eons of light with, and sealed the grain of wheat in its middle. (15) Then he said to his beloved Son: ‘Take it and **(Fol. 6a)** give it to the Archangel Michael! He will give it to Adam and Adam will sow it, so that he and his children may live on it. Michael will also teach him how to sow and reap.’ (16) Jesus called Michael and said to him: ‘Take this flesh and give it to Adam, so that he and all his children may live on it!’ (17) Michael went to Adam, as he was at the Jordan for the eighth day without eating, just crying out to the Lord. Michael spoke to him and said: ‘Peace be with you! The Lord has heard your prayer and sent you the seed for sowing’. (18) When Adam heard this from Michael, his body recovered strength: he came out of the water and threw himself down at Michael’s feet. (19) Michael gave him the sealed seed and taught him how to sow and reap **(fol. 6b)**, afterwards he went up to the heavens in glory. (20) Therefore, (be the perjury sworn by) the water, the wheat, the

seed, or the throne of the Father, one and the same sanction is foreseen for them, and the four equal the Son of God.”(21) I, John, saw and rejoiced hearing these things.