Conceiving of Children

in the

Nag Hammadi Library

Netty Bos-Veneman

Conceiving of Children

in the Nag Hammadi Library

Loppersum, 15 June 2017

Netty Bos-Veneman

Student number: s0803979

First supervisor: Lautaro Roig Lanzillotta, MA, PhD

Second supervisor: Mathilde van Dijk, MA, PhD

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT

This study aims to increase our knowledge regarding the daily life of children living in Antiquity by investigating the evidence on children in the Nag Hammadi Library. Studying the Library from the perspective of children may also contribute to our understanding of the interactions between the people behind the Nag Hammadi texts and their sociocultural environment, as well as of their ethical, cosmological, and anthropological views.

I have gathered the evidence that refers to children in translated manuscripts of the Nag Hammadi Library and studied it by means of text-critical and historical methods. The texts often refer to divine and spiritual children and use childhood metaphors, but seldom describe flesh and bone children. My findings confirm what scholars already knew about childhood in the Roman Empire regarding, for example, characteristics of parent-child relations and "patchwork" families. The child-related ideas that are included in the metaphors are mostly in line with ideas current in ancient Roman, Jewish, and Christian circles, such as the distinction between "real" and "unreal" families and the control of sexual desire. These shared daily life aspects of and opinions about children suggest diverse interactions between the Nag Hammadi texts and Roman society, Judaism, and Christianity.

In conclusion, studying the Nag Hammadi sections that refer to children provides insight into their daily lives and to that of children in Antiquity. Detailed interpretation and explanation of all bits of evidence is needed.

1 INTRODUCTION

Draw near to childhood,

And do not despise it because it is small and insignificant.[1]

1.1. STUDYING CHILDREN

Dutch children learn a song about a house in Holland inhabited by a gentleman. After he has chosen a wife, a child comes into their live and then the rest of the household unfolds in an infinite amount of couplets. In a quite similar way, Cicero states that "because the urge to reproduce is an instinct common to all animals, society originally consists of the pair, next of the pair with their children, then one house and all things in common. This is the beginning of the city and the seedbed of the state."[2] The crucial position of the child in this sequence is obvious. As grown up inhabitants of a world ruled by adults, we often forget that children and childhood play a significant role in this world. Only consider their numbers! They also contribute to adulthood. Have not all adults once been children? How we were treated in childhood, what we experienced, how we grew and developed, influences our adult lives. In addition, children determine the lives of many adults because, for sure, they draw attention to their needs and they are nearly everywhere. This makes them interesting to investigate and there are more reasons to do so.

The daily life of children mirrors their cultural and social worlds as childhood is a cultural and social phenomenon, built on "socially shred assumptions and corresponding normative expectations" that creates social realities.[3] People living in different places, cultures, and time periods view

---

[1] P.H. Poirier and M. Meyer, *'Thunder* NHC VI,2', in: M. Meyer (ed.), *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures, the Revised and Updated Translation of Sacred Gnostic Texts* (New York 2008) 375.
[2] S. Jones, *The World of the Early Church* (Oxford 2011) 120.
[3] C.B. Horn and J.W. Martens, *'Let the Little Children Come to Me,' Childhood and Children in Early Christianity* (Washington 2009) 4 and F. Schweitzer, 'Religion in Childhood and Adolescence: How should it be studied? A Critical Review of Problems and Challenges in Methodology and Research', *Journal of Empirical Theology* 27 (2014) 17–35, there 17–21.

children differently, but in general children are the hope for the future.[4] Adults, therefore, raise their children in consideration of what they value most important for the here and now and for the future. Studying children sheds light on social and cultural structures and increases our insights into their endless different contexts, certainly if we take into account the various meanings of the word "child," including age, origin, developmental stage, and status.[5] They are small but certainly not insignificant to diverse research areas. Until recently scholars hardly paid hardly any attention to children but this is changing.

Children in Roman Antiquity have also become a research topic but "it is some 2,000 years too late to learn very much about them."[6] The ancient evidence is scarce, as children and the women who took care of them left hardly any written sources. Most available evidence is of Roman, Jewish, or Christian origin, and then chiefly from "mainstream" variants. The vast Roman Empire, however, encompassed far more cultures and currents, of which the Nag Hammadi Library testifies. If scholars use these little bits of evidence, they mainly focus on ethical aspects such as marriage and hierarchical structures in the Roman world and hardly ever include the perspective of children.[7]

---

[4] Schweitzer, 'Religion in Childhood', 349.

[5] Ibidem, 2.

[6] B. Rawson, 'Introduction: Families in the Greek and Roman Worlds', in: B. Rawson (ed.), *A Companion to Families in the Greek and Roman Worlds* (Oxford 2011) 1–12, there 9 and M. Golden, 'Other People's Children', in: B. Rawson (ed.), *A Companion to Families in the Greek and Roman Worlds* (Oxford 2011) 262–275, there 262.

[7] V. Dasen, 'Childhood and Birth in Greek and Roman Antiquity', in: B. Rawson (ed.), *A Companion to Families in the Greek and Roman Worlds* (Oxford 2011) 291–314, there 290; M.Y. MacDonald, *The Power of Children: The Construction of Christian Families in the Greco-Roman World* (Waco 2014) 4, 29 and H. Moxnes, 'Introduction', in: H. Moxnes (ed.), *Constructing Early Christian Families: Family as Social Reality and Metaphor* (New York 1997) 1–12, there 1.

1.2. CHILDREN AND THE NAG HAMMADI LIBRARY

The Nag Hammadi Library

Imagine digging in a field and coming across some clay jars containing thirteen ancient books… In 1945 it happened to Muhammad Ali near the Egyptian town of Nag Hammadi. The books encompassed nearly forty-six different and until then largely unknown texts, copied in the fourth century but originating from earlier centuries.[8] Scholars identified this "Nag Hammadi Library" as a gnostic text collection. This Library once belonged to gnostics who they had regularly encountered in the refutations of the ancient heresiologists. By means of this astounding found experts have persistently tried to define Gnosticism and its overarching characteristics. But as one or more colleagues rejected the proposed definitions and characteristics time and again, scholars did not succeed in escaping from their "terminological fog."[9] More than seventy years later, they have reached some consensus and consider Gnosticism, or better "Gnosticisms," as "a complex phenomenon with miscellaneous manifestations" including diverse forms of "Early Christianities" and "Judaisms," and not as one "monolithic system."[10]

The complexity of the texts plays a role in the continuing scholarly disputes regarding, for example, the origins of the Nag Hammadi scriptures, its related currents and cultures, its cosmological, anthropological, and ethical expressions, and so on. The Library presents us with sundry world perspectives, mythological narrations, rituals, and beliefs. A summary of the heterogeneous stories once buried near Nag Hammadi could sound as follows: More fortunate humans know about the transcendent, unknowable, and perfect God. They know that they do not belong to this world but that

---

[8] M. Meyer, 'Introduction', in: M. Meyer (ed.), *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures, the Revised and Updated Translation of Sacred Gnostic Texts* (New York 2008) 1–14, there 1–5.

[9] R. van den Broek, 'Gnosticism and Hermetism in Antiquity: Two Roads to Salvation', in: R. van den Broek and W.J. Hanegraaff (eds.), *Gnosis and Hermeticism from Antiquity to Modern Times* (New York 1998) 1–20, there 4.

[10] B. Layton, *The Gnostic Scriptures* (New York, 1987) 5–22; K.L. King, *What is Gnosticism?* (Cambridge 2003) 1–4, 153; K. Rudolph and R.M. Wilson, *Gnosis: the Nature and History of Gnosticism* (San Francisco 1987) 53–76; Meyer, 'Introduction', 9 and B.D. Ehrman, *Lost Christianities and the Battles for Scripture and the Faith We Never Knew* (Oxford 2003) 113–122.

they originate from the divine of which they still carry a spark inside, called spirit or mind. This spark provides them with saving knowledge, *gnosis*, of their true identity and destiny that unites them with the divine. The complex myths we find throughout the Nag Hammadi Library serve to convey this mysterious narration. The myths narrate about the highest God and his divine realm, the *Pleroma*, resulting from his emanations, *aeons*, that produce new, lower emanations. The final *aeon*, Sophia, generates the demiurge, creator of this material world. Shared notions between the diverse myths are the cosmic catastrophe that leads to the generation of the material world and the reconciliation of the divine spark inside (some) humans with its divine origin by means of revealed knowledge.[11] Although this summary seems quite straightforward many scholarly debates remain, for example, regarding the interaction between the people reading and writing the Nag Hammadi texts and their contemporaries attached to other cultures and currents, as well as concerning their ethical attitudes, their cosmological and anthropological notions. Studying the evidence regarding children in the Nag Hammadi scriptures may contribute to these current discussions.

The main objective of this thesis, however, is to study the evidence regarding the daily life of children who were connected to the Nag Hammadi Library. We will seldom encounter flesh and bone children in the texts, but children may have learned about the Nag Hammadi myths, which stage families with children, such as the holy triad of Father, Mother, and Child, and about the texts that use metaphors related to children, such as conception, birth, and hierarchical relations between biological, illegitimate, and stepchildren.[12] We may ask ourselves what it was about children and families that the authors used them to exemplify their essential messages, and vice versa, how these stories influenced the daily lives of children.[13] To the best of my knowledge no studies have been performed concerning children and childhood in the Nag Hammadi

---

[11] Ehrman, *Lost Christianities*, 122–126 and Broek, 'Two Roads', 7–9.
[12] See pages 24–35.
[13] M.A. Williams, *Rethinking 'Gnosticism': An Argument for Dismantling a Dubious Category* (Princeton 2001) 154–160.

Library. One scholar did focus on "gnostic" families but without including the perspective of children.[14]

Let us have a closer look at the scholarly discussions to which the study of the evidence regarding children in the Nag Hammadi texts may contribute.

The Nag Hammadi Library and Ancient Cultures

We do not know much about the possessors of the divine knowledge who wrote and read the Nag Hammadi scriptures. The heterogeneous content of the texts may point to a heterogeneous audience. The people behind the Library were part of various ancient Mediterranean societies and cultures. They lived in the vast geographical region of the Roman Empire during a time period of several centuries.[15]

Scholars have related nearly all main religious and philosophical currents of the Roman world to the Nag Hammadi Library in one way or another. Judaism, Christianity, Greek philosophy, and Persian and Egyptian religions have been considered as possible origins of the views included in the manuscripts. Many scholars define Gnosticism by means of its relation to Christianity, for example, as a Christian variety or, in line with the heresiologists, as a Christian heresy. Recently, scholarly interest has shifted to Judaism as locus of origin. Other experts emphasize the similarities with Platonic tradition, for example, regarding the radical dualism with an evil material world and a good spiritual world. The Middle Platonists in the first and second centuries CE expanded Plato's views and developed entire cosmologies comparable to those expressed in the Nag Hammadi texts.[16]

Leaving aside the search for the origins of the Nag Hammadi texts as a corporate collection, scholars have begun to analyse each text separately and make comparisons with other contemporaneous evidence.[17] In such a study

---

[14] Ibidem, 150 and M.A. Williams, 'A Life Full of Meaning and Purpose: Demiurgical Myths and Social Implications', in: E. Iricinschi, L. Jenott, N. Denzey Lewis, and P. Townsend (eds.), *Beyond the Gnostic Gospels, Studien und Texte zu Antike und Christentum 82* (Tübingen 2013) 19–59.

[15] Williams, *Rethinking*, 84 and King, *Gnosticism*, 48–52.

[16] Ehrman, *Lost Christianities*, 120 and King, *Gnosticism*, 1–4, 11–12, 20–38, 97, 172–190; A. DeConick, 'The Countercultural Gnostic: Turning the World Upside Down and Inside Out', *Gnosis: Journal of Gnostic Studies* 1 (2016) 7–53, there 8–12; Williams, *Rethinking*, 52–53 and Meyer, 'Introduction', 5–8.

[17] Meyer, 'Introduction', 9.

Professor of Biblical Studies April DeConick suggests that the people behind the Nag Hammadi Library were ancient predecessors of the countercultural seekers of today's spiritualities. With their new *gnosis* they challenged the truth of their original religious and philosophical convictions. The "gnostic transgression" involves the allegorical reading of the Scriptures, the emphasis on revelation, and the views of other gods as lesser divinities, of the gnostics possessing knowledge of a higher God and even allowing his divine spark to reside inside their souls. The very first Christians also had countercultural agendas but their successors chose to fit in to Roman society. Gnostic groups though remained at odds with both the values of Romans and Christians.[18] Other scholars argue, to the contrary, that gnostics try to minimize social tensions.[19]

Research on children underscores how early Christians challenged but also adopted features of the society they lived in.[20] In the Nag Hammadi Library we may similarly discover to what extent people lived their family lives with children in a transgressive way.

Cosmology, Anthropology, and Ethics in the Nag Hammadi Library

Scholars continue to debate regarding the ethical, cosmological, and anthropological views expressed in the Nag Hammadi Library. Nearly twenty years ago Professor of Religious History Roelof van den Broek stated that "for the gnostics, the cosmos is the bad product of an evil creator." He explains that the cosmic disaster that Sophia initiates drastically splits the divine and earthly realms. In this radical, anticosmic dualism the birth of the demiurge results in the creation of a bad world and a similarly bad human body, both conceived of as prison of the soul.[21] *The Exegesis on the Soul* presents a clear example of this view.[22] Other Nag Hammadi texts, however, express a vast variety of

---

[18] S. Sutcliffe, "'Wandering Stars': Seekers and Gurus in the Modern World", in: S. Sutcliffe, S. and M. Bowman (eds.), *Beyond New Age: Exploring Alternative Spirituality* (Edinburgh 2000) 17–36 and DeConick, 'Countercultural', 12–23, 26–27.

[19] See page 17.

[20] MacDonald, *Power of Children*, 3.

[21] Broek, 'Two Roads', 9–12.

[22] L. Roig Lanzillotta, 'Platonism and the *Expository Treatise on the Soul* (NHC II,6)', in: L. van der Stockt, F. Titchener, H.G. Ingenkamp, and A. Pérez Jiménez (eds.), *Gods, Daimones, Rituals, Myths and History of Religions in Plutarch's Works. Studies Devoted to Professor Frederick E. Brenk by the International Plutarch Society* (Malaga 2010) 345–362, there 347.

cosmological and anthropological positions in a fluid and imprecise manner. Even if we encounter descriptions of the world as "prison," we should interpret this very carefully for two reasons. First, the material world is the reflection of and is controlled by the divine realm. The affairs in the material cosmos, including the earth, are part of a larger plan, but the problem is that humans often are unaware of this divine providence. Second, the polemic in the Nag Hammadi texts does not address the material cosmos, but the demiurgical powers and their incitement of their evil immorality in humans. The texts often view the cosmos in a neutral or even positive way. With the same carefulness, we have to investigate sections that say "distinctly unflattering things" about the body and connect it to vices and passions. Just like the material world, the bodily form mirrors the divine. It is used to reveal knowledge and can be brought under control through divine power.[23]

Nag Hammadi texts connect this control of the body to a process aiming at human spiritual wholeness. For example, *The Testimony of Truth* shows that the main purpose of spiritual perfection mingles with moral choices, that bring about mental transformation within the individual. Similarly, *Allogenes the Stranger* and *The Apocalypse of Paul* spiritual development happens through philosophical reflection and moral works including the rejection of passions. Since the devotee adjusts his moral standards to his reached spiritual stage, ethical principles were complex, diverse, and possibly no too rigorous.[24] A vast diversity of ethical possibilities beyond the often mentioned ascetic and libertine stands is imaginable. In line with the views of the heresiologists, some scholars think these two extreme ethical positions were the only choices gnostics had. They assume that the main characteristic of Gnosticism is a radical dualism and that this dualism rejects any kind of moral life. As we have seen however, the Nag Hammadi Library presents us with a variety of cosmological and

---

[23] Ehrman, *Lost Christianities*, 125–126; King, *Gnosticism*, 12–13, 192–208; Williams, 'Demiurgical Myths', 21–22, 26, 28–37, 40–47 and Williams, *Rethinking*, 123–138.

[24] Williams, *Rethinking*, 154; DeConick, 'Countercultural', 24; L. Roig Lanzillotta, 'The Apocalypse of Paul (NHC V,2): Cosmology, Anthropology, and Ethics', *Gnosis: Journal of Gnostic Studies* 1 (2016) 110–131, there 125–126; J.P. Mahé, 'Gnostic and Hermetic Ethics', in: R. van den Broek en W.J. Hanegraaff (eds.), *Gnosis and Hermeticism from Antiquity to Modern Times* (New York 1998) 21–36 and King, *Gnosticism*, 192–201.

anthropological positions besides a radical dualism. Moreover, the relation between radical dualistic and extreme ethical views is challenged.[25]

Nowadays scholars largely agree that there is no evidence whatsoever in the Library that supports the view regarding the existence of libertine ethics. In what regards scholarly views on asceticism the situation is more complex. The equating of sex with defilement and procreation with sin may lead to a radical position like Marcion's rejection of marriage and the bearing of children.[26] Several scholars recognize a demand for strict sexual continence and an incitement to ascetic values in most Nag Hammadi texts. Motivated by the desire for spiritual development some people may concordantly have aspired to an ascetic life.[27] However, scholars generally disagree regarding the opinions expressed in the Library about asceticism, sexuality, and marriage. For example, whereas some consider *The Gospel of Thomas* as unambiguously encratic, others find no evidence for the abhorrence of sex in it.[28] The scholarly views on the sexual attitudes and practices of Valentinian gnostics divert as well. Valentinian positions probably covered a wide spectrum between two extreme points of view. Some chose for celibacy and conceived of marriage as spiritual. A kiss in the ritual of the bridal chamber symbolized the consummation of marriage. Others saw marriage—sexual union included—as a reflection of sacred marriage. This continuum may include the idea that sex is only the means to produce offspring and should lack passion.[29] Professor of Comparative Religion Michael A. Williams also points to a wide range of opinions regarding procreation and states that for some currents producing offspring was even necessary for salvation. He insists that most people were no radicals at all.[30]

---

[25] Ehrman, *Lost Christianities*, 125–126; Williams, 'Demiurgical Myths', 46–57 and King, *Gnosticism*, 12–13, 192–208.

[26] A.Y. Yarbro-Collins, 'The Female Body as Social Space in 1 Timothy', *New Testament Studies* 57 (2011) 155–175, there 164 and Williams, *Rethinking*, 151.

[27] Mahé, 'Ethics', 27–28; Ehrman, *Lost Christianities*, 125–126; Williams, *Rethinking*, 139–187 and King, *Gnosticism*, 12–13, 192–208.

[28] R. Uro, 'Asceticism and Anti-Familial Language in the *Gospel of Thomas*', in: H. Moxnes (ed.), *Constructing Early Christian Families: Family as Social Reality and Metaphor* (New York 1997) 216–234, there 216.

[29] A. DeConick, 'The Great Mystery of Marriage, Sex and Conception in Ancient Valentinian Traditions', *Vigiliae Christianae* 57 (2003) 307–342, there 307–316.

[30] See also page 24; Williams, *Rethinking*, 152–153 and Williams, 'Demiurgical Myths', 46–59.

As far as the communal side of ethics is concerned, the focus on individual, spiritual development does not rule out the significance of communal identity to the people behind the Nag Hammadi texts.[31] Those belonging to Christian churches considered themselves as the spiritually elite <u>within</u> these churches.[32] Regarding their extended social context, different ethical stands can be identified depending on the degree of radical rejection of the material world.[33] The Marcionite emphasis on renunciation of marriage and procreation probably resulted in a high sociocultural tension, whereas other groups like Valentinians and Basilideans accommodated to their social world. Even people with an anticosmic attitude, however, may have experienced and sought less social tension than their "mainstream" Christian critics. In contrast with the opinion of DeConick described above, Williams presumes that gnostic groups, figures, or texts were attempting "to reduce the distance between on the one hand elements of the inherited and Jesus movement traditions, and on the other hand key presuppositions from the wider culture."[34]

Assuming a vast diversity in cosmological, anthropological, and ethical stands, the question remains how the people behind the Nag Hammadi texts were able to feel comfortable in a world modeled by lesser gods and how they related their cosmologies to their wide spectrum of life-styles.[35] Studying the daily life of children related to the Nag Hammadi Library may help to further unravel the anthropological, cosmological, and ethical views.

---

[31] Williams, 'Demiurgical Myths', 46–55.
[32] Ehrman, *Lost Christianities*, 126.
[33] Williams, 'Demiurgical Myths', 37.
[34] See page 14; Williams, *Rethinking*, 101–107, 111–112.
[35] Williams, 'Demiurgical Myths', 59.

1.3. STUDY OBJECTIVES

To the best of my knowledge no scholar has systematically studied the evidence on children and childhood in the Nag Hammadi Library. My main concern is to fill this gap. First, this knowledge will contribute to our general view of children in Antiquity and, more specifically, in the context of the Nag Hammadi Library. Second, it will contribute to our understanding of the interaction between the people behind the Nag Hammadi texts and their cultural environment attached to other cultures and currents, as well as concerning the ethical, cosmological, and anthropological notions expressed in the Library. In this thesis I will focus on the following main questions: What do the Nag Hammadi scriptures say about children? And: How do these views on children relate to those found in previously studied ancient Roman, Christian, and Jewish evidence?

2 METHODOLOGY

This study applies text-critical and historical methods. The interpretation of textual evidence—in this study the texts found in 1945 near Nag Hammadi— definitely provides insight into "the intellectual history of people in a certain era."[1] To what extent Nag Hammadi texts that include children or families in their argumentation show us glimpses of the daily life of children is hard to say. The theological and symbolic meaning probably interacted with the historical facts behind these texts just as Christian theology in Antiquity influenced the lives of devotees as well as, vice versa, their daily affairs affected the expression of their beliefs in texts.[2]

The reciprocal interaction between texts and daily life also applies to familial metaphors and myths that describe families. In his chapter on myth in modern thinking Professor of Religious Studies Robert Segal points to anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss who conceives of myths as means to "understand the world around us." Segal proposes a spectrum spanning from myths to be taken as make-believes to myths that spread "unassailable truths" with in-between countless intermediate forms.[3] We cannot be sure whether readers of the mythological narratives in the Nag Hammadi scriptures believed that the divine family members existed in reality or not. The individuality of the divinities seems to be subordinated to their functions in the narrative[4] and it is conceivable that the readers experienced myths as providing guidelines to their daily family lives and the divine actors as their idols and ideals, whom they wanted to resemble. In that sense, myths affected daily family life. The question as to whether and to what extent this also applies the other way around, namely whether myths reflect aspects of daily family life is also interesting. If this be so, myths including familial affairs would work in two directions to bridge the gap between ideal and day-to-day family life. This complex, two-fold relation

---

[1] Horn, *Childhood*, ix.
[2] Ibidem, ix–xi.
[3] R. Segal, 'Myth', in: R. Segal (ed.), *The Blackwell Companion to the Study of Religion* (Blackwell 2006) 337–355, there 347–355.
[4] I.S. Gilhus, 'Family Structures in Gnostic Religion', in: H. Moxnes (ed.), *Constructing Early Christian Families: Family as Social Reality and Metaphor* (New York 1997) 235–249, there 234–243.

between the daily lives of children and the mythological family members staged in the Nag Hammadi Library, but probably also the familial metaphors, will be taken into account in this study.

Embedding the textual evidence and its interpretations in the ancient sociohistorical contexts of children is indispensable to further unravel the realities of children's lives. Some considerations on the study of history are relevant to mention here. Studying history is a systematic process through which the historian develops images of the past. The researcher asks and pursues questions, identifies and gathers evidence, and thereafter interprets and explains this evidence. Interpretation and explanation of the studied material is more difficult when the sociohistorical context in which the evidence originated and had meaning is (partly) unknown, as is the case with the Nag Hammadi Library.

As a matter of fact, the sociohistorical context of ancient evidence can be imagined with the help of this evidence. For example, an ancient text may refer to a subject that is not necessarily its main theme. This is the case in my field of study, since no Nag Hammadi scripture has "children" or "family" as its main theme. Texts do refer to both topics, for example, in their myths or metaphors. The question is whether these minimal references are representative. According to Professor of Ancient Mediterranean Religions and Cultures Steve Mason "we can confidently build" an image of the ancient past with these "reliable bits." But he also warns us about the pitfalls. First, "reliable bits" blur the investigation if the scholar forgets what these bits actually are, what they are a part of, and what they were meant for. Second, "reliable bits" hinder the investigator to look past the blinkers and thus to deliberate on the "nearly infinite" possible answers to research questions.[5] Historians should not be satisfied with the blinkers but have to pursue their research questions, extensively weigh other possibilities, and categorize evidence based on the probability that they can make "a compelling case" answering their research question. If they lack evidence to

---

[5] S. Mason, *A History of the Jewish War, AD 66–74* (Cambridge 2016) 577–578 and Williams, 'Demiurgical Myths', 20.

decisively favor one explanation then they simply do not know and a search for new evidence commences.[6]

This description of the ideal procedure of an historian is inspiring. I aspire likewise to make some "compelling cases" about the daily lives of children in Antiquity. However, because of the limited size of this thesis I intentionally "use some blinkers" and aim at a first inventory of children in all Nag Hammadi texts without imagining all possibilities or providing a complete insight into all evidence. I intend to give an overview of the available evidence on children in the Nag Hammadi Library and a first move to its interpretation, including the investigation of possible relations with sociohistorical contexts.

Regarding the first study question (chapter 3)—"What do the Nag Hammadi texts say about children?"— I gathered my material by searching in the Nag Hammadi library the key words "child," "infant," "son," "daughter," "offspring," "parent," "father," and "mother." In order to do so I used three different translations of the texts.[7] With a view to reducing bias as much as possible, my study is based on the totality of the sections that I have identified, although for the sake of clarity I will not quote all the references in this thesis. For the interpretation and explanation of the passages I read them as part of the book in which they were included, only then to extrapolate the results relating them to texts proceeding from other Nag Hammadi tractates. I categorized the texts depending on the different life time periods and functions of children. They concern the periods from conception till circumcision, from circumcision till adulthood, of reaching maturity, and the functioning of children as inheritors and as representatives of (im)purity and knowledge.

By means of the second study question (chapter 4)—"How do these views on children relate to those found in previously studied ancient Roman, Christian, and Jewish evidence?"—I will embed the results of the first study question into its contexts. I aim to describe the associations between the daily lives of children

---

[6] S. Mason, *Doing History, Part I of Mason: Orientation to the History of Roman Judaea* (Eugene 2016) 65, 73.
[7] M. Meyer (ed.), *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures, the Revised and Updated Translation of Sacred Gnostic Texts* (New York 2008); J. MacConkey Robinson (ed.), *The Coptic Gnostic Library: a Complete Edition of the Nag Hammadi Codices* (Leiden 2000) and W. Barnstone and M. Meyer (eds.), *The Gnostic Bible, Gnostic Texts of Mystical Wisdom from the Ancient and Medieval Worlds* (Boston 2003).

related to the Nag Hammadi Library and those living in ancient Roman, Jewish, and Christian families.

3 CHILDREN IN THE NAG HAMMADI LIBRARY

3.1. GENERAL REMARKS

All books of the Nag Hammadi Library—except *The Prayer of the Apostle Paul* and the *Excerpt from Plato's Republic*—use at least once one of the words "child," "infant," "son," "daughter," "offspring," "parent," "father," or "mother."

Unfortunately, I have seldom encountered flesh and bone children and parents living together in families in an earthly home in the Library. Real life children reflect in most of the cases daily life childhood in Antiquity, although the corresponding texts may also include idealized views of childhood, that interact with daily life to an uncertain extent as we have seen in Chapter 2.[1] The Nag Hammadi texts abundantly narrate about heavenly family members such as the holy triad of Father, Mother, and Child, the "heavenly Father" and his Child, and other mythological, legendary but also less well-known, families. Of the plentiful references I only quote representative sections and leave out the short encounters with legendary figures—such as Theudas, father of James and husband of Mary[2], and John and James, sons of Zebedee[3]—that supply no additional information. Spiritual children and their spiritual or heavenly parents also enter the stage and children and related topics are used as metaphors to explain the insights of the author. The meanings of familial metaphors need to be clarified as these interact with daily life, possibly both affecting and reflecting it. In the first paragraphs I therefore pay attention to the interpretation of sections that include familial metaphors, sometimes with the help of Plato and his successors, so that in later paragraphs the symbolic meaning is more easily understood.

---

[1] See page 19.
[2] W.P. Funk, *'The Second Revelation of James* NHC V,3; Codex Tchacos 2', in: M. Meyer (ed.), *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures, the Revised and Updated Translation of Sacred Gnostic Texts* (New York 2008) 331–342, there 333.
[3] J.D. Turner and M. Meyer, *'The Secret Book of John* NHC II,1; III,1; IV,1; BG 8502,2', in: M. Meyer (ed.), *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures, the Revised and Updated Translation of Sacred Gnostic Texts* (New York 2008) 103–132, there 107.

3.2. From Conception till Circumcision

Conception

A few Nag Hammadi texts conceive of both the intercourse between male and female and of procreation negatively. *The Testimony of Truth* rejects sexuality because "passion … controls the souls" and considers procreation as a commandment of the defiled Law of the Old Testament.[4] Later, the text rejects the Simonians because they get married and produce children.[5] If we focus solely on having children, leaving aside sexuality and procreation, a different picture arises: the possession of children is desirable and childless mothers are not enviable. For example, the punishment envisaged for adulterous women is to be made "childless with a longing for children."[6]

The Tripartite Tractate sheds some light on the contradiction between the views regarding begetting and having children, since it refers to the "abundant grace that looks to the children but overthrows passion."[7] Children receive a warm welcome, but passionate sex is incompatible with divine knowledge and should be defeated. This view seems to lend support to the scholars who argue that while many Nag Hammadi books reject passion they do not necessarily disapprove sex.[8] Indeed, the author of *The Gospel of Philip* takes sexuality for granted and only warns that "the children a woman brings forth resemble the man she loves." If "her heart is with her lover," thus if the woman loses herself in passion during intercourse, her offspring will resemble the world. But if she contemplates on the Master during intercourse her children will look like him and their souls will contain spiritual seeds.[9] These ideas fit with the opinion, current from Early Antiquity onwards, that the thoughts of parents, especially of

---

[4] B.A. Pearson and M. Meyer, '*The Testimony of Truth* NHC IX,3', in: M. Meyer (ed.), *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures, the Revised and Updated Translation of Sacred Gnostic Texts* (New York 2008) 613–628, 617.
[5] Pearson, '*Testimony of Truth*', 624.
[6] See for example: M. Scopello and M. Meyer, '*The Gospel of Philip* NHC II,3', in: M. Meyer (ed.), *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures, the Revised and Updated Translation of Sacred Gnostic Texts* (New York 2008) 157–186, there 167 and M. Scopello and M. Meyer, '*Exegesis on the Soul* NHC II,6', in: M. Meyer (ed.), *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures, the Revised and Updated Translation of Sacred Gnostic Texts* (New York 2008) 223–234, there 228.
[7] E. Thomassen, '*The Tripartite Tractate* NHC I,5', in: M. Meyer (ed.), *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures, the Revised and Updated Translation of Sacred Gnostic Texts* (New York 2008) 57–102, there 81.
[8] Williams, *Rethinking*, 169 and DeConick, 'Marriage', 316–324.
[9] Scopello, '*Gospel of Philip*', 181.

the mother, while having intercourse determine the characteristics of their child.[10]

On the basis of these ideas DeConick recognizes different types of human marriage in Gnosticism. Passionate sex characterizes the lower, undesirable form of marriage that results in defective offspring. In the highest sort partners have sex but replace passion with contemplation, "some sort of consciousness raising." In between are plentiful intermediate forms imaginable.[11] Contrasting the inferior bodily intercourse, resulting in defective offspring, with spiritual union, resulting in spiritual children, may be rooted in Platonism and Greek mythology. In Plato's *Symposium*, Diotima values the pregnancy of the soul and spiritual offspring higher than material children born from the body. She states that "everyone would choose to have got children such as these rather than the human sort" and clarifies what these children are: "prudence, and virtue in general."[12]

As we have seen above no scholarly consensus is reached on marriage in the Nag Hammadi Library but opinions range from an encratic ascetic life style to marriage with children, including spiritual marriage.[13] Besides a possible wide spectrum of opinions on marriage, different groups may have had different views on marriage. Professor of New Testament Adela Yarbro-Collins states that the Valentinians permitted sexuality as long as the purpose was procreation and not satisfaction of desire, whereas Professor of Religion Ingvild Gilhus says that the Sethian texts are encratic.[14]

In line with the rejection of passion, passion-free ways to procreate are propagated In the Library. The perfect ones "conceive and give birth through a kiss."[15] The idea that life could be given through a kiss was already ancient in Antiquity.[16] *The Gospel of Philip* follows this idea and sees kissing as a superior

---

[10] DeConick, 'Marriage', 331–336.
[11] Idem.
[12] Plato, *Symposium* 209a and 209c, J.A. Brentlinger (ed.), *The Symposium of Plato* (Massachusetts 1970) 88–91.
[13] See page 16.
[14] Roig Lanzillotta, 'Platonism', 354–355; Gilhus, 'Family Structures', 235–249; Yarbro-Collins, 'Female Body', 173–175 and C. Osiek and D. Balch, *Families in the New Testament World, Household and House Churches* (Kentucky 1997) 151–155.
[15] Scopello, '*Gospel of Philip*', 167.
[16] DeConick, 'Marriage', 333–338.

form of intercourse resulting in biological offspring. The author may as well have in mind the "conception" of spiritual children since just before he explains about the generation of "heavenly children" and biological children. The former is superior as it results in children that do not die and therefore "the heavenly person has more children than the earthly."[17] Later, I will go into more detail regarding the distinction between spiritual and biological, or "real" and "unreal" children,[18] but conceiving through kissing, lacking passion, needs attention here.

According to *The Gospel of Philip* the mouth is related to the word and "from the mouth, from which the word comes … they would be nourished from the mouth and would be perfect."[19] In a comparable way *The Dialogue of the Savior* refers to the word that "will come from the Father … and it is productive" directly after Matthew's call to "destroy the works of the female … because they should stop giving birth."[20] The end of giving birth seems to relate to salvation, in the here and now, or in an eschatological future[21], which "is the way of the Father and the Son for the two are one."[22] The urge to stop begetting children may relate to the thought that with each born child, enslaved by Yaldabaoth, it becomes more difficult to save all spiritual elements of this world. To my opinion, *The Gospel of Philip* explains that the biological, inferior way to produce offspring will be replaced, in future, by the way of the Father and his Son/word. This probably does not mean that humans should stop to produce offspring in this material world in order to bring redemption nearer. On the contrary, procreation may be a necessary means to disperse the pneumatic seed and brings redemption nearer.[23]

Other Nag Hammadi texts reject passion while embracing the generation of offspring by just one parent. *The Revelation of Adam* mentions such a child, the "Illuminator." Angels erroneously speculate about his origin considering birth

---

[17] Scopello, '*Gospel of Philip*', 166.
[18] See pages 36–38.
[19] Scopello, '*Gospel of Philip*', 166–167.
[20] M. Scopello and M. Meyer, '*The Dialogue of the Savior* NHC III,5', in: M. Meyer (ed.), *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures, the Revised and Updated Translation of Sacred Gnostic Texts* (New York 2008) 297–312, there 310–311.
[21] Uro, 'Ascetism', 226.
[22] Scopello, '*Dialogue of the Savior*', 310–311.
[23] DeConick, 'Marriage', 340–341; K.C. Lang, 'Images of Women in Early Buddhism and Christian Gnosticism', *Buddhist-Christian Studies* 2 (1982) 94–105, there 95–99 and Gilhus, 'Family Structures', 242–245.

from a virgin womb, becoming pregnant from desire from the flowers, a pregnant, androgynous muse, and a pregnancy resulting from the intercourse between a daughter and her father. The offspring of Seth, however, knows that the Illuminator comes "from a great eternal realm."[24] *The Tripartite Tractate* narrates how the Father produces on his own "a first-born and only Son."[25] The Son of God "exists by the Father having him as a thought" and "it is the Fullness of his fatherhood whereby his abundance becomes procreation."[26]

Whereas procreation without the involvement of a feminine principle is considered in a positive way, the begetting of divine beings by only a mother is regarded inferior.[27] Sophia's parthenogenesis fails because she does not have the qualities and talents of the Holy Mother—indeed an "incomprehensible womb"[28]—nor the consent of the Father. The result is a deformed son, the demiurge Yaldabaoth. The main reason for all this misery is that Sophia started everything out of passion. Passion, again, is the biggest error ever. Many questions remain regarding possible interactions of the views on passion, sex, and procreation in the Library with the daily life of children. For example, what happened with defective children resulting from passionate intercourse? What did it mean for children to be longed for? What did they think of the combination of a warm welcome by their parents and the inferiority of procreation on this earth?

There is another reason for the cosmic disaster resulting from Sophia's actions. The discussion of this reason will also be of use in understanding many sections referring to children that will be investigated in the following paragraphs. Sophia's act was a solitary one and this goes against the reproductive process

---

[24] M. Scopello and M. Meyer, '*The Revelation of Adam* NHC V,5', in: M. Meyer (ed.), *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures, the Revised and Updated Translation of Sacred Gnostic Texts* (New York 2008) 343–356, there 351–355.

[25] Thomassen, '*Tripartite Tractate*', 64–65, 74–75. See also E. Thomassen and M. Meyer, '*Valentinian Exposition* with *Valentinian Liturgical Readings* NHC XI,2', in: M. Meyer (ed.), *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures, the Revised and Updated Translation of Sacred Gnostic Texts* (New York 2008) 663–678, there 668–669.

[26] Thomassen, '*Tripartite Tractate*', 64–65.

[27] For example, M. Meyer, '*On the Origin of the World* NHC II,5; XIII,2; Brit. Lib. Or. 4926(1)', in: M. Meyer (ed.), *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures, the Revised and Updated Translation of Sacred Gnostic Texts* (New York 2008) 199–221, there 204; W.P. Funk, '*The First Revelation of James* NHC V,4', in: M. Meyer (ed.), *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures, the Revised and Updated Translation of Sacred Gnostic Texts* (New York 2008) 321–330, there 328 and Turner, '*Secret Book of John*', 115–118.

[28] J.D. Turner, '*Three Forms of First Thought* NHC XIII,1', in: M. Meyer (ed.), *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures, the Revised and Updated Translation of Sacred Gnostic Texts* (New York 2008) 715–736, there 723.

that needs an active male principle with spiritual qualities, to provide form and movement, and a passive female element, connected with the material, providing matter.[29] Aristotle says that "in all living beings where the male and female are separate, the female is unable by itself to generate offspring and bring it to completion; if it could, the male would have no purpose, and nature does nothing in vain."[30] Parthenogenesis is a spontaneous generation that results in "lowliest among living beings": a miscarriage without soul. [31]

On the Origin of the World describes happy endings to the birth of two "aborted fetuses" without spirit or soul: Yaldabaoth himself assumes "authority over matter" in the end with the help of Sophia (or by stealing from her), and Adam, generated by the aeons without spirit and thereafter without soul, is taken care of by Sophia's daughter Zoe, called Eve, so that he can live.[32] Adam glorifies this kind of birth and motherhood by saying "You have given me life. You will be called the 'Mother of the living.' For she is my mother. She is physician, woman, one who has given birth."[33] Real life commences if something male is given to the defective offspring of a female: soul or spirit including a rational part, the "mind."[34] From this perspective it makes sense that Seth says to Pigeradamas "I am you son and you are my mind, O my father"[35], that the sons of Addai "are to receive from him a portion of his mind,"[36] and that the children of the heavenly Father resemble him in goodness and purity as they "have the mind of the Father."[37]

---

[29] Gilhus, 'Family Structures', 238–239, 242–244 and Lang, 'Images of Women', 95–99.

[30] Z. Pleše, *Poetics of the Gnostic Universe: Narrative and Cosmology in the Apocryphon of John. Nag Hammadi and Manichaean Studies vol. 52* (Leiden 2006) 142-148.

[31] Idem and DeConick, 'Marriage', 322–334.

[32] Meyer, '*On the Origin of the World*', 204, 213–214.

[33] M. Meyer, '*The Nature of the Rulers* NHC II,4', in: M. Meyer (ed.), *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures, the Revised and Updated Translation of Sacred Gnostic Texts* (New York 2008) 187–198, there 193. See also Meyer, '*On the Origin of the World*', 214.

[34] J. Dillon, *The Middle Platonists, a Study of Platonism 80BC to AD 220* (London 1977) 6, 211–214 and L. Roig Lanzillotta, '"Come out of your Country and your Kinsfolk": Allegory and Ascent of the Soul in *The Expository Treatise on the Soul* (NHC 11,6)', in M. Goodman, G. van Kooten, and J. van Ruiten (eds.), *Abraham, the Nations, and the Hagarites* (Leiden 2010) 401–420, there 406, 409.

[35] J.D. Turner, '*The Three Steles of Seth* NHC VII,5', in: M. Meyer (ed.), *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures, the Revised and Updated Translation of Sacred Gnostic Texts* (New York 2008) 523–536, there 526.

[36] Funk, '*First Revelation of James*', 329.

[37] M. Meyer, '*The Second Discourse of Great Seth* NHC VII,2', in: M. Meyer (ed.), *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures, the Revised and Updated Translation of Sacred Gnostic Texts* (New York 2008) 473–486, there 483. See also E. Thomassen, and M. Meyer, '*The Gospel of Truth* NHC I,3; XII,2', in: M. Meyer (ed.), *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures, the Revised and Updated Translation of Sacred Gnostic Texts* (New York 2008) 31–48, there 47.

Male and female principles need to become one, a phrase that is often used in the Nag Hammadi scriptures, to redeem the cosmos. In the beginning all was one until Sophia separated from her husband. In the end "the two will be one" again, just as the heavenly Father and Mother, who is named the "thought of the Father," are one.[38] Scholars debate about the precise meaning of the, sexual or asexual, union that happens in the "bridal chamber." *The Gospel of Philip* summarizes the necessity of union between male and female:

> "If the female had not separated from the male, the female and the male would not have died. The separation of male and female was the beginning of death. Christ came to heal the separation that was from the beginning and reunite the two, in order to give life to those who died through separation and unite them. A woman is united with her husband in the bridal chamber, and those united in the bridal chamber will never be separated again."[39]

Until now I have spoken of procreation, but there is more. *The Gospel of Philip* distinguishes procreation from creation by stating that creation is an open and visible act, whereas procreation is hidden or private, and a mystery.[40] Creation occurs when "the intellect transmits its intelligibility" and matter receiving rationality acquires form.[41] The soul is not only created by God, but he also gives birth to her. Diverse Nag Hammadi texts describe God both as father, thus as one who procreates, as well as creator, similar to Plato's descriptions centuries earlier.[42] Plutarch says: "But the soul, partaking of mind, reason, and harmony, was not only the work of God, but part of him not only made by him, but begot

---

[38] Turner, '*The Secret Book of John*', 103–132; Turner, '*Three Forms of First Thought*', 723; Thomassen, '*Gospel of Truth*', 47; Funk, '*First Revelation of James*', 328; DeConick, 'Marriage', 327–330; Uro, 'Ascetism', 216–220; H.C. Kee, '"Becoming a Child" in the *Gospel of Thomas*', *Journal of Biblical Literature* 82 (1963) 307–314, there 308 and Roig Lanzillotta, 'Allegory and Ascent', 409–410.
[39] Scopello, '*Gospel of Philip*', 175.
[40] Ibidem, 183–184.
[41] L. Roig Lanzillotta, 'Plutarch's Anthropology and Its Influence on His Cosmological Framework', in: M. Meeusen and L. van der Strockt (eds.), *Natural Spectaculars, Aspects of Plutarch's Philosophy of Nature* (Leuven 2015) 179–195, there 186–187.
[42] Plato, *Timaeus*, A.E. Taylor (ed.), *Plato, Timaeus and Critias* 28c and 41a (London 1929) 13–100, there 26, 38; Thomassen, '*Tripartite Tractate*', 82; Thomassen, '*Valentinian Exposition*', 667; Meyer, '*On the Origin of the World*', 213; J.P. Mahé and M. Meyer, '*Excerpt from the Perfect Discourse* NHC VI,8', in: M. Meyer (ed.), *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures, the Revised and Updated Translation of Sacred Gnostic Texts* (New York 2008) 425–436, there 430–434; Turner, '*Secret Book of John*', 107–132 and Scopello, '*Dialogue of the Savior*', 304.

by him."[43] The Hellenized Jew Philo of Alexandria also speaks of God as Father and Maker.[44]

Nag Hammadi books also feature another divine father, Yaldabaoth himself as creator.[45] Associate Professor of Religious Studies Zlatko Pleše arguments that Yaldabaoth "produces deceptive semblances of the model while pretending to have the capacity to reproduce its essential features."[46] In line with these and Plato's views, *The Secret Book of John* distinguishes between the Divine Intellect, who is father/parent and maker, and the craftsman who fabricates—Yaldabaoth or the *demiourgos.*[47]

Antenatal en Postnatal Life

The sections that use perinatal life as metaphors to explain salvation become clearer if we take into account the ideas regarding conception, procreation, and the union of male and female that I have discussed on the previous pages. According to *The Tripartite Tractate* children are born "with body and soul"[48] whereas "aborted fetuses" have a body but not a soul.[49] This fits with the ancient conviction that God creates the soul beforehand and connects it to the body at birth.[50] The soul exists before birth "in the presence of the Father"[51] and can be recognized as "Jesus' kin."[52] For example, Paul has been recognized during antenatal existence as he is the "…blessed one, set apart from your mother's womb."[53] The union between matter and mind takes place at birth. For

---

[43] Roig Lanzillotta, 'Plutarch's Anthropology', 186–187.

[44] S.C. Barton, 'The Relativisation of Family Ties in the Jewish and Greco-Roman Traditions', in: H. Moxnes (ed.), *Constructing Early Christian Families: Family as Social Reality and Metaphor* (New York 1997) 81–102, there 85.

[45] For example, Thomassen, '*Tripartite Tractate*', 85 and M. Scopello and M. Meyer, '*The Concept of Our Great Power* NHC VI,4', in: M. Meyer (ed.), *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures, the Revised and Updated Translation of Sacred Gnostic Texts* (New York 2008) 391–402, there 396–397.

[46] Pleše, *Gnostic Universe*, 274.

[47] Idem and W. Burkert, *Greek Religion* (Victoria 2014) 327.

[48] Thomassen, '*Tripartite Tractate*', 91.

[49] Meyer, '*On the Origin of the World*', 204.

[50] DeConick, 'Marriage', 338–339.

[51] E. Thomassen, '*The Interpretation of Knowledge* NHC XI,1', in: M. Meyer (ed.), *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures, the Revised and Updated Translation of Sacred Gnostic Texts* (New York 2008) 651–662, there 657.

[52] Funk, '*Second Revelation of James*', 337–338. See also M. Scopello and M. Meyer, '*The Secret Book of James* NHC I,2', in: M. Meyer (ed.), *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures, the Revised and Updated Translation of Sacred Gnostic Texts* (New York 2008) 19–30, there 30.

[53] M. Scopello and M. Meyer, '*The Revelation of Paul* NHC V,2', in: M. Meyer (ed.), *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures, the Revised and Updated Translation of Sacred Gnostic Texts* (New York 2008) 313–320, there 317–318.

example, the author of *The Treatise on Resurrection* writes that "Although once you did not exist in flesh, you took on flesh when you entered this world."[54] *The Gospel of Truth* describes fetuses "…who were within a mature person but who knew that they had not yet received form or been given a name" and continues to tell that those fetuses have not yet received knowledge of their origins: "The Father brings into being those who before coming into being were ignorant of the one who made them."[55] In the same way *The Tripartite Tractate* describes that the unborn child "has what it needs without ever having seen the one who sowed it" but after birth it "finds oneself in the light and is able to see one's parents."[56] Excluded from the union between soul and body, mind and matter, however, is the chaos of matter, symbolized by the afterbirth, that "flows out" after the birth of a child.[57]

Breastfeeding, a main aspect of early infancy, also symbolizes the attainment of knowledge about divine origins. Jesus defines drinking infants as "those who enter the kingdom,"[58] and one of the features of the Savior is that he "drinks from the milk of the mother."[59] *The Testimony of Truth* is quite negative about sexuality, but especially declines "sexual intercourse while they are still nursing,"[60] pointing to the incompatibility of knowledge of the divine and passion. Breastfeeding also binds together two boys, now grown-ups, that "were both nourished with the same milk."[61] The mother calls the two "brothers" although it is not clear if they are biologically related or if the mother is a wet nurse. The mother's milk, representing the coming to knowledge, may connect the two in a spiritual sense.

Other aspects of early childhood symbolize in Nag Hammadi texts the binding to the world of the demiurge and the loss of knowledge regarding one's

---

[54] E. Thomassen and M. Meyer, '*The Treatise on Resurrection* NHC I,4', in: M. Meyer (ed.), *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures, the Revised and Updated Translation of Sacred Gnostic Texts* (New York 2008) 49–58, there 54.
[55] Thomassen, '*Gospel of Truth*', 41.
[56] Thomassen, '*Tripartite Tractate*', 66.
[57] Meyer, '*On the Origin of the World*', 204.
[58] M. Meyer, '*The Gospel of Thomas* with the Greek *Gospel of Thomas* NHC II,2; P. Oxy. 1, 654, 655; Hippolytus, *Refutation of All Heresies*', in: M. Meyer (ed.), *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures, the Revised and Updated Translation of Sacred Gnostic Texts* (New York 2008) 133–156, there 142.
[59] Scopello, '*Concept of Our Great Power*', 397.
[60] Pearson, '*Testimony of Truth*', 625.
[61] Funk, '*Second Revelation of James*', 336.

divine origins. The first aspect is the circumcision of Jewish boys that takes place on the eighth day of life and confirms the bond with the Law of Moses.[62] Jesus' teaching that "the person old in days will not hesitate to ask a little child seven days old about the place of life, and that person will live"[63] may mean that a one day older and circumcised child does not have knowledge about the place of life anymore. Regarding this place Jesus explains that "everyone who has known oneself" will resemble it.[64] The bond with the Law of the demiurge makes one to forget one's divine origins. According to *The Gospel of Thomas* circumcision is not desirable because "if it were useful, children's fathers would produce them already circumcised from their mothers."[65]

Another aspect of childhood is used to explain the saving knowledge. Little children are characterized as being without shame of their nakedness. The author of *The Gospel of Thomas* calls the disciples to look like children regarding this shamelessness so they "will see the child of the living one."[66] The best thing to do is to trample your clothes. This symbolizes the distancing from the material world. Note the relation of shamelessness, implying asexuality, with the rejection of passion!

Summarized, the Nag Hammadi texts that explain the gaining or losing of saving knowledge by use of the perinatal period provide us with some insights and questions about unborn children, birth, and newborn infants in daily life. The extensive use of childhood metaphors suggests the importance of children, also in their perinatal period. Many questions arise: Did the people behind the Library think that flesh and bone newborns knew where they came from? Did they believe that children lost this knowledge during infancy? What was the worth of an unborn child if this was not supposed to have a soul? How did these views influence practices of abortion, miscarriages, and funeral rituals? How these opinions reflected and were implemented into daily life affairs, such as birth

---

[62] Horn, *Childhood*, 21.
[63] Meyer, '*Gospel of Thomas*', 139.
[64] Scopello, '*Dialogue of the Savior*', 305.
[65] Meyer, '*Gospel of Thomas*', 146.
[66] Meyer, '*Gospel of Thomas*', 142–145.

practices, abortion, infant death, burial rituals, and the care for newborns remains uncertain.

3.3. FROM CIRCUMCISION TILL REACHING ADULTHOOD

Children in the Household

In our times, organizations that work in disaster areas inform us ceaselessly how children try to survive out there. Imagining the sorrows of children is a powerful instrument in touching hearts because we, twenty-first century people, consider children the most precious and vulnerable individuals on earth. Does the author of *The Paraphrase of Shem* try to shock his contemporaries in a similar way with his prophesy that in the End of Times five generations will eat their own children?[67] And what should we think about the author empathically reacting to the idea of the biblical God punishing children because of the sins of their parents by questioning: "What kind of a god is this?"[68] The relation both authors make between children and adverse circumstances assumes that they considered children as a most precious possession. The question is how this related to daily life. What was the position of children? And how did these texts influence their daily life: were children that heard these texts aware of their importance, or did the texts contribute to their awareness? These questions are hard to answer because, as far as I know, no children in Antiquity have written their deepest feelings in diaries and, for sure, these diaries are not in the Nag Hammadi Library. However, the Nag Hammadi texts do refer to the positions of children.

Some texts refer to the importance of children in a general and indirect way, for example, those that narrate the story about God who urges Noah to hide in the ark together with his—in this order—children, the animals, and the birds.[69] Another example is the list of possessions of a householder in *The Gospel of Philip* that describes the higher ranking of children compared to slaves. The list

---

[67] M. Roberge, '*The Paraphrase of Shem* NHC VII,1', in: M. Meyer (ed.), *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures, the Revised and Updated Translation of Sacred Gnostic Texts* (New York 2008) 437–472, there 468.
[68] Pearson, '*Testimony of Truth*', 623.
[69] For example Meyer, '*Nature of the Rulers*', 195.

explains how the disciples of God should "examine the condition of each person's soul." Children—owners of a rational soul as we have seen—are listed as number one and get, together with slaves, cattle, dogs, and pigs, adjusted to their need their food. For children this is "what is complete."[70]

Besides the symbolic reading of the texts, the hierarchical relations between children and slaves supposedly reflected daily life and may also have confirmed the practice of slavery. Interestingly, from a twenty-first century perspective, these texts define children as possession and we may ask ourselves how this related to daily life. Were children a precious possession, or did they have just a slightly higher position compared to slaves and animals?

The Nag Hammadi texts also distinguish children with different positions within a household: first-borns, biological, illegitimate, and stepchildren, and orphans. The frequent appearance of these children as metaphors already seems to emphasizes their importance but also reveals aspects of daily life. First-born sons probably had a privileged position just as the first-born divinities who existed "before the All" and the Master who is the "first son who was conceived."[71] Legal but not biological stepchildren of a male person may have had an inferior place in the family hierarchy. Although these children call the biological children of their stepfather their siblings, their possessions symbolize vices such as "exalted passions, life's pleasures, hateful jealousies, boastful experiences, reproachful words."[72] The merit of a biological relation with a father is also apparent in the case of orphans. A child already becomes an orphan when the father has died, but the mother remains.[73] They have to be approached with compassion for "if you care for orphans, you will be parent of many children and God's loved one."[74] Orphans represent people ignorant of the Father and should be cherished so that they receive the knowledge.

---

[70] Scopello, '*Gospel of Philip*', 183.
[71] For example, Turner, '*Three Forms of First Thought*', 721; Funk, '*Second Revelation of James*', 335 and Thomassen, '*Interpretation of Knowledge*', 659–660.
[72] M. Scopello and M. Meyer, '*Authoritative Discourse* NHC VI,3*'*, in: M. Meyer (ed.), *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures, the Revised and Updated Translation of Sacred Gnostic Texts* (New York 2008) 379–390, there 383–388.
[73] Scopello, '*Gospel of Philip*', 161.
[74] P.H. Poirier and M. Meyer, '*The Sentences of Sextus* NHC XII,1', in: M. Meyer (ed.), *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures, the Revised and Updated Translation of Sacred Gnostic Texts* (New York 2008) 705–713, there 711.

Children born out of wedlock have a negative connotation that, at least, has not improved the situation of these children. Not only children of adulterous mothers are regarded inferior, but also those born to adulterous fathers. For example, in the averse description of Solomon as builder of the Temple of Jerusalem his father David's adultery plays a central role.[75] References to adulterous mothers are far more plentiful and enhanced. *The Exegesis on the Soul* narrates about the soul that prostitutes herself. Her children are "mute, blind, and sickly" and do not receive any pity "for they are children of prostitution. Their mother played the whore and shamed her children." The children are urged to accuse their mother.[76] *The Gospel of Thomas* brings to stage "the child of the whore" that "knows the father and the mother."[77] This possibly opposes the ideal of "making the two into one" and may relate to the binding to physical bonds.[78] We have already come across another reference to adultery and the resulting children in *The Gospel of Philip*.[79] These children resemble the man the mother loves and are, depending on the chosen partner, symbols of purity or impurity.[80] Although the sexual imagery in these sections is strong, it probably does not point to sexual activities as such, but symbolizes the spiritual themes of the soul's alienation due to the influence of the senses and passions and of the redemption process.[81]

The Nag Hammadi Library does not reveal much about the positions of boys and girls, but the translation of Meyer's may be helpful because of its use of "gender inclusive language."[82] The words for children that do not refer to gender are translated as "child." By doing so the translation shows that the texts mostly speak of children, and not of sons. An exception is the first-born who is in most cases a son. Although very preliminarily, this may indicate that gender differences have not been a very significant topic to the authors of the Nag

---

[75] Pearson, '*Testimony of Truth*', 626.
[76] Scopello, '*Exegesis on the Soul*', 227–228.
[77] Meyer, '*Gospel of Thomas*',152.
[78] Meyer, '*Gospel of Thomas*', 152 n183.
[79] Scopello, '*Gospel of Philip*', 181.
[80] See page 41–42.
[81] Roig Lanzillotta, 'Platonism', 349–353; Gilhus, 'Family Structures', 239–249 and DeConick, 'Marriage', 320.
[82] Meyer, 'Introduction', 11.

Hammadi texts. To what extent this reflected and affected daily life gender differences needs further studies.

In conclusion, children were highly valued and different kinds of children held different positions in the household. But how did they relate to other important members of the household, their parents? What do the plentiful metaphors and myths including family members tell us about these relations? And how do these myths and metaphors relate to earthly familial bonds?

Parent-Child Relations

Real and Unreal Families

Nag Hammadi authors viewed relations with earthly parents or children as inferior reflections of those with heavenly parents or children. They argue that when we hear the word "father" we think of our earthly, thus unreal, father although it actually refers to our real F̲ather. *The Interpretation of Knowledge* summarizes this as follows: "while we were in the darkness, we used to call many people 'father,' because we were ignorant of the Father."[83] *The Gospel of Philip* argues that the words "father" and "son" exemplify that "the names of worldly things are utterly deceptive, for they turn the heart from what is real to what is unreal."[84] An angel is not sure if Zostrianos is aware of this deception as he wonders if Zostrianos thinks that his earthly father Yolaos is his real father.[85] Regarding their main task, the name-giving of their child, parents are replaced by the heavenly Father, because "only the Name that one receives from the Father is the proper Name, and this is unequal to the name one receives from his parents."[86]

Other texts specify the differences between real and unreal family members. For example, whereas the unreal, earthly father is born, "the only Father and God in the true sense … is the one who has been born by no one."[87]

---

[83] Thomassen, '*Interpretation of Knowledge*', 657.
[84] Scopello, '*Gospel of Philip*',162.
[85] J.D. Turner, '*Zostrianos* NHC VIII,1', in: M. Meyer (ed.), *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures, the Revised and Updated Translation of Sacred Gnostic Texts* (New York 2008) 537–584, there 547.
[86] Thomassen, '*Gospel of Truth*', 46.
[87] Thomassen, '*Tripartite Tractate*', 62. See also Meyer, '*Gospel of Thomas*', 141; M. Scopello and M. Meyer, '*Eugnostos the Blessed* NHC III,3; V,1 ', in: M. Meyer (ed.), *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures, the Revised and Updated Translation of Sacred Gnostic Texts* (New York 2008) 271–282, there 277 and M.

Jesus distinguishes his biological relatives from his real family members: "who do the will of my Father are my brothers and my mother."[88] If we view submission to the Father's will as a rational act, rationality is the distinguishing characteristic of real family members. Finally, real parents provide their offspring with real life and knowledge as the texts suggests in which Jesus says that his true Mother gave him life[89], that "your father is not my Father but my Father has become a father to you,"[90] and that "when you know yourselves, then you will be known, and you will understand that you are children of the living Father."[91]

One's heavenly, real children are regarded as superior to one's biological, unreal children, for example in the sections from *The Gospel of Philip* and *Exegesis on the Soul* previously quoted.[92] Real children may be understood as new proselytes, the "children coming after us,"[93] but also as virtues, the "children as accomplishments."[94] Professor of Philosophy Kenneth Waters emphasizes the idea of offspring as virtues and vices in Nag Hammadi texts in line with what we have seen in the speech of Diotima in Plato's *Symposium*.[95] Socrates also discusses the pregnancy of the soul with Theaetetus and he discloses to him that he practices the art of a midwife, assisting at the birth of real children.[96]

Thus, diverse Nag Hammadi scriptures deny that biological family ties are "real." These biological bonds are connected to the material world and lead to nothing but trouble as can be understood from the narration about Jesus hanging on the cross. His father Joseph made the cross from the trees planted in his garden, on this material world.[97] These ideas conceivably influenced earthly relations between parents and children towards a devaluation. Serious

---

Scopello and M. Meyer, '*The Wisdom of Jesus Christ* NHC III,4; BG 8502,3; P. Oxy. 1081 ', in: M. Meyer (ed.), *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures, the Revised and Updated Translation of Sacred Gnostic Texts* (New York 2008) 283–296, there 290.

[88] Meyer, '*Gospel of* Thomas',151–152.

[89] Meyer, '*Gospel of* Thomas', 151–152.

[90] Funk, '*Second Revelation of James*', 336. See also Scopello, '*Gospel of Philip*', 164.

[91] Meyer, '*Gospel of* Thomas', 137.

[92] See page 24.

[93] Scopello, '*Secret Book of James*', 30.

[94] Scopello, '*Gospel of Philip*', 177, 179.

[95] See page 25 and K.L. Waters, 'Saved through Childbearing: Virtues as Children in 1 Timothy 2:11–15', *Journal of Biblical Literature* 123 (2004) 703–735, there 713–716

[96] Plato, *Theaetetus* 149c–151d, C. Rowe (ed.), *Plato: Theaetetus and Sophist* (Cambridge 2015) 1–98, there 10–13 and Roig Lanzillotta, 'Platonism', 345–349.

[97] Scopello, '*Gospel of Philip*', 177–178.

consequences for family life may have followed if the texts that urge to disconnect one's unreal, biological family ties had been taken literally.[98] The symbolic reading of these sections, aiming to illustrate the true identity of a disciple and Jesus' heavenly origin, does not rule out the possibility of a negative impact on earthly family relations. The question remains if people really decided to radically cut their family bonds.[99]

Spiritual families may also have inspired earthly families and have possibly led to a positive recharacterization of family life. The few parables that use earthly families to exemplify positive issues may have contributed to a revaluation of the biological family as well. For example, the author of a parable in *Authoritative Discourse* relates an earthly father with the place of knowledge and describes stepchildren as inferior company.[100] In order to enhance our understanding of redefined aspects of family life, we now turn to very significant contributors to the life of children: their parents.

Characteristics of Parent-Child Relations

In this paragraph I have a closer look at the features of fathers and mothers and of the relations with their children. I include delineations of divine parental character traits and of divine parent-child relations as these bring out ideal aspects of parenthood that earthly parents and children possibly aspired, leading to a recharacterization of parent-child interactions, or that reflected daily life.

An important feature of the relation between fathers and children is obedience. For example, the author of *Eugnostos the Blessed* explains the difference between father and son as a difference in power.[101] In *The Discourse on the Eighth and the Ninth* a son emphasizes his obedience to his father several times.[102] Obedience is also important in mythological father-child relations.

---

[98] For example, Scopello, '*Secret Book of James*', 25.
[99] Uro, 'Ascetism', 216–220 and Gilhus, 'Family Structures', 239–241.
[100] Scopello, '*Authoritative Discourse*', 384.
[101] Scopello, '*Eugnostos*', 278. See also Scopello, '*Wisdom of Jesus Christ*', 291.
[102] J.P. Mahé and M. Meyer, '*The Discourse on the Eighth and the Ninth* NHC VI,6', in: M. Meyer (ed.), *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures, the Revised and Updated Translation of Sacred Gnostic Texts* (New York 2008) 409–418, there 413–414, 418.

Several texts call to "do the will of the Father."[103] Obedience even characterizes the relation between another father, namely the demiurge, and his children.[104]

In line with the notion of biological family ties as unreal, some texts call to disobey earthly parents because this obedience does not match with knowing the heavenly Father. For example, Jesus insists that "whoever does not hate father and mother cannot be a disciple of me."[105] This leads to conflicts between a father and his son and "…they will stand alone."[106] Obedience to Jesus is incompatible with obedience to earthly parents.[107] Indeed, one may leave, and even curse, his parents after coming to knowledge about the highest God as did Sabaoth, son of Yaldabaoth.[108]

The reason to obey the Father comprises his sweetness and his goodness.[109] Love and affection are considered part of both earthly and mythological parent-child relations. A teaching father says "My child, let us embrace in love,"[110] and *The Prayer of Thanksgiving* speaks of "fatherly kindness," affection, and love.[111] The divine Father himself approaches his children in a caring way. *The Gospel of Philip* states that "the children of God are precious in the eyes of the Father."[112] They are his fragrance whom he loves and disperses everywhere.[113] The heavenly Father has compassion, is not wrathful but kind, loving, caring, good, and sweet,[114] lacks jealousy,[115] and he reaches his helping hand.[116] In line with these fatherly characteristics, the archon Adonaios treats

---

[103] For example, Thomassen, '*Interpretation of Knowledge*', 651–662; Thomassen, '*Valentinian Exposition*', 671–672; Thomassen, '*Gospel of Truth*', 43 and Scopello, '*Secret Book of James*', 25, 28.
[104] M. Meyer, '*The Revelation of Peter* NHC VII,3', in: M. Meyer (ed.), *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures, the Revised and Updated Translation of Sacred Gnostic Texts* (New York 2008) 487–498, there 492.
[105] Meyer, '*Gospel of Thomas*', 145, 151.
[106] Ibidem, 141.
[107] Scopello, '*Secret Book of James*', 25.
[108] Meyer, '*Nature of the Rulers*', 197. See also Meyer, '*On the Origin of the World*', 207.
[109] Thomassen, '*Gospel of Truth*', 44.
[110] Mahé, '*The Eighth and the Ninth*', 416.
[111] Mahé, J.P. and M. Meyer, '*The Prayer of Thanksgiving* NHC VI,7', in: M. Meyer (ed.), *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures, the Revised and Updated Translation of Sacred Gnostic Texts* (New York 2008) 419–424, there 422.
[112] Scopello, '*Gospel of Philip*', 169–170.
[113] Thomassen, '*Gospel of Truth*', 44.
[114] Funk, '*Second Revelation of James*', 337, 339; Thomassen, '*Gospel of Truth*', 42, 44; Scopello, '*Secret Book of James*', 26; Turner, '*Zostrianos*', 582; J.D. Turner, '*Marsanes* NHC X', in: M. Meyer (ed.), *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures, the Revised and Updated Translation of Sacred Gnostic Texts* (New York 2008) 629–650, there 634 and Meyer, '*Second Discourse of Great Seth*', 477.
[115] Thomassen, '*Tripartite Tractate*', 70 and Thomassen, '*Gospel of Truth*', 37.
[116] M. Meyer, '*The Letter of Peter to Philip* NHC VIII,2; Codex Tchacos 1', in: M. Meyer (ed.), *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures, the Revised and Updated Translation of Sacred Gnostic Texts* (New York 2008) 585–594, there 592 and Scopello, '*Exegesis on the Soul*', 227–228.

James graciously when he thinks that James is his son.[117] An intense and emotional bond is also expressed in the closeness or even unity of fathers and children.[118] The children of truth are "close to the Father" or translated otherwise "in the bosom of the Father."[119] If a child is not close to the heavenly Father he will be like "the grapevine … planted away from the Father. Since it is not strong, it will be pulled up by its roots and will perish."[120]

Another issue regarding parent-child relations is intergenerational continuity. Zostrianos' proclamations about "the god of my fathers," and that he "would praise them all, since my forefathers and ancestors who sought found" suggest the importance of continuity of religion and mimicking parents.[121] The author of *The Tripartite Tractate* highly esteems the Hebrew preservation of "the testimony of the fathers."[122] We can also interpret Jesus' cryptic statements in *The Secret Book of James* in this light, where he says that "a father does not need a son, but it is the son who needs a father."[123] This section may relate to text saying that "a father produces children, but a child cannot produce children. One who has just been born cannot be a parent."[124] What the son needs is knowledge of his roots, knowledge of who his father is, so that he can spread this knowledge. When he, in his turn, grows up he can have children and disperse his knowledge. Norea and Sophia, being adults, similarly pass on their knowledge to their children.[125] The use of genealogies in the Nag Hammadi scriptures also points to the importance of family continuity and memory, but then with regard to the spiritual family.[126] On the other hand, the Nag Hammadi texts also feature fathers that should be avoided, such as "the father of mammon who is also the father of sexual intercourse."[127] The negative traits of father Yaldabaoth, like jealousy towards his own children and injustice, are not to be imitated.[128]

---

[117] Funk, '*First Revelation of James*', 329.
[118] For example, Scopello, '*Gospel of Philip*', 162–163, 165, 178 and Scopello, '*Secret Book of James*', 24.
[119] Meyer, '*Second Discourse of Great Seth*', 486.
[120] Meyer, '*Gospel of Thomas*', 144.
[121] Turner, '*Zostrianos*', 547.
[122] Thomassen, '*Tripartite Tractate*', 89–90.
[123] Scopello, '*Secret Book of James*', 27.
[124] Scopello, '*Gospel of Philip*', 166.
[125] Meyer, '*Nature of the Rulers*', 197 and Scopello, '*Wisdom of Jesus Christ*', 292–293.
[126] Gilhus, 'Family Structures', 241–242.
[127] Pearson, '*Testimony of Truth*', 625.
[128] For example, Meyer, '*On the Origin of the World*', 207–208 and Meyer, '*Second Discourse of Great Seth*', 484.

The texts hardly ever refer to the bond between mothers and their children. Some sections point to the importance of mothers, for example, the references to the divine Mother as "love."[129] *The Gospel of Philip* describes the relation between soul and spirit as that between child and mother[130] and *The Second Discourse of Great Seth* associates motherhood with truth and spirit.[131] Not connected to the mother-child relation are the associations between mothers and negative features, like disobedience, foolishness, and ignorance.[132] These featuring is to be understood in the light of the connection between femaleness and matter, but still I wonder how children viewed the flesh and bone females around them as they learned about these Nag Hammadi metaphors.

It is more difficult to unravel the interactions between earthly parents and the more divine features of divine parents. Did earthly fathers strive to become Fathers of light, truth, and the All, or majestic, powerful, immortal, preexistent, aiming at salvation, and residing "in the heavens."[133] Were mothers searching for ways to become Mothers of glory, truth, life, wisdom, and knowledge, or aimed to be light, invisible, and to complete the All?[134] Earthly fathers may have felt encouraged by the often encountered combination of the titles "God" and "Father,"[135] and inspired by the combinations of other functions of God, like friend [136] and "guardian of virginity."[137]

---

[129] For example, Scopello, '*Eugnostos*', 279 and Scopello, '*Wisdom of Jesus Christ*', 292.

[130] Scopello, '*Gospel of Philip*', 176.

[131] Meyer, '*Second Discourse of Great Seth*', 485.

[132] For example, Meyer, '*Letter of Peter to Philip*', 590, 593; Scopello, '*Gospel of Philip*', 184 and B.A. Pearson, '*The Teachings of Silvanus* NHC VII,4 ', in: M. Meyer (ed.), *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures, the Revised and Updated Translation of Sacred Gnostic Texts* (New York 2008) 499–522, there 507.

[133] For example, Thomassen, '*Gospel of Truth*', 41–42; Meyer, '*Nature of the Rulers*', 191–192; Meyer, '*Letter of Peter to Philip*', 589–591; Turner, '*Marsanes*', 634; Meyer, '*On the Origin of the World*', 219 and Funk, '*First Revelation of James*', 330.

[134] For example, Turner, '*Three Forms of First Thought*', 723, 728; Scopello, '*Dialogue of the Savior*', 310–311; Turner, '*Secret Book of John*', 126–127; Scopello, '*Gospel of Philip*', 180; Meyer, '*Second Discourse of Great Seth*', 477 and Pearson, '*Teachings of Silvanus*', 507.

[135] For example, Funk, '*Second Revelation of James*', 341; Turner, '*Secret Book of John*', 108 and Mahé, '*Prayer of Thanksgiving*', 422.

[136] Pearson, '*Teachings of Silvanus*', 510.

[137] Scopello, '*Exegesis on the Soul*', 228.

Education

In modern society, school is a very important social context for children. What then does the Nag Hammadi Library say about education?

The children of the householder receive food adjusted to their needs.[138] If the food symbolizes the instruction of children, the text suggests education on differentiated levels. This very small bit of evidence is the only reference to general education during childhood in the Nag Hammadi scriptures. Spiritual education, however, is an important theme. *The First Revelation of James* gives a clue regarding spiritual instruction of children. The legendary founder of Syrian Christianity, Addai, has to share the things revealed to him with his son. The son needs to keep the revelation "within him until he is seventeen years old"[139] which suggests that his father shares his revelation with him somewhere during his childhood.

Most texts describe a spiritual father instructing his spiritual and probably adult son, who may also be his biological son. Fathers instruct sons about diverse spiritual and moral subjects—that are indeed not very suitable to teach young children—and encourage them to "listen, my son." Allogenes is "commissioned … to disclose to you [his son Messos] the matters that were proclaimed before me."[140] Another teacher instructs his student, referred to as "child," regarding moral subjects, evil and Christ, and returning to the divine nature. The pupil is urged to "accept for yourself the education and the teaching … joyfully" because afterwards "you will receive a crown of education by your guiding principle." If he lives like he has been taught he "will prevail over all your enemies."[141] In *The Revelation of Adam* and in *Allogenes the Stranger* their fathers tell Seth and Messos, respectively, about their apocalypses, in *The Treatise on Resurrection* his father tells Rheginus about resurrection. In *The Discourse on the Eighth and the Ninth* a father instructs his son about the prayers necessary to pass through the last stages of spiritual perfection. A letter directed to Rheginus clearly points to a spiritual father-son relationship as the father says:

---

[138] Scopello, '*Gospel of Philip*', 183.
[139] Funk, '*First Revelation of James*', 329.
[140] J.D. Turner, '*Allogenes the Stranger* NHC XI,3', in: M. Meyer (ed.), *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures, the Revised and Updated Translation of Sacred Gnostic Texts* (New York 2008) 679–700, there 700.
[141] Pearson, '*Teachings of Silvanus*', 505.

"what I have received through the generosity of my Lord Jesus Christ I have taught you and your brothers and sisters, who are my children … I greet you and those who love you with the love of family."[142]

If spiritual master-pupil relations were part of childhood education does not become clear from the Nag Hammadi texts. That spiritual and moral instruction, at least of adults, was considered important is beyond doubt.

In conclusion, the Nag Hammadi Library pays attention to different kinds of children in the household and their relations to their parents, but only slightly touches the theme of education. Children represent different types of humans with or without knowledge of Father. It is not hard to imagine that the positions of the different kind of children in the family is strongly rooted in but also affected daily life: biological children stand higher in the pecking order than stepchildren, an adulterous conception determines the nature of children born outside a legal marriage, and orphans need protection.

The different positions of children suggest different roles of the parents. The bond with the father determines the position of children with his biological children holding the highest position. There are only few references to mother-child relations. The role of a child's gender and the position of enslaved children scarcely comes to the fore. Features of father-child relations are obedience, love and affection, and intergenerational continuity. The Nag Hammadi texts may have given rise to a recharacterization of family bonds regarding all these aspects. A devaluation of daily family life may have resulted from the inferior position of the earthly family compared to the divine and spiritual, but on the other hand, the idealizations of family life may have inspired earthly family members.

---

[142] Thomassen, '*Treatise on Resurrection*', 55.

3.4. REACHING MATURITY

Childhood ends when adulthood begins. The Nag Hammadi texts give hardly any clues regarding this transition. *The Concept of Our Great Power* mentions that a child comes to maturity, but not at which age.[143] The son of Addai has to keep the revelation of his father "within him until he is seventeen years old," suggesting this being a transitional age.[144]

Marriage is an aspect of the end of childhood. Metaphors connecting marriage to salvation may have caused people to appreciate marriage higher and to aim at reaching the ultimate union by practicing contemplation during intercourse or having a spiritual marriage. But did a man's ties with his parents loosen in adulthood as "a man will leave his father and mother and will join himself to his wife?"[145] Did the bond between a woman and her parents remain strong as a bride only shows herself to "her father, her mother, the friend of the bridegroom, and the attendants of the bridegroom?"[146]

In summary, the Nag Hammadi texts provide no conclusive information regarding the end of childhood. The age of seventeen may mark the transition to adulthood. The texts that describe marriage can be interpreted symbolically but may also have interacted with daily life.

---

[143] Scopello, '*Concept of Our Great Power*', 399.
[144] Funk, '*First Revelation of James*', 329.
[145] Turner, '*Secret Book of John*', 126–127.
[146] Scopello, '*Gospel of Philip*', 184.

3.5. Children as Inheritors

Inheriting is a metaphor of, again, the attainment of saving knowledge and used in many sections.[147] Several of these texts shed light on inheritance practices in daily life.

If the Soul chooses "to inherit with the stepchildren" she will forget "her siblings and her father, and sensual pleasures and sweet things [will] deceive her" besides that she will "fall into drinking too much wine." In doing this she has "abandoned knowledge." The gentle child, however, does not forget her father, but inherits from him. She even tries to duplicate her inheritance—which means that she will disperse her knowledge—and "the father rejoices over his child, because everyone praises the father on account of the child."[148] The metaphorical meaning is obvious, but the narrative also suggests that children in daily life were heirs to their fathers.

Several texts suggest the right of sons, but not of daughters, to inherit from their parents.[149] In the mythological story of Noah, his sons get their part of the earth.[150] Two parables in *The Gospel of Thomas* name sons as heirs of their father's belongings.[151] This right is not applicable to all male children of a household. Stepchildren cannot be heirs to their stepfather "but they will inherit from their mother alone."[152] Slaves do not inherit at all, as I understand from the distinction between slaves and children comprising that "a slave … does not seek the master's estate … but a child claims the father's inheritance."[153]

The moment of handling over the possessions from father to son is variable. *The Gospel of Philip* indicates that the possessions of a father belong to his son but that the father hands them over only when he has become an adult.[154] *Authoritative Discourse* suggests that this occurs while the father is still alive as "the gentle child inherits with joy from the father, and the father rejoices

---

[147] Meyer, '*Letter of Peter to Philip*', 591; Scopello, '*Secret Book of James*', 27; Turner, '*Three Forms of First Thought*', 733 and Meyer, '*Second Discourse of Great Seth*', 482.
[148] Scopello, '*Authoritative Discourse*', 384.
[149] For example, Funk, '*Second Revelation of James*', 336.
[150] Scopello M, '*Revelation of Adam*', 349.
[151] Meyer, '*Gospel of Thomas*', 148, 152.
[152] Scopello, '*Authoritative Discourse*', 383–384.
[153] Scopello, '*Gospel of Philip*', 161.
[154] Ibidem, 167.

over his child."[155] The moment of handling over the possessions may also have been after the father's death as suggested by the story of the man who asks Jesus' help to get his share of his father's inheritance. If the father was still alive, would the man not have asked his father for help or at least mentioned his father as part of the problem?[156] The texts leave us indecisive about the moment of handling over the inheritance. Other questions remain as well. Were mothers allowed to pass their possessions on to their children? Or did the texts contribute to such a practice? Could stepchildren could inherit only inherit from their biological mother? And what about daughters?

In conclusion, Nag Hammadi texts frequently use the inheritance of parental possessions by children as a symbol of salvation, but also provide evidence that sons were heirs to their parents, that children could inherit from their biological mother but not from their stepfather but, while slaves were no heirs at all. The moment of handling over possessions may have been variable as some sections suggest that parents did this during life and some point to inheriting after the parent's death.

3.6. CHILDREN AS REPRESENTATIVES

Children as Representatives of (Im)purity

In the previous pages we have encountered children pictured as being close to the Father. These children representing purity and perfection include in the first place the Holy Child. He is the ideal representation of purity, "the Perfect Child" to whom hymns are sung and he is certainly not inferior to the Father and the Mother of the Holy Triad.[157]

Other children also represent purity. Adamas passes on his incorruptibility to his son Seth and the following generations.[158] God and his child resemble each other regarding positive character traits as "the one is great, the other is next to

---

[155] Scopello, 'Authoritative Discourse', 384.
[156] Meyer, Gospel of Thomas', 149.
[157] For example, Turner, 'Zostrianos', 546 and J.D. Turner and M. Meyer, 'The Holy Book of the Great Invisible Spirit NHC III,2; IV,2', in: M. Meyer (ed.), The Nag Hammadi Scriptures, the Revised and Updated Translation of Sacred Gnostic Texts (New York 2008) 247–270, there 267–268.
[158] Ibidem, 258, 260.

the great."[159] Children of the divine Father are recognized by "motion and rest."[160] Motion may point to the movement of the mind that results in rest, which is the perfect union with the female. Children are also described as accomplishments that "come into being from a time of rest," and offspring as "incorruptible." [161] *The First Revelation of James* vividly indicates that in precarious times—when the toll collectors try to steal away your soul—it is life-saving to emphasize your purity that is inherent to your status as son of the heavenly Father.[162] If the purity of a child stems from its pre-sexual nature, the "becoming of a child" represents reaching a state of asexual purity.[163] The shamelessness of children that the disciples should strive after fits in this view.[164]

Children not only represent purity but also impurity and imperfection as their essential features depend on the thoughts of the mother during intercourse and on the father.[165] Illustrative is that Adam's children are as noble as he is, but Cain is not because the serpent was his father, instead of Adam.[166] The children born to angels of the demiurge and human daughters inherited their spirit of stubbornness and the daughter of the demiurge "is beneath them all."[167] "Children of falsehood," "children of the devil," children of the "psychics," and of death come on stage.[168] Defiled passion is linked to the resulting children. They look like their parents when they "fulfill the desire of their parents" by living according to the "love of their body."[169]

This imperfection of children is often described in a mild and friendly way: a little child is "a drop from a spring" and "a blossom from a vine" needing

---

[159] Poirier, '*Sentences of Sextus*', 712.
[160] Meyer, '*Gospel of Thomas*', 145.
[161] Scopello, '*Gospel of Philip*', 177, 179.
[162] Funk, '*First Revelation of James*', 328.
[163] Kee, '*Gospel of Thomas*', 313.
[164] See page 32.
[165] Scopello, '*Gospel of Philip*', 181 and Scopello, '*Exegesis on the Soul*', 227–228.
[166] Scopello, '*Gospel of Philip*', 168, 176; Scopello, '*Revelation of Adam*', 348 and Thomassen, '*Valentinian Exposition*', 672–673.
[167] Turner, '*Secret Book of John*', 130–131; Thomassen, '*Tripartite Tractate*', 81 and Meyer, '*On the Origin of the World*', 206.
[168] For example, Turner, '*Zostrianos*', 561; Scopello, '*Dialogue of the Savior*', 303; Meyer, '*Second Discourse of Great Seth*', 480; Thomassen, '*Tripartite Tractate*', 96; Scopello, '*Gospel of Philip*', 168; Pearson, '*Testimony of Truth*', 626; Scopello, '*Authoritative Discourse*', 388; Meyer, '*Nature of the Rulers*', 197; Meyer, '*On the Origin of the World*', 208 and Pearson, '*Teachings of Silvanus*', 507.
[169] J.D. Turner and M. Meyer, '*The Book of Thomas* NHC III,7', in: M. Meyer (ed.), *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures, the Revised and Updated Translation of Sacred Gnostic Texts* (New York 2008) 235–246, there 242.

"nourishment, growth, and perfection"[170] and a father and son remember the son's "early years of life" when he posed his "senseless, unintelligent questions" while they rejoice that the son has obtained much knowledge since.[171] The dialogue between the Savior and Thomas uses childhood as symbol of imperfection in a more negative manner. The Savior states that "you are children until you become perfect" after his elaboration on the disapproved body and its passions which gives life to children.[172] These references to imperfection emphasize the possibility to grow.

Children as Recipients and Transmitters of Knowledge

We have come across children possessing the saving knowledge about their divine origins, for example by means of their birth or drinking their mother's milk.[173] Children make the "two into one" in order to enter the kingdom.[174] *The Gospel of Truth* compares "the little children, who have knowledge of the Father" with the foolish people who are "wise in their own eyes."[175] Many texts discuss this knowledge of children together with the unknowability of the Father and his decision to reveal himself to whom he wants to.[176]

After their reception of saving knowledge children pass it on. The feminine entity claims in *Thunder* that childhood is valuable because it transmits the knowledge that will lead to further knowledge.[177] Other texts also point to the transmission of knowledge by children. In *The Revelation of Paul* a child functions as a spiritual guide[178] and we have already met the "person old in days" that receives saving knowledge from a little child.[179] The previously encountered son will disperse his knowledge of his roots after he has attained it.[180]

---

[170] Thomassen, '*Tripartite Tractate*', 66–67.
[171] Mahé, '*The Eighth and the Ninth*', 414.
[172] Turner, '*Book of Thomas*', 240.
[173] See page 30–32.
[174] Meyer, '*Gospel of Thomas*', 142–143, 145, 152.
[175] Thomassen, '*Gospel of Truth*', 37.
[176] For example, Thomassen, '*Tripartite Tractate*', 97; Scopello, '*Gospel of Philip*', 174; Funk, '*Second Revelation of James*', 334; Thomassen, '*Gospel of Truth*', 36–37 and Turner, '*Great Invisible Spirit*', 253.
[177] Poirier, '*Thunder*', 375.
[178] Scopello, '*Revelation of Paul*', 317.
[179] Meyer, '*Gospel of Thomas*', 139.
[180] See page 40; Scopello, '*Secret Book of James*', 27 and Scopello, '*Gospel of Philip*', 166.

Comparable are the features of divine children. A clear example is Jesus, s the Son of the heavenly Father and the Son of humanity.[181] He is called "the knowledge of the Father"[182] and his task is to make the unknown known.[183] His revealing task also connects to childhood as Jesus was only a child when he had already begun to preach.[184] In *The Three Forms of First Thought* the Son also teaches "unrepeatable doctrines to all who became children of the light."[185] Last but not least, the divine daughter Zoe functions as the instructor of Adam and Sabaoth.[186]

In conclusion, this section shows that children in the Nag Hammadi scriptures represent both purity and impurity. Purity and perfection relate to salvation, the making of the two into one, and knowledge. Imperfect children need nourishment to grow towards perfection. The descriptions of pure and perfect children may have contributed to the position of earthly children, whereas the use of learning and growing in knowledge as metaphors presents these topics in a positive light. Several questions remain however. Did the awareness of the Perfect Child in the Holy Triad enlarge the self-confidence of children? What did children do when they heard about children chosen by the heavenly Father to know him and to transmit this knowledge to others? Little revealers of knowledge may have encouraged earthly children to learn, but what was the role of adults: did they permit children to take on teaching roles and did they consider (spiritual) education of children as important? Did the decisive role of the divine Father to determine who will receive knowledge affect children to aim at an intense bond with their father? Children also come to the fore as puppets of their parents whose bond with the material world and passions determines their fate. Did children have any control over their daily life?

---

[181] For example, Funk, '*Second Revelation of James*', 334; Scopello, '*Gospel of Philip*', 170, 179, 183; Pearson, '*Testimony of Truth*', 626–627; Scopello, '*Secret Book of James*', 24 and Turner, '*Secret Book of John*', 118.

[182] For example, Thomassen, '*Tripartite Tractate*', 78 and Funk, '*Second Revelation of James*', 334.

[183] Turner, '*Three Forms of First Thought*', 722, 724; Thomassen, '*Gospel of Truth*', 36, 40 and Turner, '*Secret Book of John*', 110.

[184] Thomassen, '*Tripartite Tractate*', 100.

[185] Turner, '*Three Forms of First Thought*', 724.

[186] Meyer, '*On the Origin of the World*', 206–207, 214.

4   CHILDREN IN ANTIQUITY

4.1.   GENERAL REMARKS

The people behind the Nag Hammadi Library lived their lives together with Romans, Jews, and Christians in the sociocultural contexts of the Roman Empire. Some ideas current in these contexts have probably been appealing to these people and they incorporated them in their developing convictions. Surely, they have embraced only parts of or even completely rejected other ideas. A similar influence of the sociocultural environment is imaginable on the views of the people behind the Nag Hammadi scriptures regarding children and childhood.

Romans, Jews, and Christians thought in a very similar way about children and all counted the family as the cornerstone of society. Differences are also obvious, especially between Judaism and Christianity on the one hand and their Roman context on the other. Jewish families living in a thoroughly Roman context preserved their Jewish identity and Christianity gradually transformed into a entity separate from the Romans, although it never completely dissociated from its ancient contexts. The three were in constant, negative and positive, interaction.[187] In this chapter, I relate the findings discussed in the previous chapter to what is known about Roman, Jewish, and Christian childhood by asking two questions: How do we understand the evidence in the Nag Hammadi scriptures regarding children if we relate it to its sociocultural contexts? And: does this evidence contribute to our view of childhood in Antiquity?

However, it is not feasible to give an overview on the daily life of children in the Roman world, because of its great time period, cultural heterogeneity, and geographical vastness. Studies on Roman childhood also mainly focus, due to the available evidence, on children who lived as free citizens with parents belonging

---

[187] MacDonald, *Power of Children*, 6, 17, 29; Rawson, 'Families', 1–8; C. Osiek, 'What We Do and Don't Know About Early Christian Families', in: B. Rawson (ed.), *A Companion to Families in the Greek and Roman Worlds* (Oxford 2011) 198–214, there 198; Horn, *Childhood*, 1; D. Noy, 'Foreign Families in Roman Italy', in: B. Rawson (ed.), *A Companion to Families in the Greek and Roman Worlds* (Oxford 2011) 145–160, there 156–157 and Moxnes, 'Introduction', 2.

to higher social classes and not on the "silent majority" of children, living in poorer families or being enslaved.[188]

4.2. FROM CONCEPTION TILL CIRCUMCISION

Conception

In the Roman world, marriage represented the beginning of the basic family with diverse social tasks such as production and reproduction, sharing, social protection, and worship.[189] Marriage was first and for all the social contract between two families for the production of legitimate offspring and the legal transfer of property within the main cultural context of honor and shame.[190] Honor to the family resulted from legitimate progeny and shame, stemming from illegitimate children, was to be prevented. Women had the ultimate power to provide honor to the family, or not. The fatherly task of guardian of virginity, mentioned in the Nag Hammadi Library, can be understood from this perspective.[191] Sexuality, marriage, gender roles, and status were thus closely connected. This dualistic system of honor/shame and male/female recognized the participation of both sexes in procreation and applied to cosmological ideas as well, in line with my findings in the Nag Hammadi Library.[192]

Marriage was central to Roman society and its Christian and Jewish inhabitants agreed with its importance. All regarded children as a blessing that secured the old-age support of parents and bareness a great sorrow.[193] The extensive use of marital and other familial metaphors in Jewish and Christian literature, with marriage as main Christian metaphor for the "ultimate

---

[188] Horn, *Childhood*, 3–4 and H. Moxnes, 'What is a Family? Problems in Constructing Early Christian Families', in: H. Moxnes (ed.), *Constructing Early Christian Families: Family as Social Reality and Metaphor* (New York 1997) 13–41, there 18.

[189] Moxnes, 'What is a Family?', 30 and Osiek, *New Testament World*, 39.

[190] P.F. Esler, 'Imagery and Identity in Gal 5.13 to 6.10', in: H. Moxnes (ed.), *Constructing Early Christian Families: Family as Social Reality and Metaphor* (New York 1997) 121–149, there 122–125.

[191] Scopello, '*Exegesis on the Soul*', 228.

[192] Osiek, *New Testament World*, 41 and Moxnes, 'What is a Family?', 20.

[193] Horn, *Childhood*, 43, 72–77; T. Parkin, 'The Roman Life Course and the Family', in: B. Rawson (ed.), *A Companion to Families in the Greek and Roman Worlds* (Oxford 2011) 276–290, there 287–289 and J.N. Neumann, 'Das Kind in der "Kindheitsgeschichte" des Lukas-Evangeliums: Ein Beitrag zum Verständnis von Zeugung, Geburt und Entwicklung des Kindes im Frühen Christentum des ersten Jahrhunderts', *Sudhoffs Archiv* 69 (1985) 192–213, there 197.

commitment to Christ" and childbearing and motherhood symbolizing salvation, points to the importance of marriage and family life.[194] Early Christians refuted the rejection of marriage, for example by Marcion.[195] Marriage and family life, however, also underwent a devaluation. Jesus, looking ahead to the End of Times in the canonical gospels, judged earthly marriage and family life as lacking lasting value and early Christian leaders advised against procreation.[196] This subordination of mundane ties was not without precedent: both in Judaism and in Roman philosophy the biological family was seen as inferior to higher aims.[197] Later, I will return to this devaluation of family life and its relation with celibacy[198] but let us now shortly look at another factor contributing to notions of celibacy: the rejection of passion.

The ideas regarding sexuality and passion that we encountered in the Nag Hammadi texts had their equivalents in the Roman Empire. The control of desire was a common concern in aristocratic and intellectual Roman circles. Medical and philosophical texts point to the harmful effects of passionate sexuality, such as losing spirit during the ejaculation of semen, and the superiority of a life of contemplation detached from the bodily passions.[199] Sexual morality and practice was essential to early Christian self-definition, as it was in Judaism.[200] Although early Christians emphasized the unity of couples, this union should not be based on desire.[201] Paul considered passion as a polluting threat to the believer's body and sex only as "prophylaxis against desire."[202]

In sum, marriage and family life including children were highly valued in the Roman Empire. Early Christians, philosophers, ancient doctors, and authors of the Nag Hammadi Library shared their exit point of the extirpation of sexual

---

[194] Moxnes, 'What is a Family?', 31–32; E.M. Lassen, 'The Roman Family: Ideal and Metaphor', in: H. Moxnes (ed.), *Constructing Early Christian Families: Family as Social Reality and Metaphor* (New York 1997) 103–120, there 110 and MacDonald, *Power of Children*, 6, 125.

[195] Yarbro-Collins, 'Female Body', 162–165.

[196] Horn, *Childhood*, 90–91, 301–309 and J.M.G. Barclay, 'The Family as the Bearer of Religion in Judaism and Early Christianity', in: H. Moxnes (ed.), *Constructing Early Christian Families: Family as Social Reality and Metaphor* (New York 1997) 66–80, there 72–75.

[197] Barton, 'Relativisation', 81.

[198] See pages 59–60.

[199] Osiek, *New Testament World*, 104–107; DeConick, 'Marriage', 341–342; Dillon, *Platonists*, 9; Roig Lanzillotta, 'Plutarch's Anthropology', 193 and D.B. Martin, 'Paul without Passion: on Paul's Rejection of Desire in Sex and Marriage', in: H. Moxnes (ed.), *Constructing Early Christian Families: Family as Social Reality and Metaphor* (New York 1997) 201–216.

[200] Horn, *Childhood*, 106–108.

[201] MacDonald, *Power of Children*, 6 and Moxnes, 'What is a Family?', 31–32.

[202] Martin, 'Passion', 201.

desire but worked it out in different ways due to their different perspectives. Thus, the combination of the rejection of passionate sexuality and welcoming offspring in the Nag Hammadi texts did not appear out of the blue but had equivalents in Roman, Jewish, and Christian circles.

Antenatal en Postnatal Life

The Nag Hammadi texts scarcely inform us about ideas and practices regarding the antenatal and postnatal period such as abortion, infant death, birth practices, and the care for newborns. Evidence on these topics from the ancient Roman world is minimal as well, but provides us with some insights regarding free-born children belonging to the higher social classes.[203]

A major contributor to Roman infancy was the high mortality rate. In Antiquity about 25% of infants died. This caused people to see their infants as "liminal, vulnerable, and dependent" and as "skirting the boundaries of human existence."[204] Infancy was a transition state between living and not living marked by birth rituals and not by birth itself. Just as in the Nag Hammadi Library, the Roman borders of antenatal life were more fluid than in our times. Directly after birth that took place at home in the presence of a midwife or another experienced woman and mostly in absence of the father, the child underwent an examination of its condition. If the child was not perfect, the umbilical cord was not cut and the infant died. If the child was granted life, the umbilical cord was cut and the newborn bathed. At the eighth respectively ninth day of life a girl or boy received his identity, including its names, and became part of existence. In the ritual of *dies lustricus* the *pater familias* lifted the newborn up from the floor to welcome it into his household—or not, depending on sex, status, condition, and so on. Until then the child did not exist. Jews similarly circumcised their eight-day-old boys to welcome them into the covenant with God. As we have seen, sections of the Nag Hammadi Library reject this ritual because it represents the binding to this material world, symbolized by the Law of Moses. The Christian

---

[203] Dasen, 'Childhood and Birth', 290.

[204] Horn, *Childhood*, 21; R. Saller, 'The Roman Family as Productive Unit', in: B. Rawson (ed.), *A Companion to Families in the Greek and Roman Worlds* (Oxford 2011) 116–128, there 119 and Jones, *Early Church*, 128.

welcome ritual, baptism, resembled the Roman custom but deviated from Jewish circumcision in that it concerned boys and girls. It differed from both as baptism was not limited to infant age and not baptized Christian children were also considered members of the church, as can also be concluded from epitaphs for Christian infants.[205]

The first days the newborn was fed with honey, "a special food with heavenly connotations," followed by a gradual introduction of mother's milk, that was attributed with positive qualities like the transmission of diverse remedies to an ill infant. Families that could afford it entrusted their infants to slave or free-born wet nurses to feed, nurture, and raise their little ones. The high mortality rates of infants and the related, conscious or unconscious, postponed bonding of parents to their children possibly contributed to this custom. Wet nurses had to give up their sexual life, because a pregnancy corrupted the milk. The dismissal of sexual intercourse of nurses in *The Testimony of Truth* thus related to daily life practice.[206] Children were weaned at the age of two or three, which was an important transitional age. In Antiquity milk joint together the nurslings of a wet nurse.[207] The nurse of the men in *The Second Revelation of James* may have been their mother, but as the text suggests that the two men did not meet before, they probably had milk-ties.[208] Diverse early Christian texts refer to breastfeeding infants in a same line of thought as we have seen in Nag Hammadi texts.[209] For example, the *Odes of Solomon*, a collection of early Christian hymns, symbolizes the peace and hope of God by means of the drinking of mother's milk.[210] Paul contrasts infants that only tolerate mother's milk to mature people, grown in salvation, taking solid food.[211] Assistant Professor of Early Christianity Cornelia Horn tries to imagine how wet

---

[205] Jones, *Early Church*, 121; Dasen, 'Childhood and Birth', 293–306; C. Laes, 'Grieving for Lost Children, Pagan and Christian', in: B. Rawson (ed.), *A Companion to Families in the Greek and Roman Worlds* (Oxford 2011) 315–350, there 327–328; Horn, *Childhood*, 19–21, 97, 185–186, 273–291 and Osiek, *New Testament World*, 66–67, 83.

[206] Pearson, '*Testimony of Truth*', 626.

[207] Osiek, *New Testament World*, 66; Jones, *Early Church*, 124; Dasen, 'Childhood and Birth', 292–312 and Horn, *Childhood*, 21–22.

[208] Funk, '*Second Revelation of James*', 336.

[209] C.S. Keener, *1-2 Corinthians* (Cambridge 2005) 40; MacDonald, *Power of Children*, 98 and Horn, *Childhood*, 58, 144.

[210] Horn, *Childhood*, 65–66.

[211] Keener, *1-2 Corinthians*, 40.

nurses, who were surely among the audience listening, reacted to this imagery.[212]

In Roman times abortion, infanticide, and exposure of children were accepted methods of birth control. As long as the husband's interest in legitimate offspring or the mother's life was not at risk, Roman law did not prohibit abortion. There were some critical voices though. Intellectuals discussed about the beginning of life in the womb and the moment of creation of body and soul and took at least an "intelligible rhetorical pose" against abortion. The first-century Stoic philosopher Musonius Rufus rejected abortion.[213] Jews and Christians therefore equated abortion to infanticide as both devastate God's creative work. Exposure of a child led to his death or to a life of slavery or prostitution. Jews and Christians condemned all three practices without discussion and accepted children unconditionally into the family as created in the image of God. But individual Jews and Christians did not completely defy themselves from using these practices in daily life.[214] Over time, Christianity influenced Roman laws on infanticide and child exposure leading to the prohibition of both, but not of abortion.[215] The authors of the Nag Hammadi texts underscore the importance of the soul and locate the moment of its binding to the body at birth. However, there is not enough evidence yet to conclude to with which of the diverse views on abortion, exposure, and infanticide in Roman times they lined up with.

---

[212] Horn, *Childhood*, 21–22 and MacDonald, *Power of Children*, 98.

[213] Z. Mistry, *Abortion in the Early Middle Ages, c.500-900* (York 2015) 25–28, 32, 36–37 and Osiek, *New Testament World*, 65.

[214] MacDonald, *Power of Children*, 78; S.L. Dyson, 'The Family and the Roman Countryside', in: B. Rawson (ed.), *A Companion to Families in the Greek and Roman Worlds* (Oxford 2011) 431–444, there 437; Saller, 'Roman Family', 119; Osiek, 'Early Christian Families', 208; Golden, 'Other People's Children', 271; Mistry, *Abortion*, 23, 27, 36–44 and Horn, *Childhood*, 18–21, 185–186, 214–217, 222–225.

[215] Mistry, *Abortion*, 26–28.

4.3. FROM CIRCUMCISION TILL REACHING ADULTHOOD

Children in the Household

Nelson Mandela said that "there can be no keener revelation of a society's soul than the way in which it treats its children."[216] How children are treated surely is related to how they are valued. On the other hand, the practices of abortion, infanticide, and child exposure, and the use of wet nurses do not imply that children were of less importance in the Roman world than in our modern times. Several aspects of Roman society suggest the opposite, namely that children were highly esteemed as valuable members of both their family and society.[217] The Roman family was a sort of center of production in which all family members, including children, contributed to the fabrication of items necessary in the household. Children were also indispensable for the transmission of possessions and social status down the generations. Therefore, children were the most precious property of Roman families, both in their here and now, as well as in future.[218]

Diverse evidence indeed indicates that children were highly valued. First, Lecturer in Classical Studies Janet Huskinson demonstrates on the basis of reliefs that children were central to their families.[219] Epitaphs express the intense grief of parents of whom a child had died.[220] Roman law permitted wives to gain legal independence from their husband by giving birth.[221] Finally, children were used as political propaganda for the Empire, in the flesh at processions and ceremonies or by use of their depictions communicating the humiliation of

---

[216] https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/quotes/n/nelsonmand178795.html, 'Nelson Mandela Quotes', 3 March 2017.
[217] Horn, *Childhood*, 21–22, 70–71, 92–94.
[218] Osiek, *New Testament World*, 42.
[219] J. Huskinson, 'Picturing the Roman Family', in: B. Rawson (ed.), *A Companion to Families in the Greek and Roman Worlds* (Oxford 2011) 521–541, there 530–534.
[220] Jones, *Early Church*, 124; Laes, 'Grieving', 322; J.H. Tulloch, 'Devotional Visuality', in: B. Rawson (ed.), *A Companion to Families in the Greek and Roman Worlds* (Oxford 2011) 542–563, there 555 and Golden, 'Other People's Children', 270.
[221] Horn, *Childhood*, 22–24 and Lassen, 'Metaphor', 109.

enemies, the triumph of the Empire, or the admonition to submit to Rome. In all cases children symbolized a lost or gained future.[222]

Judaism and Christianity in Antiquity also assigned children a high value. Christian parents in ancient Rome set their hopes on their children as can be understood from their epitaphs.[223] The Biblical text describing that children are punished for the sins of their parents confused not only a Nag Hammadi author but was a matter of debate in first century Judaism and Christianity.[224] The profuse use of children in metaphors also points to their importance. Both ancient Christians and Jews expressed their relation with God through the metaphor of the child of God. They used this metaphor also to describe the Church and Israel as communities of God's children. This childhood imagery may help us to understand the basic assumptions about children.[225] Jesus proclaimed that children were blessed and to be welcomed as children who represent himself, not because of one of their attributes, such as vulnerability, innocence, celibacy, or insignificance, but because of the complete picture of the child of God, including its greater faith, knowledge, and commitment.

Children were essential to the concept of a Christian: the little child is "the child of God" that every Christian needs to strive after. Some scholars argue that Christianity changed the general attitude towards children as it granted them an intrinsic value and, for example, accepted them as members of the church. Judaism had, however, viewed children in an similar way since long before Christianity arose but never had a widespread influence. Other scholars state that this changing attitude towards children fitted in the development of the first centuries: the gap between adulthood and childhood, that was viewed solely as the preparation phase to adulthood in earlier times, gradually lessened. Interestingly, Christian authors hardly ever refer to children and their education, care, and maturation in a direct way which is in sharp contrast with Jewish but also Roman writings. Although Christians recognized an intrinsic, spiritual value

---

[222] MacDonald, *Power of Children*, 57, 102; J. Diddle Uzzi, 'The Power of Parenthood in Official Roman Art', *Hesperia Supplements* 41 (2007) 61–81, there 64–78 and Huskinson, 'Picturing', 525.
[223] Laes, 'Grieving', 315–350.
[224] Horn, *Childhood*, 44.
[225] Lassen, 'Metaphor', 103; Horn, *Childhood*, 41–68 and O.L. Yarbrough, 'Parents and Children in the Letters of Paul' in: L.M. White and O.L. Yarbrough, (eds.), *The Social World of the First Christians: Essays in Honor of Wayne A. Meeks* (Minneapolis 1995) 126–143, there 126.

of children, they may not have seen them as separate entities in daily life but solely as part of their household.[226] From the Nag Hammadi texts a similar picture of children as significant possessions of a household and as highly valued, spiritual persons arises, although more detailed study is necessary.

Now we have seen that Romans, as also the people behind the Nag Hammadi scriptures, did consider children very important we turn to the widespread sexual use of children and the treatment of slave children in the Roman Empire.[227] Jews and early Christians condemned the sexual use of children and as the Roman world embraced Christianity it faded away, or at least became invisible.[228] Hardly anyone, Roman, Christian, or Jew, objected against the sexual use, physical violence, abortion, infanticide, exposure, or in general to the possession and selling of slave children. Slaves could not form a family in a legal sense, but reproduction was an important means to acquire new slaves because home-born slaves were considered to be more reliable and dedicated. The plentiful slave children belonged to and were delivered up to the quirks of their Roman, Christian, or Jewish masters who were not infrequently also their biological fathers.[229] These practices imply that Roman society distinguished between the relative worth of one human over another. We do not know what this tells about the value and position of children, and about the love of parents to their children.[230] Scholars suggest that these slavery practices did not fit smoothly with Judaism and Christianity.[231] The Nag Hammadi Library does not spend a word on these practices. This does not imply, however, that the practices and the related ethical discussions were not part of the lives of its authors and readers.

Nag Hammadi texts refer to different kinds of children living in a household. Children in the Roman period often grew up in "patchwork" families

---

[226] Horn, *Childhood*, 113, 252–262, 347 and Osiek, *New Testament World*, 64–65.

[227] Golden, 'Other People's Children', 266.

[228] MacDonald, *Power of Children*, 22, 34, 45 and Horn, *Childhood*, 34–35, 169, 213–251.

[229] Horn, *Childhood*, 36, 217–221, 232–239; H. Mouritsen, 'The Families of Roman Slaves and Freedmen', in: B. Rawson (ed.), *A Companion to Families in the Greek and Roman Worlds* (Oxford 2011) 129–144, there 129–134; Dyson, 'Roman Countryside', 432; M.Y. MacDonald, 'Like Father Like Son: Reassessing Constructions of Fatherhood in Ephesians in Light of Cultural Interests in Family Continuity', in: A. Hege Grung, M. Bjelland Kartzow, and A.R. Solevåg (eds.), *Bodies, Borders, Believers, Ancient Texts, and Present Conversations* (Eugene 2016) 125–143, there 127–129 and Jones, *Early Church*, 99.

[230] Golden, 'Other People's Children', 274.

[231] Horn, *Childhood*, 225.

with "pseudo-parents" as many fathers died (over 25 percent of children lost their father before they reached the age of 15), parents divorced and remarried, and stepparents, other relatives, or siblings took care of or even adopted other one's children.[232] During a child's life course the family composition changed regularly because of deaths and births of family members.[233] A family consisting of multiple generations probably was the ideal that seldom reflected real life with its high mortality rates.[234] Archeological evidence suggests that all members of the extended family, including other relatives and slaves, lived closely together. Children were part of this collective life but the closest bond was with their parents. [235]

My findings from the Nag Hammadi scriptures regarding the different children in a family matches the conclusions of scholars on Roman family life. First, the bond with the father determined the position of children in Roman society as they belonged to their father.[236] In the honor/shame context of Roman family life, illegitimate children were considered inferior. Mothers carried the responsibility for their "bastard" children alone.[237] The well-known story of Jesus' birth also suggests that a child born outside legal marriage resulted in disgrace and a sharp rejection of adultery in Early Christianity and in Judaism. Further, Old and New Testament and other Jewish texts point to the privileged place of first-born sons. Finally, early Christian groups, alike Yahweh's practice in the Old Testament, cared for abandoned and orphaned children.[238]

The Nag Hammadi scriptures only occasionally refer to slaves and do not mention slave children at all. This is remarkable as in the families of the Roman

---

[232] MacDonald, *Power of Children*, 72; Saller, 'Roman Family', 119; S. Dixon, 'From Ceremonial to Sexualities', in: B. Rawson (ed.), *A Companion to Families in the Greek and Roman Worlds* (Oxford 2011) 245–261, there 247, 248; Osiek, *New Testament World*, 62; Jones, *Early Church*, 123, 128–129; Horn, *Childhood*, 79 and Rawson, 'Families', 3.

[233] Parkin, 'Roman Life Course', 277–284.

[234] S. Huebner, 'Household Composition in the Ancient Mediterranean—What do We Really Know?', in: B. Rawson (ed.), *A Companion to Families in the Greek and Roman Worlds* (Oxford 2011) 73–91, there 77–80.

[235] J.A. Dickmann, 'Space and Social Relations in the Roman West', in: B. Rawson (ed.), *A Companion to Families in the Greek and Roman Worlds* (Oxford 2011) 53–72, there 56–60; Parkin, 'Roman Life Course', 276 and Huskinson, 'Picturing', 527–532.

[236] Jones, *Early Church*, 123; Diddle Uzzi, 'Parenthood', 62; Osiek, *New Testament World*, 42 and Dixon, 'From Ceremonial', 248.

[237] J. Evans Grubbs, 'Promoting *Pietas* through Roman Law', in: B. Rawson (ed.), *A Companion to Families in the Greek and Roman Worlds* (Oxford 2011) 377–392, there 384 and Lassen, 'Metaphor', 104 and Osiek, *New Testament World*, 40.

[238] MacDonald, *Power of Children*, 24–26; Osiek, *New Testament World*, 104–166 and Horn, *Childhood*, 42–45, 77–78, 56, 163–165.

Empire slaves are omnipresent, as parents, children of other slaves, but also as the biological offspring of their masters. Free and slave children shared their worlds and received a similar treatment, including obedience and physical punishment. However, in accordance with the texts referring to slaves in the Nag Hammadi Library, children and slaves differed in an essential aspect: the former were part of a family, submitted to *pietas*, the reciprocal virtue prescribing affections and obligations between family members. *Pietas* was not part of a master-slave relation that, at least often, lacked any reciprocity and affection.[239]

Parent-Child Relation

Real and Unreal Family Relations

The Hebrew Bible, Philo—who applied Middle Platonic notions to his interpretation of the Torah[240]—, the New Testament, and other Jewish and early Christian texts conceive of relations between God and believers but also of the internal relations in the religious community by using the metaphors of childhood and parenthood with God or a religious leader as father. Paul's own relation to "his true child" Timothy or the community of believers is a famous example.[241] These metaphors possibly contributed to the distinction between spiritual, "real" and biological, "unreal" families and to a new sense of belonging. Non-Christian Romans with their highly hierarchical ideal household and strong biological family ties may have found these metaphors offending. Romans also used family metaphors, especially that of father and son, and saw gods as models for parents, but only to underline hierarchical relations and authority.[242]

The explicit opposition of different kind of families lead to a disadvantageous recharacterization of earthly family bonds. The canonical gospels and the Nag Hammadi Library include similar sections in which Jesus considers his heavenly Father as his true father and prioritizes his family of followers to his biological family. Jesus calls his followers to replace biological

---

[239] Horn, *Childhood*, 70–71, 220–221; Moxnes, 'What is a Family?', 27–29; MacDonald, *Power of Children*, 3, 8, 18, 21, 33–38; Lassen, 'Metaphor', 109 and Mouritsen, 'Roman Slaves', 129–130.
[240] Ehrman, *Lost Christianities*, 120.
[241] Yarbrough, 'Parents and Children', 126; MacDonald, *Power of Children*, 102; Osiek, *New Testament World*, 69–102 and Waters, 'Virtues', 703–713, 716–719.
[242] MacDonald, *Power of Children*, 15; Esler, 'Imagery', 131–144 and Lassen, "Metaphor", 103–115.

family with spiritual kin as the first hinders them in spreading the gospel. This attitude towards earthly family life may be a "powerful metaphorical way of calling for the displacement of every obstacle to true discipleship to Jesus."[243] Related to both their rejection of desire and the devaluation of the biological family, Paul and several early Christian leaders propagated chastity and celibacy, and advised to remain without offspring. These most negative notions on marriage and procreation were promoted in the fiercest way, while other church leaders certainly approved of marriage, though sometimes only as a means to procreate. Most Christians probably continued to marry and have children, although in later centuries the ascetic ideal became powerful.[244]

The devaluation of family bonds for the sake of a superior aim was not unknown in Roman and Jewish surroundings. Celibacy related to such a subordination and expressing religious commitment was part of Second Temple Judaism and perhaps the early rabbinic period. The community of the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Therapeutae are well-known examples. Stories in the Old Testament echo this view as well.[245] Rejection of marriage and family bonds in order to reach individual freedom and self-sufficiency comes to the fore in the Cynic philosophical schools and is rooted in a tradition dating back before the Common Era. Less radically the Stoic Musonius Rufus and his pupil Epictetus tone down family ties to serve the greater goal of philosophy. These currents did not attach the devaluation of family ties to the End of Times like Jesus and the early Christians did.[246]

In conclusion, in concordance with the Nag Hammadi scriptures diverse groups in the Roman world distinguished between real, spiritual and unreal, biological families and characterized family ties in a new way. However, their emphases and aims differed.

---

[243] Barton, 'Relativisation', 81; Horn, *Childhood*, 90–91, 302–310; Osiek, 'Early Christian Families', 200, 211; Uro, 'Ascetism', 210–232 and Moxnes, 'What is a Family?', 34.

[244] Horn, *Childhood*, 87–92, 101–111, 301–323; Osiek, *New Testament World*, 107–108, 148–152; Barclay, 'Bearer of Religion', 72–75 and K. Cooper, 'The Household and Christian Conversion', in: B. Rawson (ed.), *A Companion to Families in the Greek and Roman Worlds* (Oxford 2011) 183–197, there 188–191.

[245] Horn, *Childhood*, 106–111, 301–323; Barclay, 'Bearer of Religion', 72–75 and Osiek, *New Testament World*, 107–108, 148–152.

[246] See page 52; Barton, 'Relativisation', 81–98; MacDonald, *Power of Children*, 68 and Horn, *Childhood*, 302–304.

Characteristics of Parent-Child Relations

Nag Hammadi scriptures describe father-child relations as characterized by obedience, love and affection, and intergenerational continuity, but only infrequently feature relations between mothers and children. Scholars draw similar conclusions from Roman, Jewish, and Christian evidence.

Obedience defined the bonds between Roman parents and their children.[247] Obedience implied honor, disobedience shame. The *pater familias* had unlimited authority over his family and children needed to accept even his unfair will for the sake of *pietas*, the essential Roman virtue. *Pietas* was a matter of reciprocal obligations, loyalty, and affection between family members. For example, adult children had to compensate for the care they had received from their parents and were expected to support their ageing parents[248] and the love of Roman parents becomes visible in epitaphs expressing their intense grief for lost children.[249] To what extent fathers exercised their power in daily life is doubted.[250] Against the tides and not representing mainstream first century thoughts, Musonius Rufus supported disobedience of parents if this was in the interest of philosophy.[251]

The way in which Jews and Christians viewed and practiced *pietas* is unclear. The Hebrew Bible and early Christian texts urge children to obey their parents. Josephus asserts that the Roman ideas of *pietas* are at the heart of Jewish family life. The New Testament, including the Household Codes in *Colossians* and *Ephesians*, also suggests that *pietas* was an important family value. Jesus is the ultimate *filius familias* being obedient to his Father until death and simultaneously to his earthly parents. In the same way true children of God obey their parents. Being disobedient implied impiety. However, the Household Codes, in line with Josephus' claims, probably have aimed at demonstrating the

---

[247] Horn, *Childhood*, 79–85.

[248] Evans Grubbs, 'Promoting *Pietas*', 377, 382; Osiek, *New Testament World*, 165–166 and M. Imber, 'Life without Father: Declamation and the Construction of Paternity in the Roman Empire', *Memoirs of the American Academy in Rome. Supplementary Volumes* 7 (2008) 161–169, there 162.

[249] Jones, *Early Church*, 124; Laes, 'Grieving', 322; Tulloch, 'Devotional Visuality', 555 and Golden, 'Other People's Children', 270.

[250] MacDonald, *Power of Children*, 9, 18, 74, 79, 100; Osiek, 'Early Christian Families', 199–200; H. Lindsay, 'Adoption and Heirship in Greece and Rome', in: B. Rawson (ed.), *A Companion to Families in the Greek and Roman Worlds* (Oxford 2011) 346–360, there 357 and Jones, *Early Church*, 120–121.

[251] MacDonald, *Power of Children*, 68.

respect and acceptation of Roman family hierarchy. Interestingly, the image of the *patria potestas* was used to exemplify the spiritual authority of the Christian father over his family, for example in the *Shepherd of Hermas*, a text linked to the Catholic Church.[252]

The second-century Celsus suspected that early church groups encouraged children to disobedience. And indeed, as the Christian community transformed into a "united family," open to everybody, free and slave, child and parent, that surpassed biological relations challenges may have arisen to the *patria potestas,* the authority of the biological father over his children.[253] Evidence from Christian epitaphs for deceased children points to a lesser emphasis on *pietas*[254] and Christian authors indeed narrate about young Christian women breaching the bonds with their pagan parents or defying the *patria potestas* of their husbands, something that significantly interested Christians.[255]

In Early Christianity the call to obey parents was balanced with a call to only moderately exercise paternal authority. Scholars do not agree whether this is a main change in pedagogical insights or just a continuation of the common Roman views on the reciprocal obligations and affection of *pietas*. Anyhow, *Ephesians* dissuades fathers to provoke their children and the Household Codes discuss obedience explicitly in the context of a loving and caring relation. Love and affection are also expressed in narratives about parents, who bring their sick children to Jesus. Paul characterizes his relation with his children, the church members, also as loving and Clement of Alexandria recognizes love and affection as central to parent-child relations.[256]

The perpetuation of family traditions depended on *pietas*. The *imitatio patri* of the son warranted this continuity as he "lived up to the memory of his ancestors." Parents named their children after their ancestors and names stayed

---

[252] Horn, *Childhood*, 44–45, 53–61, 79–85; Yarbrough, 'Parents and Children', 138–139; MacDonald, *Power of Children*, 13–15, 23–26, 74, 79, 102; MacDonald, 'Fatherhood', 125, 133–135; Osiek, 'Early Christian Families', 199–200 and Cooper, 'Christian Conversion', 183–191.

[253] MacDonald, *Power of Children*, 24–26, 49, 56, 68, 78, 99; Jones, *Early Church*, 142; Cooper, 'Christian Conversion', 183–186; MacDonald, 'Fatherhood', 126–127, 135 and Horn, *Childhood*, 108–109, 301–309.

[254] Laes, 'Grieving', 322–323.

[255] MacDonald, *Power of Children*, 101 and Cooper, 'Christian Conversion', 188–191.

[256] Horn, *Childhood*, 58, 60, 80, 93, 301; Osiek, 'Early Christian Families', 199; MacDonald, *Power of Children*, 78 and MacDonald, 'Fatherhood', 126.

in a family during several generations. Regarding religion, Roman rituals had a central place for children in order to pass religion on to them. Family continuity and memory, especially regarding the religious, was also an important issue in Christian and Jewish families as it was to the people behind the Nag Hammadi texts. The sometimes extensive genealogies in the Bible show the importance of family lineage. The Jewish family, due to the minority status of Jews and their fear of intermarriage, was essential in the preservation of their ethnic identity, which Josephus considered "the most important duty in life." Early Christians projected the concept of *imitatio patri* from the biological family and related it to the Son of God as the image of his Father and to their spiritual family of Christians. Jesus' life to do the work of the Father was their ideal to strive after, and they aimed to live up with and to inherit from their spiritual ancestors.[257]

The mother-child relation is less visible in ancient evidence, just as in the Nag Hammadi texts. This does not rule out the important role of mothers during childhood. On the contrary, mothers or other females took care of children under age seven and scholars point to intense and emotional bonds between mothers and sons which approached a symbiosis.[258] A woman married under *manus* and thus submitted to the *patria potestas* of her husband received the title of honor "*mater familias*" and occupied the hierarchical position between her husband and her sons, without being allotted any legal rights though.[259]

In conclusion, evidence from the Nag Hammadi Library matches the evidence regarding Roman, Jewish, and Christian families as well as provides new evidence that obedience, love and affection, and family continuity were major determinants of parent-child relations in the Roman world.

---

[257] MacDonald, *Power of Children*, 31, 68, 74–77, 90, 94; Barclay, 'Bearer of Religion', 69; MacDonald, 'Fatherhood', 131, 140; Horn, *Childhood*, 33–34, 50–54, 72, 104–105; Moxnes, 'What is a Family?', 28–29; Noy, 'Foreign Families', 156–157; F. Dolanski, 'Celebrating the Saturnalia: Religious Ritual and Roman Domestic Life', in: B. Rawson (ed.), *A Companion to Families in the Greek and Roman Worlds* (Oxford 2011) 488–503, there 488; Barclay, 'Bearer of Religion', 67–68; Horn, *Childhood*, 33–34 and Jones, *Early Church*, 139.
[258] Moxnes, 'What is a Family?', 35 and Osiek, *New Testament World*, 42–43.
[259] Horn, *Childhood*, 22–23.

Education

The spiritual father-child relation is an important theme in several texts of the Nag Hammadi Library and matches the common ancient depiction of a father nurturing and instructing his son as a metaphor for a teacher and his student.[260] References to regular education of children are nearly untraceable in the Nag Hammadi scriptures, but there is a large amount of evidence regarding education during Roman childhood. The Roman world recognized the importance of education and considered it a process that extended far into adulthood. Most evidence, however, concerns wealthy, free-born, male children whereas access and quality of education largely depended on a child's social status, class, and gender.[261]

At the age of seven children passed from infancy to childhood. At this age other activities, mainly learning, replaced playing. Rites in which the Roman child gave up his toys marked the transition. The involvement of the father in the life of children started at this age, but scholars consider the Roman emphasis on the education of sons by their fathers as, at least partly, ideological. This is already imaginable at the backdrop of the high percentage of fatherless children, including the still alive but, temporarily, absent fathers. Fathers and legitimate teachers had the exclusive right to organize the schooling of children. Parents were responsible to provide, but not necessarily to supply, education to their children. The pedagogue, usually a slave attendant, accompanied Roman children to school, provided basic teachings, and had tasks in the upbringing of children. Female relatives engaged in the education of girls regarding female handwork and other tasks, but other educational activities by women were rejected. Professor of Religious Studies Margaret MacDonald, however, thinks that women may have had a more prominent role in educating their children than we think.[262]

Schools, not regulated by the state and often located at a private house, were widespread in the Roman world, but girls mainly learned their skills at

---

[260] MacDonald, *Power of Children*, 87–89, 111 and Horn, *Childhood*, 133–134.
[261] Saller, 'Roman Family', 125–127; Horn, *Childhood*, 3–4 and Moxnes, 'What is a Family?', 18.
[262] MacDonald, *Power of Children*, 114; Osiek, *New Testament World*, 67–74; MacDonald, 'Fatherhood',130 and Horn, *Childhood*, 6–7, 15, 24–34, 116–165.

home. The Dead Sea Scrolls provide evidence of mandatory communal education for children and in the second century CE schools lead by rabbis arise. Jewish boys continued to receive part of their education in the synagogue. This is also true for Christians who taught their children at home but also at the Christian community. [263]

Romans considered children as passive products of their schooling and the efforts of the teacher. Physical punishment was an accepted method to teach a child in Roman, Jewish, and Christian surroundings. The Pastoral Epistles and the Dead Sea Scrolls suggest a combination of disciplinary methods with the use of words and kindness to achieve a teaching commitment in the child. Roman and Christian parents appreciated the educational value of toys and play. In line with modern views on education, the Dead Sea Scrolls call to adjust education to the pace and level of the student.[264] 1 *Corinthians* 3:1–6 also refers to different levels of spiritual education to be offered to different students. As we have seen, *The Gospel of Philip* may also point to differentiated schooling methods.[265]

Roman and Jewish children, including those related to the Dead Sea Scrolls, were taught by use of memorization. The elementary education of these children included writing, reading and arithmetic.[266] Roman education consisted of another two stages: the grammatical and the rhetorical, philosophical education. Boys from wealthy families received education fitting to their aspired careers in politics, military affairs, legal professions, philosophy, architecture, medicine, and so on, that continued far into adulthood.[267] Although Christians felt uneasy by using "pagan" methods to provide their children with elementary

---

[263] Horn, *Childhood*, 3–4, 25–27, 34, 119, 123–127, 137; F.G. Naerebout and H.W. Singor, *De Oudheid* (Amsterdam 1995) 388; T. Morgan, '*Ethos*: The Socialization of Children in Education and Beyond', in: B. Rawson (ed.), *A Companion to Families in the Greek and Roman Worlds* (Oxford 2011) 504–520, there 516–517; C. Wassen, 'On the Education of Children in the Dead Sea Scrolls', *Studies in Religion* 41 (2012), 350–363, there 355 and MacDonald, *Power of Children*, 87.
[264] Scopello, '*Gospel of Philip*', 183; MacDonald, *Power of Children*, 82–87, 113, 132; Horn, *Childhood*, 116–160, 197–210; Barclay, 'Bearer of Religion', 76–77; Wassen, 'Dead Sea Scrolls', 357 and Osiek, *New Testament World*, 64.
[265] See page 42.
[266] MacDonald, *Power of Children*, 77, 82–87, 136; Wassen, 'Dead Sea Scrolls', 357; Horn, *Childhood*, 28–30 and Jones, *Early Church*, 125–126.
[267] Horn, *Childhood*, 117, 173; Naerebout, *Oudheid*, 388 and Jones, *Early Church*, 125–128.

education, there is no evidence regarding a separate Christian schooling program until the fourth century.[268]

Education also aimed at mental and spiritual development. Paul, Philo, and Plutarch associate prophets with teachers due to their task in religious instruction.[269] Physical training, an essential part of the education of Roman but also of wealthy and Hellenized Jewish children, formed also the mind of children from the age of seven and older.[270] Jews, including those connected to the Dead Sea Scrolls, considered religious instruction as the core of education, more important than learning to read and write.[271] The purpose of Christian education was the moral and religious transformation of children into adults with a close relation to God and embedded in the community of the church. How this was reached is largely unknown, but it matches the conviction of Romans and Jews, including those related to the Qumran community and the Nag Hammadi texts, of education as a "life-long learning project."[272]

Most Roman, Jewish, and Christian children, both slave and free-born, however, did not go to schools at all or only received elementary education. They learned by working from a young age onwards and their families relied on their income. The *Infancy Gospel of Thomas*, among other apocryphal gospels, provides us with a clear image of the child Jesus who does tasks, like gathering wood and getting water, and learns his craft. Slave children started to work from ages as young as five years and learned their tasks by working side-by-side with adult slaves. Slave children of the larger aristocratic houses learned also the basics of letters and numbers in the classrooms of the house, the *paedagogium*.[273] Boys, free-born and slave, were apprenticed to learn a skill from their early teens or earlier.[274] Whether enslaved or free-born, wealthy or poor, girls received less and different education than boys. They learned their skills, spinning and weaving, in the home of female relatives and their instruction

---

[268] Osiek, 'Early Christian Families', 205 and Morgan, 'Children in Education', 519.

[269] Osiek, *New Testament World*, 156–162.

[270] Horn, *Childhood*, 32–33, 119–122 and Morgan, 'Children in Education', 505–510.

[271] Horn, *Childhood*, 13–14, 27–29, 119; Barclay, 'Bearer of Religion', 70 and Wassen, 'Dead Sea Scrolls', 358.

[272] Horn, *Childhood*, 117, 136–151 and MacDonald, *Power of Children*, 73–76, 82–87, 110, 122–130.

[273] Saller, 'Roman Family', 126.

[274] MacDonald, *Power of Children*, 116; Saller, 'Roman Family', 124–126 and Horn, *Childhood*, 26–30, 117–183.

proceeded far beyond marriage and the birth of children. Elementary education for most girls ceased at the primary school level and further education was not universally accepted if it was not kept within the family. Surprisingly, Musonius Rufus as well as Plutarch advocate equal education of boys and girls so they could develop the same virtues. Early rabbinic Judaism rejected, at least partly, educating girls in the Torah.[275] The ideas regarding gender differences of the people behind the Nag Hammadi Library remain unknown. Translation of the texts with concise attention to gendered language is necessary.

Christian ideas regarding the educational role of the community and religious instruction took some side-ways and in general resemble those we encounter in the Dead Sea Scrolls. Education remained a core characteristic of Christian identity and also became central to Christian mission. Jesus' blessings of the children had presented them as the focus of his ministry. In opposition to the exclusive right of fathers to arrange the education of children, the house church became the centre of child schooling which aimed at their development as Christians or even evangelists. As Celsus feared, early Christians may have envisioned education as the "beginning of a life course set apart from the dominant culture." With distrust he noticed the involvement of, not always biologically related, women in the education of children. Later, as the educational influences of fathers became connected to the church offices, mothers and grandmothers continued to teach children. On the other hand, Christians also tried to remain part of the Roman world by calling fathers to facilitate the "instruction of the Lord" of their children.[276]

The educational aspects described above were ubiquitous in the Roman world and probably familiar to the people behind the Nag Hammadi Library. The absence of references to general education and other daily life issues of children may suggest that the authors preferred to write about spiritual instead of earthly themes. They regarded spiritual education very important, just as their Roman, Jewish, and Christian contemporaries.

---

[275] MacDonald, *Power of Children*, 116; Horn, *Childhood*, 13–14, 26–30, 119, 171; Morgan, 'Children in Education', 518–519 and Osiek, *New Testament World*, 68–74, 167.
[276] MacDonald, *Power of Children*, 21–23, 68–91, 102, 106–109, 114, 144; Wassen, 'Dead Sea Scrolls' 355; Horn, *Childhood*, 108–109, 149, 161; Osiek, *New Testament World*, 167–173 and MacDonald, 'Fatherhood', 136–140.

4.4. REACHING MATURITY

Childhood was a flexible concept in Roman times. Everyone younger than twenty years old was seen as a non-adult, but parents settled the end of childhood depending on legal, social and economical status, gender, and geographical factors. Boys had a ceremony, the *toga virilis*, between ages thirteen to eighteen as the starting point of their process of maturity. This includes the age of seventeen mentioned in relation to the son of Addai.[277] Men married at ages between twenty-five and thirty, but marriage was only one of the determinants of the transition into adulthood, besides entrance into military and political careers and the course of education. Girls entered adulthood at marriage based on their ability to procreate, but scholars discuss the exact age, pointing to ages between the early and late teens.

This Roman view on puberty as transitional stage was common in Jewish thought and Philo. For Jewish boys marriage was related to maturity in a complex way. Maturity began at the age of thirteen but was seen as a process with its end point between ages eighteen and twenty. The early rabbis considered girls to be mature, and thus ready for marriage, when they reached puberty at the age of twelve. This way of thinking about maturity was strongly embedded in daily Jewish life.[278]

Several issues blurred the border between children and grown-ups in the Roman world. First, education continued far into adulthood surpassing marriage and child birth, an ideal also expressed by Jewish and Christian circles. Second, work commenced at different and often very young ages. Finally, adulthood did not coincide with independence from parental influence: the *patria potestas*, the power of the father over his *filius familias* and children, only terminated at the father's death. In a marriage *sine manus*, which means without transmission of legal authority, a woman remained bound to her father's dominion. In the early Roman period most marriages were accompanied by transmission of *manus* to

---

[277] See page 42; Funk, '*First Revelation of James*', 329.
[278] Horn, *Childhood*, 9–19; Noy, 'Foreign Families', 156–157; Dyson, 'Roman Countryside', 438; Dasen, 'Childhood and Birth', 296; Morgan, 'Children in Education', 504; Naerebout, *Oudheid*, 395; Osiek, *New Testament World*, 62 and Dixon, 'From Ceremonial', 247.

the husband or, if still alive, the father-in-law, but during the Roman Empire most couples married without this transfer.[279] In the Nag Hammadi Library we have encountered a similar close connection between brides, "adult" at a young age, and their parents.[280]

We have already seen that, together with the community of the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Therapeutae but with an unprecedented emphasis, Christians offered children a new future perspective: celibacy. Celibacy could positively change the future of children but also cloud the outlook on a secure future. Especially the apocryphal acts and later hagiographies suggest that children chose a celibate life.[281] Due to the similar notions on passion and the devaluation of family life, people behind the Nag Hammadi texts may have felt attracted to celibacy as well.

4.5. CHILDREN AS INHERITORS

Among Romans procreation envisaged two main goals: first, begetting an heir and second, securing their retirement as the child took care of parents in old age.[282] An important social function of the family was inheritance, viewed as the passing on of possessions, but also of status and honor by means of the *imitatio patri*.[283] Legitimate heirs could only be born in marriage and were preferably sons inheriting from their fathers. However, Roman daughters could inherit as well, due to their ability to supply male heirs.[284] A second century law allowed mothers to pass their possessions on to their children, but only in the fifth century the same inheritance rules applied for men and women.[285] Roman law forbade slaves to inherit. Christian slaves were promised an inheritance from the Lord, but this obviously did not concern material possessions but was associated

---

[279] Osiek, *New Testament World*, 61–65; MacDonald, *Power of Children*, 9, 18, 34–36, 79–83, 101; Horn, *Childhood*, 3, 15–18, 35–38, 106–108, 252–255; Dyson, 'Roman Countryside', 431; Morgan, 'Children in Education', 504 and Jones, *Early Church*, 120–123.
[280] See page 42.
[281] Horn, *Childhood*, 106–108, 309–323; Dyson, 'Roman Countryside', 443 and Osiek, *New Testament World*, 153.
[282] Osiek, *New Testament World*, 64.
[283] Moxnes, 'What is a Family?', 30.
[284] Lindsay, 'Adoption', 346, 354–356.
[285] J.F. Gardner, 'Roman "Horror" of Intestacy', in: B. Rawson (ed.), *A Companion to Families in the Greek and Roman Worlds* (Oxford 2011) 361–376, there 375 and Evans Grubbs, 'Promoting *Pietas*', 385.

with the coming kingdom of God.[286] The moment of handling over the possessions, an issue the Nag Hammadi Library points to as being variable, happened normally after the death of the parent. The father, however, regularly handed over his possessions during his lifetime to become dependent on his children in old age.[287] This evidence on the inheriting processes confirms the findings in the Nag Hammadi scriptures and vice versa the Library contributes to the images of daily life derived from this evidence.

4.6. CHILDREN AS REPRESENTATIVES

Children as Representatives of (Im)purity

In Antiquity children represented both purity and impurity, just as the children we encountered in the Nag Hammadi scriptures. Romans viewed children as models of piety and praise the "irresistible qualities" of infants like their soft skin, their beauty and charm, their attitude and development, even though occasionally they also refer to their imperfection and even ugliness.[288] The Hebrew Bible, and in the same line the New Testament, uses the metaphor of children to exemplify how the people of the covenant abandon God. His true children remain faithful to him. The canonical gospels take children as examples of discipleship and piety.

As we have seen, Jesus makes the child his representative because of its greater faith, knowledge, and commitment. Early Christian texts, including epitaphs, view children as beautiful, charming, innocent, chaste, undefiled, not even attracted to evil, and call people to follow their ways.[289] However, these teachings of Jesus were received in Early Christianity not only in a literal way, but also in a spiritualized way. Consequently, an earthly child was supposed to submit himself to discipline and education in order to reach the maturity of the model adult, free-born male. Jesus' teachings on childhood were understood as

---

[286] MacDonald, *Power of Children*, 8, 55 and Osiek, *New Testament World*, 62.
[287] Parkin, 'Roman Life Course', 288.
[288] Dasen, 'Childhood and Birth', 291–314 and Laes, 'Grieving', 324–325.
[289] Horn, *Childhood*, 45–47, 64–65, 110–111, 140; MacDonald, *Power of Children*, 125, 146; Osiek, 'Early Christian Families', 210–21 and Laes, 'Grieving', 322–325.

metaphors explaining the path to maturity. Whereas the church members were spiritual children, those not yet grown to maturity in their relationship with God the Father, and thus dependent and vulnerable to seduction, were called "infants": children not yet weaned. Having in mind the references to breastfeeding in Early Christianity, a connection between maturity and toleration of solid food is illustrative. Paul calls his followers to distance themselves from childish immaturity and take solid food.[290] Philo associates more non-adult life stages with impurity, namely childhood with passion and puberty with vice.[291]

In conclusion, the perception of children as representatives of purity and impurity in the Nag Hammadi texts is in line with Roman, Jewish, and Christian views.

Children as Recipients and Transmitters of Knowledge

Nag Hammadi scriptures feature the little representatives of purity also as bearers of divine knowledge. Whereas MacDonald states that Roman society did not regard children as sources of knowledge about anything, Horn demonstrates that children, due to their innocence, purity, and honesty, were seen as mediators between adults and the Roman and Christian divine world. Scholars of Christianity have suggested that children were assumed to possess a special religious sensibility. In Judaism children did not represent spiritual enlightenment, but Jesus portrays them as receivers of hidden knowledge. He associates these bearers of knowledge with smallness and insignificance. His statements relate to his own knowledge of his Father. The canonical gospels show that Jesus is the only one who knows the Father and this knowledge came to him through the will of the Father. Similarly, the Old Testament God chooses his children, but Paul underscores the freedom to choose a life of submission to God. As we have seen in the Nag Hammadi Library, Jesus' task is to disperse this knowledge.[292]

---

[290] Keener, *1-2 Corinthians*, 40.
[291] Horn, *Childhood*, 7–9, 52–61, 254–262; Dasen, 'Childhood and Birth', 292, 312 and MacDonald, *Power of Children*, 68, 90.
[292] MacDonald, *Power of Children*, 23 and Horn, *Childhood*, 33–34, 47–55, 92–94, 179, 252–259, 298–299.

5 Discussion

5.1. CHILDREN AND THE NAG HAMMADI LIBRARY

Children in the Nag Hammadi Library and in Antiquity

Children are not insignificant at all, but they merely cautiously and humbly enter the scholarly arena bringing along just a limited variety of evidence. With this thesis I hope to inspire scholars to search for the "small bits" that ancient evidence—other than that representing "mainstream" Roman, Christian, and Jewish cultures—provides regarding children and their daily life. This will result in a more complete picture of children in Antiquity, who are indeed products of "socially shred assumptions and corresponding normative expectations"[1] but also to relevant research questions.

This thesis is the first study on children in the Nag Hammadi Library. Children and childhood come to the fore as mythological family members and as metaphors in the Library. Romans, Jews, and Christians also made use of familial metaphors, but for different purposes. Whereas Christians wanted to increase the attachment to their spiritual family, the metaphors helped Romans to explain hierarchical relations. The Library uses familial metaphors in a similar way as the Christians, but incorporates in the metaphors the views on childhood current in contemporary Roman, Jewish, and Christian circles.

In general, the Nag Hammadi texts referring to children gain clarity if we read them while considering the daily life of children in Antiquity and, vice versa, these very little bits of evidence confirm what scholars already knew about childhood in the Roman Empire, including its Christian and Jewish inhabitants. I recall the characterization of parent-child relations by obedience and affection related to the concept of *patria potestas*, and by intergenerational continuity. Moreover, knowledge about the hierarchical structure of the "patchwork" household with its biological and stepchildren and slaves, the inferior position of

---

[1] Schweitzer, 'Religion in Childhood',17–21.

illegitimate children in the honor/shame culture, and the inheritance practices including women and the variable moment of handling over the possessions clarifies the Nag Hammadi texts that refer to these themes. The same benefit results from our awareness of Roman, Jewish, and Christian rituals after birth, the transitions from infancy to childhood, from childhood to adulthood, and at the moment of weaning, but also of the prohibition of nurses to have sexual intercourse and the milk ties between people who received milk from the same woman during infancy. For example, the Nag Hammadi sentence telling that Addai's son has to keep a revelation hidden inside him till he is seventeen makes more sense if we are familiar with the broad age range of boys becoming adults in the Roman world. The Library lines up with contemporary notions regarding education as it emphasizes spiritual master-pupil relations and describes these as father-son relations. Its focus on spiritual and moral development and life-long learning fits in its Roman, Jewish, and Christian educational environment.

Besides the metaphorical use of aspects of childhood in the Library, I recognize interactions with views on childhood and related topics current in the Roman Empire. Examples are the appreciation as well as the devaluation or relativizing of marriage and family life, the distinction between real and unreal children and families, the control of desire, the duality of male and female and the necessity of their union, the idea that parents' thoughts during intercourse determines their child's characteristics, and the notion of God as father and creator. We have also come across preexisting souls connecting to bodies, conception following kissing, and the skirting of the boundaries of existence in the Roman world as well as in the Nag Hammadi texts. Finally, evidence from both the Roman world as the Nag Hammadi Library shows children as representatives of purity and impurity, as bearers and revealers of hidden knowledge, and most and for all as a blessing.

We have seen that part of these shared ideas can be traced back to Plato and his successors, being isolated traces of Platonism embedded in the broader ancient culture or part of a wider world view.[2] These ideas were worked out in different ways. For example, the devaluation of family ties in the Nag Hammadi

---

[2] Roig Lanzillotta, 'Platonism', 345–346 and Pleše, *Gnostic Universe*, vii.

texts may relate both to the eschatological perspective and the expression of religious commitment in Christianity and to a spiritual tendency comparable to contemporary philosophical thought. The strong emphasis on celibacy in Early Christianity and some Jewish groups following the devaluation of family life was unprecedented in the Roman world. The people behind the Nag Hammadi scriptures may have been influenced towards encratic ideas, but it remains uncertain to what extent these people really chose such a life style. Imaginably, they were familiar with as many views as their neighbors were.

Also regarding the views on special relationships between children and the divine, the evidence from the Library resembles and differs from other ancient evidence. Just as early Christians and Jews, the authors of the Nag Hammadi Library understood their relation with God through the child metaphor. But whereas Christians and Jews were aware of an intrinsic value of children, the Nag Hammadi books seem to use the metaphor of the child because of its attributed functions. Further studies are needed to investigate whether and to what extent the Library, in line with Jesus' sayings, goes beyond the more incidental notion of children as mediators between divine and earthly worlds. Similar to Christian texts, but in contrast with Jewish and Roman evidence, the Library hardly pays any attention to daily life affairs of children, probably considering the child as part of its household and extended context and leaving aside its individuality. In sum, although diverse ancient currents attribute a special relation with the divine to children, the details of this relation may considerably vary.

This study thus suggests diverse interactions between the Nag Hammadi texts and Roman society, Judaism, and Christianity. These connections may have become visible in opinions regarding social issues. However, the Library remains completely silent on topics such as abortion, infanticide, child exposure, slavery, and sexual use of children. The metaphorical use of birth, antenatal and postnatal life to exemplify salvation and the attainment of knowledge suggests that its authors considered these periods significant and may relate to the Roman, Jewish, and Christian critical notes that were posed against abortion, infanticide, and child exposure. The silence in the Library can be meaningful but

we lack evidence to proof whether people were (relatively) not interested in or agreed with these widespread practices. The social care for orphans is explicitly mentioned in one Nag Hammadi text, the *Sentences of Sextus*. In Roman society widows and orphans were not usually taken care of, in contrast with Christian and Jewish charity. Contrary to Jewish and Christian opinions the people behind the Nag Hammadi texts may not have bothered too much about gender differences. Further research should unravel possible relations with the voices in Roman society that called for similar developmental possibilities for boys and girls.

In conclusion, this effort to imagine daily life of children in Antiquity, especially those related to the Nag Hammadi Library, contributes to our understanding of the views and related metaphors expressed in the Nag Hammadi Library and to our knowledge of children and their families in Antiquity, mainly confirming what we already knew from previous studies about Roman, Jewish, and Christian families. My findings suggest that the views and practices regarding the children expressed by the Nag Hammadi Library did not differ that much from their Roman, Jewish, and Christian neighbors, and probably stemmed from shared notions. All highly valued children as parts of the cornerstone of society, the family. I have found no indications in the Library of a widespread countercultural way of living family lives with children. Admittedly, differences in views on children expressed by Roman, Jewish, and Christian evidence and the Library are also obvious, due to different perspectives, aims, time periods, regions, ethnicities, landscapes, and social classes.

Children and Anthropology, Cosmology, and Ethics

The Nag Hammadi scriptures express a variety of interrelated cosmological, anthropological, and ethical views. The findings discussed in this thesis contribute to our understanding of these views.

We have come across a variable dualism of earthly and divine spheres and its anthropological counterpart distinguishing body from soul or spirit. Texts on mythological family members or using familial metaphors similarly express a duality of female and male and of unreal and real children and their families. In line with the considerations on dualism in the Nag Hammadi Library, we have to approach these sections carefully. The families of the material world and their children are inferior to the real, spiritual families and this possibly results in a devaluation of the first. But superior family members may have challenged and inspired their unreal counterparts to resemble them, their idols. The child living on this earth, though inferior, imaginably gains respect as it reflects the divine. Children are used to explain salvation and the attainment of knowledge. They receive and reveal knowledge of the divine origins, they represent purity, and as infants they "drink" the knowledge symbolized by mother's milk. They result from the union of male and female, and this, as well as their conception and antenatal life, is a powerful image of salvation.

The authors of the Nag Hammadi Library consider aspects of daily childhood to be powerful enough to explain their essential anthropological and cosmological views. They derive many metaphors from the day-to-day life of children, including inheritance practices, *patria potestas*, and patchwork family structures of Roman times but do not express a harsh rejection of family life. Thus, the authors, by using familial metaphors and mythological family members, contributed to the understanding of earthly children as unreal and inferior, but also to the feeling of living suitably and comfortably in earthly families with offspring. A wide spectrum between the two extremes of sharp rejection and a warm embrace of the family is imaginable, and may be due to the possible continuum of cosmological and anthropological views.

Moral deeds are part of spiritual development in several Nag Hammadi scriptures. This, as well as the variety of anthropological and cosmological ideas,

leads to the idea of a varied and extended pallet of ethical stands with at its extremes ascetic and libertine world views. The evidence on children in the Library provides no proof of libertine ethics, but sheds a new light on its assumed ascetic tendencies. The plentiful references to mythological children and the abundant use and content of familial metaphors suggest that most people behind the Nag Hammadi Library continued to have children. We have seen that they considered families as important and warmly welcomed children as a blessing. They combined these ideas with their aim to reach the ideal passionless spiritual state. The ambition to defeat bodily passions was well-known in the Roman world but only in Christianity and Jewish currents it culminated in a powerful emphasis on ascetism. Also regarding celibacy, a "normal distribution" with the most radical stands at its end points is most probable.

The presence of daily family life in the Nag Hammadi texts, admittedly in mostly indirect and implicit ways, suggests that many of its readers and writers were embedded in their families. However, the scriptures hardly ever refer directly to real life daily affairs of children such as education, play, development, behavior, and transitional rituals and the texts do not participate in social debates on ethical matters. There is not enough evidence to tell us what this silence means, especially if we take into account the omnipresent references to children, including those in the perinatal period. For sure, many questions remain regarding topics that the Nag Hammadi scriptures do not treat and about the interactions between the references to children and the daily lives of children related to the Library.

5.2. STRENGTHS AND LIMITATIONS

This thesis is significant as it is the first endeavor to give an overview of the available evidence on children in the Nag Hammadi Library. The combined use of text-critical and historical methods, including the study of textual evidence in relation to sociocultural contexts, are its strengths. By doing so, our restricted sight is enlarged on families living two-thousand years before us, which only left texts that do not in an explicit and direct way narrate about daily life, but that to an uncertain extent affect as well as reflect it.

A comparison of the views on children expressed by the Nag Hammadi Library with those current in Roman, Jewish, and Christian circles is limited as the available evidence mainly represents free-born people belonging to higher social and intellectual layers, neglecting the "silent majority" of children from poor, enslaved, and made free families lower in the social hierarchy. Besides, other cultures and currents, living in a vast time period and a large geographical region, surrounded and interacted with the Library. Finally, the Roman world, Judaism, and Christianity are themselves no monolithic systems, but characterized by variance. Only general and tentative conclusions about children can thus be drawn.

This study uses different translations of the Library as evidence, but not the original Coptic and Greek manuscripts. Ideally, different translations should be studied in combination with the original books. Further, inherent to a first inventory aiming at a global overview is that it rules out an in-depth interpretation and explanation of all found evidence. I have not taken into account per bit of evidence what these bits actually are, what they are a part of, and what they were meant for. This would have lead to a complete and thorough study of all Nag Hammadi books, as nearly every text refers minimally once to children and their family members, and to an infinite amount of possible images of daily childhood in Antiquity.

A final strength or limitation of every scholarly effort and a main covariate to study results is the scholar himself. My interests and social concerns are surely

reflected in the research questions I posed throughout this thesis and probably also to an unknown extent in its findings. I leave it up to the reader, with her or his own assumptions, to decide how this study was influenced, in a limiting or strengthening way by its researcher, being a mother and a public health doctor of youth, intensively involved with nowadays children, fascinated by and respecting their heterogeneous ways of developing, learning, and behaving in an adult world with patchwork families, and convinced that children are significant and not small at all.

5.3. CONCLUDING REMARKS

The texts in the Nag Hammadi Library that pay attention to children become clearer if we have knowledge about the daily life of children in Antiquity. These texts also confirm what we already knew about daily Roman, Jewish, and Christian family life. Since this thesis is not intended as the ultimate study but as a first inventory on children in the Nag Hammadi scriptures, its conclusions are tentative, but surely not insignificant. Its limitations can be seen as a sign of a promising research field. I have identified and gathered evidence; its detailed interpretation and explanation is a next step. The many questions that I have asked in this study can be taken as directions for future studies. Instead of repeating these questions, I would like to make some general concluding remarks. First of all, every finding of this study needs to be reinvestigated with the use of the Coptic originals of the Nag Hammadi texts. Second, every gathered bit of evidence requires further investigation in relation to the text it belongs to and to its particular historical and sociocultural context in order to discover infinite possible explanations, contributions, and relations of the texts both affecting and reflecting daily life. Only then we can decide which cases are the most compelling and further unravel the diverse childhoods children experienced in their daily lives during all ages and in all regions of Antiquity related to the Nag Hammadi scriptures.

Bibliography

Barclay, J.M.G., 'The Family as the Bearer of Religion in Judaism and Early Christianity', in: H. Moxnes (ed.), *Constructing Early Christian Families: Family as Social Reality and Metaphor* (New York 1997) 66–80.

Barnstone, W. and M. Meyer (eds.), *The Gnostic Bible, Gnostic Texts of Mystical Wisdom from the Ancient and Medieval Worlds* (Boston 2003).

Barton, S.C., 'The Relativisation of Family Ties in the Jewish and Greco-Roman Traditions', in: H. Moxnes (ed.), *Constructing Early Christian Families: Family as Social Reality and Metaphor* (New York 1997) 81–102.

Broek, R. van den, 'Gnosticism and Hermetism in Antiquity: Two Roads to Salvation', in: R. van den Broek and W.J. Hanegraaff (eds.), *Gnosis and Hermeticism from Antiquity to Modern Times* (New York 1998) 1–20.

Burkert, W., *Greek Religion* (Victoria 2014).

Cooper, K., 'The Household and Christian Conversion', in: B. Rawson (ed.), *A Companion to Families in the Greek and Roman Worlds* (Oxford 2011) 183–197.

Dasen, V., 'Childhood and Birth in Greek and Roman Antiquity', in: B. Rawson (ed.), *A Companion to Families in the Greek and Roman Worlds* (Oxford 2011) 291–314.

DeConick, A., 'The Great Mystery of Marriage, Sex, and Conception in Ancient Valentinian Traditions', *Vigiliae Christianae* 57 (2003) 307–342.

DeConick, A., 'The Countercultural Gnostic: Turning the World Upside Down and Inside Out', *Gnosis: Journal of Gnostic Studies* 1 (2016) 7–53.

Dickmann, J.A., 'Space and Social Relations in the Roman West', in: B. Rawson (ed.), *A Companion to Families in the Greek and Roman Worlds* (Oxford 2011) 53–72.

Diddle Uzzi, J., 'The Power of Parenthood in Official Roman Art', *Hesperia Supplements* 41 (2007) 61–81.

Dillon, J., *The Middle Platonists, a Study of Platonism 80BC to AD 220* (London 1977).

Dixon, S., 'From Ceremonial to Sexualities', in: B. Rawson (ed.), *A Companion to Families in the Greek and Roman Worlds* (Oxford 2011) 198–214.

Dolanski, F., 'Celebrating the Saturnalia: Religious Ritual and Roman Domestic Life', in: B. Rawson (ed.), *A Companion to Families in the Greek and Roman Worlds* (Oxford 2011) 488–503.

Dyson, S.L., 'The Family and the Roman Countryside', in: B. Rawson (ed.), *A Companion to Families in the Greek and Roman Worlds* (Oxford 2011) 431–444.

Ehrman, B.D., *Lost Christianities and the Battles for Scripture and the Faith We Never Knew* (Oxford 2003).

Esler, P.F., 'Imagery and Identity in Gal 5.13 to 6.10', in: H. Moxnes (ed.), *Constructing Early Christian Families: Family as Social Reality and Metaphor* (New York 1997) 121–149.

Evans Grubbs, J., 'Promoting *Pietas* through Roman Law', in: B. Rawson (ed.), *A Companion to Families in the Greek and Roman Worlds* (Oxford 2011) 377–392.

Funk W.P., '*The First Revelation of James* NHC V,4', in: M. Meyer (ed.), *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures, the Revised and Updated Translation of Sacred Gnostic Texts* (New York 2008) 321–330.

Funk W.P., '*The Second Revelation of James* NHC V,3; Codex Tchacos 2', in: M. Meyer (ed.), *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures, the Revised and Updated Translation of Sacred Gnostic Texts* (New York 2008) 331–342.

Gardner, J.F., 'Roman "Horror" of Intestacy', in: B. Rawson (ed.), *A Companion to Families in the Greek and Roman Worlds* (Oxford 2011) 361–376.

Gilhus, I.S., 'Family Structures in Gnostic Religion', in: H. Moxnes (ed.), *Constructing Early Christian Families: Family as Social Reality and Metaphor* (New York 1997) 235–249.

Golden, M., 'Other People's Children', in: B. Rawson (ed.), *A Companion to Families in the Greek and Roman Worlds* (Oxford 2011) 262–275.

Horn, C.B. and J.W. Martens, '*Let the Little Children Come to Me,' Childhood and Children in Early Christianity* (Washington 2009).

Huebner, S., 'Household Composition in the Ancient Mediterranean—What do We Really Know?', in: B. Rawson (ed.), *A Companion to Families in the Greek and Roman Worlds* (Oxford 2011) 73–91.

Huskinson, J., 'Picturing the Roman Family', in: B. Rawson (ed.), *A Companion to Families in the Greek and Roman Worlds* (Oxford 2011) 521–541.

Imber, M., 'Life without Father: Declamation and the Construction of Paternity in the Roman Empire', *Memoirs of the American Academy in Rome. Supplementary Volumes* 7 (2008) 161–169.

Jones, S., *The World of the Early Church* (Oxford 2011).

Kee, H.C., '"Becoming a Child" in the *Gospel of Thomas*', *Journal of Biblical Literature* 82 (1963) 307–314.

Keener C.S., *1-2 Corinthians* (Cambridge 2005).

King, K.L., *What is Gnosticism?* (Cambridge 2003).

Laes, C., 'Grieving for Lost Children, Pagan and Christian', in: B. Rawson (ed.), *A Companion to Families in the Greek and Roman Worlds* (Oxford 2011) 315–350.

Lang, K.C., 'Images of Women in Early Buddhism and Christian Gnosticism', *Buddhist-Christian Studies* 2 (1982) 94–105.

Lassen, E.M., 'The Roman Family: Ideal and Metaphor', in: H. Moxnes (ed.), *Constructing Early Christian Families: Family as Social Reality and Metaphor* (New York 1997) 103–120.

Layton B., *The Gnostic Scriptures* (New York 1987).

Lindsay, H., 'Adoption and Heirship in Greece and Rome', in: B. Rawson (ed.), *A Companion to Families in the Greek and Roman Worlds* (Oxford 2011) 346–360.

MacDonald, M.Y., *The Power of Children: The Construction of Christian Families in the Greco-Roman World* (Waco 2014).

MacDonald, M.Y., 'Like Father Like Son: Reassessing Constructions of Fatherhood in Ephesians in Light of Cultural Interests in Family Continuity', in: A. Hege Grung, M. Bjelland Kartzow, and A.R. Solevåg (eds.), *Bodies, Borders, Believers, Ancient Texts and Present Conversations* (Eugene 2016) 125–143.

MacConkey Robinson, J. (ed.), *The Coptic Gnostic Library: a Complete Edition of the Nag Hammadi Codices* (Leiden 2000).

Mahé, J.P., 'Gnostic and Hermetic Ethics', in: R. van den Broek en W.J. Hanegraaff (eds.), *Gnosis and Hermeticism from Antiquity to Modern Times* (New York 1998) 21–36.

Mahé, J.P. and M. Meyer, '*The Discourse on the Eighth and the Ninth* NHC VI,6', in: M. Meyer (ed.), *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures, the Revised and Updated Translation of Sacred Gnostic Texts* (New York 2008) 409–418.

Mahé, J.P. and M. Meyer, '*The Prayer of Thanksgiving* NHC VI,7', in: M. Meyer (ed.), *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures, the Revised and Updated Translation of Sacred Gnostic Texts* (New York 2008) 419–424.

Mahé, J.P. and M. Meyer, '*Excerpt from the Perfect Discourse* NHC VI,8', in: M. Meyer (ed.), *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures, the Revised and Updated Translation of Sacred Gnostic Texts* (New York 2008) 425–436.

Martin, D.B., 'Paul without Passion: on Paul's Rejection of Desire in Sex and Marriage', in: H. Moxnes (ed.), *Constructing Early Christian Families: Family as Social Reality and Metaphor* (New York 1997) 201–216.

Mason, S., *Doing History, Part I of Mason: Orientation to the History of Roman Judaea* (Eugene 2016).

Mason, S., *A History of the Jewish War: AD 66–74* (Cambridge 2016).

Meyer, M., 'Introduction', in: M. Meyer (ed.), *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures, the Revised and Updated Translation of Sacred Gnostic Texts* (New York 2008) 1–14.

Meyer, M., '*The Gospel of Thomas* with the Greek *Gospel of Thomas* NHC II,2; P. Oxy. 1, 654, 655; Hippolytus, *Refutation of All Heresies*', in: M. Meyer (ed.), *The Nag Hammadi*

Scriptures, the Revised and Updated Translation of Sacred Gnostic Texts (New York 2008) 133–156.

Meyer, M., '*The Nature of the Rulers* NHC II,4', in: M. Meyer (ed.), *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures, the Revised and Updated Translation of Sacred Gnostic Texts* (New York 2008) 187–198.

Meyer, M., '*On the Origin of the World* NHC II,5; XIII,2; Brit. Lib. Or. 4926(1)', in: M. Meyer (ed.), *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures, the Revised and Updated Translation of Sacred Gnostic Texts* (New York 2008) 199–221.

Meyer, M., '*The Second Discourse of Great Seth* NHC VII,2', in: M. Meyer (ed.), *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures, the Revised and Updated Translation of Sacred Gnostic Texts* (New York 2008) 473–486.

Meyer, M., '*The Revelation of Peter* NHC VII,3', in: M. Meyer (ed.), *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures, the Revised and Updated Translation of Sacred Gnostic Texts* (New York 2008) 487–498.

Meyer, M., '*The Letter of Peter to Philip* NHC VIII,2; Codex Tchacos 1', in: M. Meyer (ed.), *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures, the Revised and Updated Translation of Sacred Gnostic Texts* (New York 2008) 585–594.

Mistry, Z., *Abortion in the Early Middle Ages, c. 500-900* (York 2015).

Morgan, T., '*Ethos*: The Socialization of Children in Education and Beyond', in: B. Rawson (ed.), *A Companion to Families in the Greek and Roman Worlds* (Oxford 2011) 504–520.

Mouritsen, H., 'The Families of Roman Slaves and Freedmen', in: B. Rawson (ed.), *A Companion to Families in the Greek and Roman Worlds* (Oxford 2011) 129–144.

Moxnes, H., 'Introduction', in: H. Moxnes (ed.), *Constructing Early Christian Families: Family as Social Reality and Metaphor* (New York 1997) 1–12.

Moxnes, H., 'What is a Family? Problems in Constructing Early Christian Families', in: H. Moxnes (ed.), *Constructing Early Christian Families: Family as Social Reality and Metaphor* (New York 1997) 13–41.

Naerebout F.G. and H.W. Singor, *De Oudheid* (Amsterdam 1995).

Neumann, J.N., 'Das Kind in der "Kindheitsgeschichte" des Lukas-Evangeliums: Ein Beitrag zum Verständnis von Zeugung, Geburt und Entwicklung des Kindes im Frühen Christentum des ersten Jahrhunderts', *Sudhoffs Archiv* 69 (1985) 192–213.

Noy, D., 'Foreign Families in Roman Italy', in: B. Rawson (ed.), *A Companion to Families in the Greek and Roman Worlds* (Oxford 2011) 145–160.

Osiek, C. and D. Balch, *Families in the New Testament World, Household and House Churches* (Kentucky 1997).

Osiek, C., 'What We Do and Don't Know About Early Christian Families', in: B. Rawson (ed.), *A Companion to Families in the Greek and Roman Worlds* (Oxford 2011) 198–214.

Parkin, T., 'The Roman Life Course and the Family', in: B. Rawson (ed.), *A Companion to Families in the Greek and Roman Worlds* (Oxford 2011) 276–290.

Pearson B.A., '*The Teachings of Silvanus* NHC VII,4', in: M. Meyer (ed.), *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures, the Revised and Updated Translation of Sacred Gnostic Texts* (New York 2008) 499–522.

Pearson B.A. and M. Meyer, '*The Testimony of Truth* NHC IX,3', in: M. Meyer (ed.), *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures, the Revised and Updated Translation of Sacred Gnostic Texts* (New York 2008) 613–628.

Plato, *Theaetetus*, C. Rowe (ed.), *Plato: Theaetetus and Sophist* (Cambridge 2015) 1–98.

Plato, *Timaeus*, A.E. Taylor (ed.), *Plato, Timaeus and Critias* (London 1929) 13–100.

Plato, *Symposium*, J.A. Brentlinger (ed.), *The Symposium of Plato* (Massachusetts 1970).

Pleše, Z., *Poetics of the Gnostic Universe: Narrative and Cosmology in the Apocryphon of John. Nag Hammadi and Manichaean Studies vol. 52* (Leiden 2006).

Poirier P.H. and M. Meyer, '*Thunder* NHC VI,2', in: M. Meyer (ed.), *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures, the Revised and Updated Translation of Sacred Gnostic Texts* (New York 2008) 367–379.

Poirier P.H. and M. Meyer, '*The Sentences of Sextus* NHC XII,1', in: M. Meyer (ed.), *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures, the Revised and Updated Translation of Sacred Gnostic Texts* (New York 2008) 705–713.

Rawson, B., 'Introduction: Families in the Greek and Roman Worlds', in: B. Rawson (ed.), *A Companion to Families in the Greek and Roman Worlds* (Oxford 2011) 1–12.

Roberge, M., '*The Paraphrase of Shem* NHC VII,1', in: M. Meyer (ed.), *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures, the Revised and Updated Translation of Sacred Gnostic Texts* (New York 2008) 437–472.

Roig Lanzillotta, L., 'Platonism and the *Expository Treatise on the Soul* (NHC II,6)', in: L. van der Stockt, F. Titchener, H. Ingenkamp, and A. Pérez Jiménez (eds.), *Gods, Daimones, Rituals, Myths, and History of Religions in Plutarch's Works. Studies Devoted to Professor Frederick E. Brenk by the International Plutarch Society* (Malaga 2010) 345–362.

Roig Lanzillotta, L., '"Come out of your Country and your Kinsfolk": Allegory and Ascent of the Soul in *The Expository Treatise on the Soul* (NHC 11,6)', in M. Goodman, G. van Kooten, and J. van Ruiten (eds.), *Abraham, the Nations, and the Hagarites* (Leiden 2010) 401–420.

Roig Lanzillotta, L., 'Plutarch's Anthropology and Its Influence on His Cosmological Framework', in: M. Meeusen and L. van der Strockt (eds.), *Natural Spectaculars, Aspects of Plutarch's Philosophy of Nature* (Leuven 2015) 179–195.

Roig Lanzillotta, L., 'The Apocalypse of Paul (NHC V,2): Cosmology, Anthropology, and Ethics', *Gnosis: Journal of Gnostic Studies* 1 (2016) 110–131.

Rudolph, K. and R.M. Wilson, *Gnosis: the Nature and History of Gnosticism* (San Francisco 1987).

Saller, R., 'The Roman Family as Productive Unit', in: B. Rawson (ed.), *A Companion to Families in the Greek and Roman Worlds* (Oxford 2011) 116–128.

Schweitzer, F., 'Religion in Childhood and Adolescence: How Should it be Studied? A Critical Review of Problems and Challenges in Methodology and Research', *Journal of Empirical Theology* 27 (2014) 17–35.

Scopello M. and M. Meyer, '*The Secret Book of James* NHC I,2', in: M. Meyer (ed.), *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures, the Revised and Updated Translation of Sacred Gnostic Texts* (New York 2008) 19–30.

Scopello M. and M. Meyer, '*The Gospel of Philip* NHC II,3', in: M. Meyer (ed.), *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures, the Revised and Updated Translation of Sacred Gnostic Texts* (New York 2008) 157–186.

Scopello M. and M. Meyer, '*Exegesis on the Soul* NHC II,6', in: M. Meyer (ed.), *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures, the Revised and Updated Translation of Sacred Gnostic Texts* (New York 2008) 223–234.

Scopello M. and M. Meyer, '*Eugnostos the Blessed* NHC III,3; V,1', in: M. Meyer (ed.), *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures, the Revised and Updated Translation of Sacred Gnostic Texts* (New York 2008) 271–282.

Scopello M. and M. Meyer, '*The Wisdom of Jesus Christ* NHC III,4; BG 8502,3; P. Oxy. 1081', in: M. Meyer (ed.), *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures, the Revised and Updated Translation of Sacred Gnostic Texts* (New York 2008) 283–296.

Scopello M. and M. Meyer, '*The Dialogue of the Savior* NHC III,5', in: M. Meyer (ed.), *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures, the Revised and Updated Translation of Sacred Gnostic Texts* (New York 2008) 297–312.

Scopello M. and M. Meyer, '*The Revelation of Paul* NHC V,2', in: M. Meyer (ed.), *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures, the Revised and Updated Translation of Sacred Gnostic Texts* (New York 2008) 313–320.

Scopello M. and M. Meyer, '*The Revelation of Adam* NHC V,5', in: M. Meyer (ed.), *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures, the Revised and Updated Translation of Sacred Gnostic Texts* (New York 2008) 343–356.

Scopello M. and M. Meyer, '*Authoritative Discourse* NHC VI,3', in: M. Meyer (ed.), *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures, the Revised and Updated Translation of Sacred Gnostic Texts* (New York 2008) 379–390.

Scopello M. and M. Meyer, '*The Concept of Our Great Power* NHC VI,4', in: M. Meyer (ed.), *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures, the Revised and Updated Translation of Sacred Gnostic Texts* (New York 2008) 391–402.

Segal, R., 'Myth', in: R. Segal (ed.), *The Blackwell Companion to the Study of Religion* (Blackwell 2006) 337–355.

Sutcliffe, S., '"Wandering Stars": Seekers and Gurus in the Modern World', in: S. Sutcliffe, S. and M. Bowman (eds.), *Beyond New Age: Exploring Alternative Spirituality* (Edinburgh 2000) 17–36.

Thomassen, E. and M. Meyer, '*The Gospel of Truth* NHC I,3; XII,2', in: M. Meyer (ed.), *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures, the Revised and Updated Translation of Sacred Gnostic Texts* (New York 2008) 31–48.

Thomassen, E. and M. Meyer, '*The Treatise on Resurrection* NHC I,4', in: M. Meyer (ed.), *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures, the Revised and Updated Translation of Sacred Gnostic Texts* (New York 2008) 49–58.

Thomassen, E., '*The Tripartite Tractate* NHC I,5', in: M. Meyer (ed.), *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures, the Revised and Updated Translation of Sacred Gnostic Texts* (New York 2008) 57–102.

Thomassen, E., '*The Interpretation of Knowledge* NHC XI,1', in: M. Meyer (ed.), *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures, the Revised and Updated Translation of Sacred Gnostic Texts* (New York 2008) 651–662.

Thomassen, E. and M. Meyer, '*Valentinian Exposition* with *Valentinian Liturgical Readings* NHC XI,2', in: M. Meyer (ed.), *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures, the Revised and Updated Translation of Sacred Gnostic Texts* (New York 2008) 663–678.

Tulloch, J.H., 'Devotional Visuality', in: B. Rawson (ed.), *A Companion to Families in the Greek and Roman Worlds* (Oxford 2011) 542–563.

Turner J.D. and M. Meyer, '*The Secret Book of John* NHC II,1; III,1; IV,1; BG 8502,2′, in: M. Meyer (ed.), *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures, the Revised and Updated Translation of Sacred Gnostic Texts* (New York 2008) 103–132.

Turner J.D. and M. Meyer, '*The Book of Thomas* NHC III,7', in: M. Meyer (ed.), *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures, the Revised and Updated Translation of Sacred Gnostic Texts* (New York 2008) 235–246.

Turner J.D. and M. Meyer, '*The Holy Book of the Great Invisible Spirit* NHC III,2; IV,2', in: M. Meyer (ed.), *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures, the Revised and Updated Translation of Sacred Gnostic Texts* (New York 2008) 247–270.

Turner J.D., '*The Three Steles of Seth* NHC VII,5', in: M. Meyer (ed.), *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures, the Revised and Updated Translation of Sacred Gnostic Texts* (New York 2008) 523–536.

Turner J.D., '*Zostrianos* NHC VIII,1', in: M. Meyer (ed.), *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures, the Revised and Updated Translation of Sacred Gnostic Texts* (New York 2008) 537–584.

Turner J.D., '*Marsanes* NHC X', in: M. Meyer (ed.), *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures, the Revised and Updated Translation of Sacred Gnostic Texts* (New York 2008) 629–650.

Turner J.D., '*Allogenes the Stranger* NHC XI,3', in: M. Meyer (ed.), *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures, the Revised and Updated Translation of Sacred Gnostic Texts* (New York 2008) 679–700.

Turner J.D., '*Three Forms of First Thought* NHC XIII,1', in: M. Meyer (ed.), *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures, the Revised and Updated Translation of Sacred Gnostic Texts* (New York 2008) 715–736.

Uro, R., 'Asceticism and Anti-Familial Language in the *Gospel of Thomas*', in: H. Moxnes (ed.), *Constructing Early Christian Families: Family as Social Reality and Metaphor* (New York 1997) 216–234.

Wassen, C., 'On the Education of Children in the Dead Sea Scrolls', *Studies in Religion* 41 (2012) 350–363.

Waters, K.L., 'Saved through Childbearing: Virtues as Children in 1 Timothy 2:11–15', *Journal of Biblical Literature* 123 (2004) 703–735.

Williams, M.A., *Rethinking 'Gnosticism': An Argument for Dismantling a Dubious Category* (Princeton 2001).

Williams, M.A., 'A Life Full of Meaning and Purpose: Demiurgical Myths and Social Implications', in: E. Iricinschi, L. Jenott, N. Denzey Lewis, and P. Townsend (eds.), *Beyond the Gnostic Gospels, Studien und Texte zu Antike und Christentum 82* (Tübingen 2013) 19–59.

Yarbro-Collins A.Y., 'The Female Body as Social Space in 1 Timothy', *New Testament Studies* 57 (2011) 155–175.

Yarbrough, O.L., 'Parents and Children in the Letters of Paul' in: L.M. White and O.L. Yarbrough (eds.), *The Social World of the First Christians: Essays in Honor of Wayne A. Meeks* (Minneapolis 1995) 126–143.

Websites:

https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/quotes/n/nelsonmand178795.html,

'Nelson Mandela Quotes', last accessed: 3 March 2017.