

4 | Notes Made by Monks: The Marginal Markings in Codex I and Codex VIII

This chapter deals with a curious scribal feature prominent in two Nag Hammadi codices: the appearance of *diple* and *coronis* signs in the margins of the texts, either alone or in a row. On the few occasions these signs have been noted and discussed by scholars engaged with the Nag Hammadi texts, they have been described, or perhaps rather explained away, as paragraph markers. As this chapter makes clear, however, there is not much supporting the interpretation that the small arrow-like signs in both the left and right margins appearing in some of the texts are paragraph markers. Rather, it is argued here that these signs in Codex I and Codex VIII were markers made by a reader or the scribe himself to highlight passages of particular importance. Furthermore, it is argued that the context in which the marked passages make the most sense is that of a Pachomian monastery in the late fourth or early fifth century.

Ancient Christian Scribal Practice and the Use of *Diplai*

Christians used a number of scribal signs meant to aid the legibility and study of a text: paragraph markers in the form of enlarged letters; initial lines protruding into the margin (called *ekthesis*); diaeresis markers, dots above vowels to indicate where one word ends and the next begins; as well as aspirations and breathing markers. Another scribal sign, or perhaps reading sign, with a more elusive function was the *paraphrasi cum corone*, or simply *coronis*, written somewhat like the letter tau with a tilting base,

a parallel line with a diagonal vertical stroke drawn from its middle down to the left side. *Corone* were chiefly used as paragraph markers but could also highlight passages of particular importance. The *diple* sign, written like a pointed bracket or an arrow (>), has an even vaguer background. Greek scribes are said to have used the *diplai* markers for a number of reasons: in order to highlight passages in a text which contained quotations from another text, for example, or for marking out important passages with paratextual relevance.¹ This practice was adopted by Christian scribes to varying degrees, as scholars have noted previously.² In the earliest Christian manuscripts containing the New Testament writings, the *diplai* signs were used to mark out passages quoting the Hebrew Bible.³ Charles E. Hill writes that he has not found any Christian texts from antiquity where this sign is used in any other way than to quote Scripture.⁴ However, as we shall see, none of the passages highlighted in the Nag Hammadi texts by one or more *diple* signs being placed in the right or left margins are quotes – or not, at least, of any texts known to us today, Christian or otherwise. However, as noted, *diplai* were also applied for other purposes, although New Testament scholars have not expanded upon their Christian use. Eric Turner notes in his work on the codicology of Greek manuscripts that a *diple* was used to mark passages, words or phrases of particular importance, to indicate a parallel or reference or to mark out a passage which is further elaborated on in a commentary in the scribe's possession or one that is in the process of being made.⁵

¹ Eric G. Turner, *Greek Papyri: An Introduction* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016 [1968]), 92–95, 112–124; Turner, *Greek Manuscripts*, 17–18.

² Charles E. Hill, 'Irenaeus, the Scribes, and the Scriptures: Papyrological and Theological Observations from P.Oxy 3.405', in *Irenaeus: Life, Scripture, Legacy*, ed. Sara Parvis and Paul Foster (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2012), 119–130.

³ Charles E. Hill, "'The Truth above All Demonstration': Scripture in the Patristic Period to Augustine', in *The Enduring Authority of the Christian Scriptures*, ed. D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2016), 68–69.

⁴ Hill, 'The Truth above All Demonstration', 68–69.

⁵ Turner, *Greek Papyri*, 118.

Let us turn to the Nag Hammadi texts showcasing the *diplai* and *corone* signs.

Scribal Signs in the Nag Hammadi Codices

It has been estimated that twelve different scribes were involved in producing the Nag Hammadi codices, chiefly by identifying the particulars of the scribal hands.⁶ Many, although far from all the texts contain scribal signs, including punctuation, diaeresis, *ekthesis*, spacing and enlarged letters, among others, that one would expect of ancient manuscripts from this age and context. Such signs were most likely meant to aid legibility, to ease the tracking of the text when reading it (most probably aloud). However, given the existence of some very cluttered pages as well as texts without any scribal markings at all (like *The Treatise on the Resurrection* in Codex I, discussed in the previous chapter), legibility was far from the first priority for all scribes. Facilitating the reading or performing of the texts in communal settings by a lector was, thus, most likely not their chief purpose. Rather, examination of the scribal signs found in the texts indicates a better fit with a scenario in which the texts were copied for private use: for study, contemplation, educational purposes and discussion.

The *corone* signs appear in Codices III, V and VIII. As René Falkenberg has pointed out in his study of the sequence of the texts in Codex III (from a codicological perspective), a *coronis* by itself does not give much information about its function.⁷ Usually they

⁶ James M. Robinson, 'The Construction of the Nag Hammadi Codices', in *Essays on the Nag Hammadi Texts: In Honor of Pahor Labib*, ed. M. Krause (Leiden: Brill, 1975), 170–190; Williams, *Rethinking 'Gnosticism'*, 242–243.

⁷ See, René Falkenberg, 'The Making of a Secret Book of John: NHC III in Light of New Philology', in *Snapshots of Evolving Traditions: Jewish and Christian Manuscript Culture, Textual Fluidity, and New Philology*, ed. Liv Ingeborg Lied and Hugo Lundhaug (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2017), 105–109. My thanks to the anonymous reviewer who pointed this out to me.

are used as paragraph markers but to ascertain this one is dependent on the context, coupled with other paratextual features. Their use in the Nag Hammadi codices remains to be systematically studied. The *diploi* (>) and the *diple obelismene* (>—) have also received unreasonably little attention. Studying these signs carries great potential for aiding us in determining who actually read these texts and why.

Found in most of the Nag Hammadi codices, the majority of the *diple* signs are situated at the far-right edge of a line to make the margin straight or at the bottom of a page or a text, to complete the last line of a text/page. Thus, the *diple* sign was first and foremost used as a line filler and for marking off passages and ending pages. In these cases, the *diploi* are simply used for aesthetic purposes and for lucidity.⁸ The *coronis*, or *paraphrasi cum corone*, as its name indicates, is most often thought to be a paragraph marker. But closer study of the Nag Hammadi codices shows that the *coronis* is not used only as a paragraph marker, nor can the *diploi* be reduced to simple line fillers.

On some occasions, like in Codex VIII, we find *coronis* marks that cannot be paragraph markers, since they are found within a narrative. We also find *diple* signs in the margin of texts that do not seem to have the function of being a line filler, since the marks protrude into the margin (and thus serve the opposite purpose of a line filler).⁹ These are found in Codex I. They, too, appear in the

⁸ See 13:25 (here there is also a forward slash: /), 59:38, 66:40, 89:36, 90:13, 93:37, 97:39, 101:35.

⁹ For example, in Codex I, *diploi* marks are used at the ending of *The Apocryphon of James* and *The Gospel of Truth* and also used to mark off the three different subsections of *The Tripartite Tractate*. That the *diple* has other functions as well is apparent from 33:39, 40:1–2, 68:19, 75:32–34, 82:2–3, 82:10, 83:21, 84:11–13, 119:23–27. This has previously been noted in regard to Codex I, by Kasser (*Tractatus Tripartitus: Pars I*, 15), who also marks out 118:36 as including a *diple*, yet the left margin is not visible due to lacunae and at the right margin there is a colon, not a *diple* (Kasser, *Tractatus Tripartitus: Pars I*, 15). On page 32 the mark is used to indicate where to insert a line that the scribe failed to copy, which was then placed at the bottom of the page. In my opinion, the *diple* at 33:39 is more reminiscent of a *coronis*.

middle of a narrative and cannot have been used as paragraph markers. Kasser suggested that the *diplai* in Codex I could have been used to indicate quotes, as in other early Christian texts, for example quotes from Scripture, but the passages so marked are not from any known Scriptural text. The same is the case with the *coronis*, excluding its use as a quotation marker. Kasser also suggests that the markings in Codex I could indicate passages of particular importance. Let us study these cases in detail, first the *diplai* in Codex I and then compare them to the *corone* sign appearing in Codex VIII and see what the use of these signs can tell us about their readers and how they were read.

The Diplai in Codex I

The *diple* sign is used throughout Codex I and, as stated above, most are line fillers and markers to end a page/text. But in the following places, the sign is not a line filler, nor does it highlight when a text or page ends: 68:19, 75:32–34, 82:2–3, 82:10 83:21, 84:11–13, 119:23–27.¹⁰ Three of these instances are pages where just a single *diple* has been placed next to the margin (68:19, 82:10 and 83:21). The single lines highlighted in this way do not form complete sentences, nor are they indicators of the beginning of something new in the narrative.

¹⁰ We could include 82:10 and 40:1–2. At 82:10 the marking is placed between two lines, followed by a ze. This is most likely a paragraph marker. The sentence marked out at 40:1–2 makes poor sense on its own. The two lines read: εἰ ᾤμι ἐμμε ἡτοοτῆ ἡνεῖ ἡταρμεστοῦ ὑαρῆ. However, since the above *diple* is placed between lines 1 and 2, I take it here as a maker for the beginning of a new passage, which is also what seems to begin at the end of line 2. From the word ὑαρῆ onward, which is the beginning of a new sentence, the nature of “the Name” is being described in detail. On page 32 there is a mark used to indicate where to insert a line that the scribe failed to copy, but which was then placed at the bottom of the page. Finally, at the bottom of page 33 (33:39) in *The Gospel of Truth*, we find a marking below the line. This might be the only occasion where a *coronis* sign is used, which often signals a shift in focus or a new passage, but also part of a particularly important subject. Here it was perhaps meant to highlight the *paraenetic* sections that are concentrated on page 33. It might also be a way to highlight the importance of the following page, 34, which discusses the nature of the Father.

The lines before 68:19 tell us how the Aeons are expected to honour the Father with a certain sentence; then follows the *diple* line, 'It is the Father who is the All' (πρωτ· πε πεε· ετεε η̄ταδϣ πε· η̄πτηρ̄ϣ) (68:18–19). This is too short to ascertain if it is a quote from another text or just a mark made by a reader to note the sentence, perhaps agreeing with what has just been read. We find the same thing in 83:21, which reads, 'glorious pre-existent one' ([τ]λειλειτ· ετ̄ρ̄ ῡαρ̄η̄ η̄ωοοπ̄). Both of these *diplai* occur in the middle of a narrative and highlight passages that underline the greatness of the highest Father, a noteworthy topic for a Christian reader. At 82:10, a *diple* is placed at the end of a passage but not as one would expect, to mark the place where something new starts, but rather to mark off a sentence that ends the previous passage. The *diple* is placed next to a line that is drawn inward from the left margin, marking out a sentence beginning and ending with χε, between which we read, 'All his prayer and remembering were numerous powers according to that limit. For there is nothing barren in his thought.'¹¹ It is hard to decipher a more detailed purpose behind marking out these single *diple* sentences. There are, however, four instances in *The Tripartite Tractate* where multiple *diplai* have been placed in a vertical row next to the margin, marking out longer passages (75:32–34, 82:2–3, 84:11–13 and 119:23–27) (see Fig. 4.1).

As mentioned in the previous chapter, two of these vertical rows of *diplai* (p. 119 and, even more clearly, on p. 84) must have been inserted by the scribe himself,¹² since they do not protrude into the left margin, as one would expect if they were added post-inscription

¹¹ 82:10–14: χε η̄ελεπσε̄ τηρ̄η̄ η̄τεε η̄η̄ η̄η̄ (η̄)η̄εεγε· η̄εη̄ωοοπ̄ η̄η̄η̄δομ̄ η̄η̄εωωω
κα(τα) η̄η̄ρορ̄οσ η̄η̄ ετ̄η̄η̄εη̄ χε η̄η̄ λλγε· ωοοπ̄ εφοη̄λοσ̄ η̄η̄τεε η̄η̄η̄εη̄[ε]. Text and translation by Attridge, in *Nag Hammadi Codex I*, ed. Attridge, 242–243.

¹² This, of course, presupposes that these features were not simply copied from the original Greek manuscript. However, this seems highly unlikely. Turner, *Greek Manuscripts*.



Figure 4.1 The top of page 84 and the bottom of 119 exhibit vertical *diplai* in line with the left margin, which indicates that they were made by the scribe or that the scribe intentionally indented the passage. Photo of page 84 by Basile Psiroukis. Photo of page 119 by Jean Doresse. Images courtesy of the Institute for Antiquity and Christianity Records, Special Collections, Claremont Colleges Library, Claremont, California.

(see Fig. 4.1). On pages 75 and 82 the case is less certain. On page 75 the markings are on the right side of the margin, which is rare for this scribe, so it is possible that they were added by a later reader. In the case of page 82, lines 2 and 3, the *diplai* are placed next to the left of the text, as *ekthesis*.¹³ The two lines do not extend as far to the left as the surrounding lines, suggesting that the *diplai* were added by the scribe when copying the text.

¹³ This refers to a technique whereby the first line of a passage protrudes into the left margin, as a sort of reading aid.

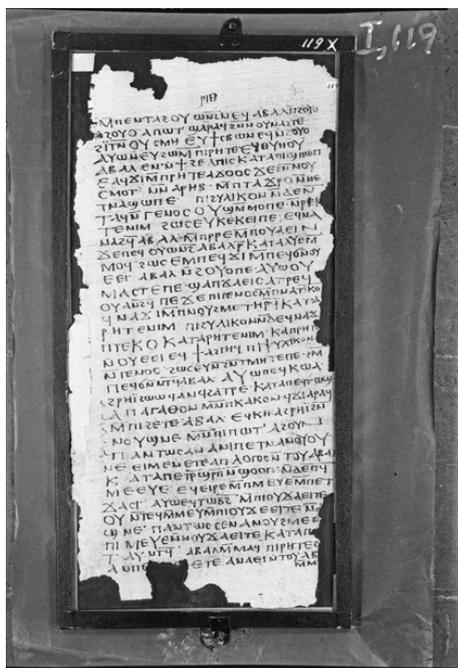


Figure 4.1 (cont.)

What is the meaning of these markings?¹⁴ In the following section I examine these four instances where it is obvious that we are not dealing with paragraph markers (because there is more than one *diple* in the margin), quotes (they are from no known text) or line fillers (all except one are found in the left margin¹⁵).

¹⁴ Thomassen writes that sometimes the *diploi* seem to point ‘out a passage of special interest’ or ‘tend to be general and easily quotable dicta’. Unfortunately, he does not elaborate on why these passages would be interesting or quotable, or what this could tell us about the readers and owners of this codex. Cf. Einar Thomassen, ‘The Tripartite Tractate from Nag Hammadi’ (PhD diss., University of St Andrews, 1982), 13 n. 3. This point seems to have been omitted in the published French version. See Einar Thomassen and Louis Painchaud, *Le traité tripartite: (NH I,5)* (Québec: Le Presses de l’Université Laval, 1989), 6.

¹⁵ On page 75 the row of *diploi* is in the right margin, where one would expect line fillers, but these are somewhat awkwardly placed for line fillers (see image above).

Multiple Diplai in The Tripartite Tractate (NHC I,5)

At 75:32–34 we find three *diplai* in the right-hand margin marking the following passage:

He (the Logos) received a wise	αϑχι ἡνοϋφνςις ἡσοφια
nature so as to inquire into	ατρειϑατϑτ̄ ἡσα πσυμε·
the hidden order, since he was	ετθη ϑωσ ευκαρποσ
an offspring of wisdom. ¹⁶	ἡσοφια πε

This sentence describes the nature of the Logos, and page 75 as a whole marks the entrance of the Logos, the main character of the narrative in *The Tripartite Tractate*.

Lines 82:2–3 have two *diplai* in the left margin, marking a passage on the return of the Logos after his fall from the harmony of the Pleroma. The marked-out sentence reads, ‘It was a help, causing him to turn toward himself’,¹⁷ referring to the ‘prayer of the blending’ (πικαπ̄ ἡτε πτωτ̄), mentioned on the line before. ‘Blending’ (πτωτ̄) is a technical term used throughout *The Tripartite Tractate* to refer to rejoining the harmony of the Pleroma, Christ and the unity of the spiritual Church.¹⁸ And, as we have seen,

¹⁶ NHC I, 75:32–34. The last five letters are found on line 35. My translation. Text by Attridge, in *Nag Hammadi Codex I*, ed. Attridge, 232.

¹⁷ NHC I, 82:2–3: ΠΕΟΥΒΟΗΘΙΑ ΠΕ· ΑΤΡΕΥΤΣΑϑ ΕΒΟΥΗ ΜΜΗΗ ΜΜ[αϑ]. My translation. Text by Attridge, in *Nag Hammadi Codex I*, ed. Attridge, 242. As in the case of 40:1–2, one of the two arrows on page 82 seems to be placed between the lines. This could thus be understood as an indication that the whole following passage is of particular import. However, this does not fit the narrative on page 82 at all, while at the same time the two lines together form a complete sentence with a crucial point being made. Thus, I rather think it is more likely that just the two sentences are being highlighted.

¹⁸ Linjamaa, *The Ethics of The Tripartite Tractate*, chapter 1. Another word used for this is ΜΟΥΖΚ, and these two terms are contrasted with ΤΩϑ and ΤΑϑΤϑ (‘mixing’), The words for mixing are used when the Logos gets ‘unmixed’ (ΑΤΤΩϑ) from his erroneous creation on account of the Saviour (90:17–18); when the Logos does not allow his superior powers to ‘mix’ (ΤΩϑ) with the inferior (97:25); when the righteous Hebrews transcend the influence of the ‘mixed powers’ (ΠΘΟΜ ΕΤΕϑΤΑϑΤ) and ‘attained to the level of the unmixed ones’ (ΑΤΑϑΤϑ) (110:34); and to denote those

praying has previously been highlighted in the text as of particular importance (82:10). There is a third *diple* a few lines further down, between lines 9 and 10, marking off a whole paragraph that starts with the Logos turning towards himself. The passage as a whole reads:

The prayer of the blending was a help, causing him to turn towards himself and the Totality. A reason for him to remember the pre-existent ones is that he is remembered. This is the thought which calls out from afar, bringing him back. ¹⁹	ΠΕΡΕΠΙΣΑΠ̄C ΒΕ Η̄ΤΕ ΠΙΤΩΤ [ΠΕ] ΝΕΟΥΒΟΗΘΙΑ ΠΕ· ΔΤΡΕΥΤCΑC ΕΞΟΥΝ Μ̄ΜΙΝ Μ̄Μ[ΔC] ΔΥΩ ΠΤΗΡC̄ ΧΕ ΝΕΟΥΛΔΕΙΘΕ ΝΕC ΠΕ· ΔΤΡΕC̄Ρ ΠΜΕΕΥ[Ε] ΝΠΕΤΥΟΟΠ Η̄ΥΑΡ̄Η ΠΕΤΡΟῩΡ ΠΕCΜΕΕΥΕ· ΕΤΕ ΠΑΕΙ ΠΕ ΠΜΕΥΕ ΕΤΩΩ ΔΒΔΛ Μ̄ΠΟΥΔΕΙΕ· ΕCΤCΟ Μ̄ΜΔC̄
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Again, prayer is discussed. Here we are told that the Logos turns towards himself, prays and then remembers his previous life with the Totality (the harmony with other Aeons), and the Totality in turn remembers him. These events contribute to the Logos' return to harmony.

Lines 84:11–13 have a *diple* beside the first letter in the left margin, and all three are in line with the text in the body, which indicates that they were written by the original scribe and were meant to be included in the text from the beginning. The sentences on these

humans and angels who will be lost and destroyed in the end, as they are mixed (ΤΕΤ̄Τ̄/ΤΕC̄Τ̄) (120:21, 121:22). This mixed state is the original human reality and would have been permanent if it were not for the grace of the Saviour. This is contrasted to 'blending' (ΤΩΤ/ΜΟΥΧΚ): when the elect blend with the Saviour (122:13–17); when the Logos is reintegrated (blends) with the Pleroma from which he had fallen away (122:25–27); as the blended harmony of the Aeons (68:27, 71:11); and as a description of the ultimate restoration (ΑΠΟΚΑΤΑCΤΑCΙC) of the Church and the Pleroma (123:11–27, 133:6–7). These aspects are influenced by Stoic discussions of physics. For more, see Linjamaa, *The Ethics of The Tripartite Tractate*, chapter 1.

¹⁹ NHC I, 82:1–9. My translation. Text by Attridge, in *Nag Hammadi Codex I*, ed. Attridge, 242.

lines comment on the emergence of the different beings created in the aftermath of the fall of the Logos. We read:

<p>they were drawn down into forces and substances in accordance with the state of being in conflict (with) each other.²⁰</p>	<p>ΑΤΡΟΥΑΜΕ̄ ΖΑ ΖΗ̄ΒΟΜ ΔΥΩ ΖΑ ΖΗΝΟΥΟΥΓΙ[Δ] ΚΑΤΑ ΠΤΩΥΕ· ΜΠ† Δ[ΧΗ] ΝΟΥΕΡΗΥ·</p>
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Here we encounter an explanation of how the angelic orders above humanity emerged, later called those on the left and the right; they were drawn down after the fall of the Logos into certain natures and substances that resulted in a perpetual conflict within the angelic world.

The last section marked off is at 119:23–27, and here the *diplai* are found in the left margin. This passage discusses another important subject in *The Tripartite Tractate*: the psychic race. The pneumatics are described as those who react immediately to the appearance of the Saviour; these people are the natural leaders of the Church and described as the teachers (116:17–20). The role and identity of the psychics is uncertain. However, the lines marked off with *diplai* make things a bit clearer:

<p>According to its (the psychic race) disposition for both good and evil, it receives the emanation that is established abruptly, and the complete escape to those who are good.²¹</p>	<p>ΚΑΤΑ ΠΕΥΤΩΥ ΑΠΑΓΛΘΘΝ Μ̄ ΠΚΑΚΟΝ ΕΧΙ ΔΡΑΕΥ Μ̄ΠΙΖΕΤΕ· ΔΒΔΔ· ΕΚΚΗ· ΔΖΡΗ̄Ι ΖΗ̄Ν ΟΥΥΠΕ Μ̄ ΠΠΩΤ· ΔΘΟΥΝ ΠΑΝΤΩΣ ΔΗ ΔΗΠΕΤΗΔΗΝΟΥΟΥ·</p>
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²⁰ NHC I, 84:11–13. My translation. Text by Attridge, in *Nag Hammadi Codex I*, ed. Attridge, 246. I emend the lacuna on line 13 with Δ[ΧΗ] instead of Δ[ΖΗ], as Attridge has it, thus following Thomassen and Painchaud, *Le traité tripartite*, x.

²¹ NHC I, 119:23–27. My translation. Text by Attridge, in *Nag Hammadi Codex I*, ed. Attridge, 308.

This is a crucial passage in the text. Here we learn that the psychic humans will receive a ‘complete escape’ but that they are drawn to both good and evil on account of the ephemeral nature of their situation. Later in *The Tripartite Tractate* we read that the psychics have to prove themselves by doing good works and acting as instructed by the pneumatics (131:22–34).

In conclusion, the passages marked off with more than one *diple* sign can be summed up in the following way:

75:32–34	Logos as offspring of Wisdom
82:2–3	Logos prays and is aided to turn towards himself
84:11–13	Angelic warfare
119:23–27	The psychics receive full salvation

Elucidating the Monastic Connection of the Diplai Passages in Codex I

All these topics, particularly those highlighting the need for prayer and the passage on page 84 commenting on angelic warfare,²² would have spoken to ascetics involved in early Egyptian monasticism.²³ The passages also deal with details pertaining to Valentinian theology (e.g. those on the youngest Aeon and the psychic race), technicalities that are not spontaneously associated with monks. However, we know that several Church Fathers read Valentinian works and some wrote long treatises about and against them, including two of the most famous early Christian theologians, Origen and Clement, who were in turn read by monks.²⁴ It is

²² For more on this topic in early Christianity, focusing on the monastic movement, see especially David Brakke, *Demons and the Making of the Monk: Spiritual Combat in Early Christianity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006).

²³ Lundhaug and Jenott, *Monastic Origins*, 78–89, 246–262.

²⁴ Clement’s paraphrase of Valentinian theology is often counted among the most reliable (e.g. his recapitulation of a certain Theodotus). Origen read, wrote about and often agreed with Heraclion, one of the earliest theologians to have been influenced by Valentinus. Furthermore, we know that many monks read and admired Origen,

not unthinkable for monks to have shown interest in forms of Christian theology that Origen and Clement discussed at length and sometimes even upheld, texts that also coincided with what was classified as Origenist theology.²⁵ As many scholars have pointed out, *The Tripartite Tractate* corresponds with Origen's thought on several points: on the doctrine of *apokatastasis*; seeing the Will of the Father as the origin of creation; the pre-existence of souls before the body; a resurrection without the physical body.²⁶ But what could have spoken to a monastic reader in the parts highlighted with *diplai* (except the clear monastic topics of prayer and angelic warfare)?

which would eventually become controversial. They read Clement too. For the influence Clement had on Evagrius, for example, see Brakke, *Demons and the Making of the Monk*, chapter 3. For the influence of Origen in early Egyptian monasticism, see Samuel Rubenson, 'Origen in the Egyptian Monastic Tradition of the Fourth Century', in *Origeniana Septima: Origen in den Auseinandersetzungen des 4. Jahrhunderts*, ed. W. A. Bienert and U. Kühneweg (Leuven: Peeters, 1999), 319–337; Jon F. Dechow, 'The Nag Hammadi Milieu: An Assessment in the Light of the Origenist Controversies (with Appendix 2015)', in *The Nag Hammadi Codices and Late Antique Egypt*, ed. H. Lundhaug and L. Jenott (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2018), 11–51. For a work on the relation between Origen and Heracleon, see Carl Johan Berglund, *Origen's References to Heracleon: A Quotation-Analytical Study of the Earliest Known Commentary on the Gospel of John* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2020).

²⁵ For examples on how *The Gospel of Philip* in Nag Hammadi Codex II reflects awareness of the Origenist controversy, see Hugo Lundhaug, *Images of Rebirth: Cognitive Poetics and Transformational Soteriology in the Gospel of Philip and the Exegesis on the Soul* (Leiden: Brill, 2010).

²⁶ For more on the Origenist tendencies in *The Tripartite Tractate*, see Lundhaug and Jenott, *Monastic Origins*, 242. One doctrine on which Clement, Athanasius (who wrote *The Life of Antony*), Evagrius and *The Tripartite Tractate* would agree is that bad *phantasia* (impressions) could affect humans and are the result of demons (in *The Tripartite Tractate* called 'mixed powers' or those comic powers from the 'left' side) (109:24–110:1, 110:22–111:23). For discussions of this doctrine in Clement, Evagrius, Shenoute and Athanasius, see Brakke, *Demons and the Making of the Monk*, 37–47; Alberto Camplani, 'Un episodio della ricezione del ΠΕΡΙ ΕΥΧΗΣ in Egitto: Note di eresiologia Shenutiana', in *Il dono e la sua ombra: Ricerche sul di Origene: Atti del I Convegno del Gruppo Italiano di Ricerca su 'Origene e la Tradizione Alessandrina'*, ed. F. Cocchini (Rome: Institutum Patristicum Augustinianum, 1997), 159–172.

The youngest Aeon is called Logos in *The Tripartite Tractate*, but in Valentinian theology the youngest Aeon is more often called Sophia, as in *The Interpretation of Knowledge* and *A Valentinian Exposition*, which were copied by the same scribe who copied *The Treatise on the Resurrection* in Codex I.²⁷ The passage marked off at 75:32–34 could have been read with special interest because here the Logos is an offspring of Wisdom (Sophia). The doctrine that the Logos, identified with the Wisdom of God, carries out creation according to the providence of God (as it is described in *The Tripartite Tractate*) would not have sounded strange to a reader familiar with John's prologue, and even less strange to one who had knowledge of the writings of Philo and Origen.²⁸ There are, of course, also points of departure. For example, Origen would likely have opposed *The Tripartite Tractate* at the same point where he opposed Heracleon, who made the distinction that the Logos created 'all things' (Joh 1:3) *outside* the Pleroma.²⁹ But there are clear

²⁷ *The Interpretation of Knowledge* is very damaged but most likely included a myth of the fallen Sophia, see Paul Linjamaa, 'The Female Figures and Fate in *The Interpretation of Knowledge*, NHC XI,I', *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 24:1 (2016): 29–54. *A Valentinian Exposition* is even more damaged, but from the little that remains, one can discern a Valentinian myth. See Elaine Pagels, 'A Valentinian Exposition: Introduction', in *Nag Hammadi Codices XI, XII, XIII*, ed. C. H. Hedrick (Leiden: Brill, 1990), 89–105.

²⁸ For Origen, the Son was known as Wisdom in relation to the Father and Logos in relation to the World (*Peri Archon* I.2). For more on this, see, e.g., Panayiotis Tzamalikos, *Origen: Cosmology and Ontology of Time* (Leiden: Brill, 2006). The portrayal of Logos in the Gospel of John, as was well known, coincided with how Wisdom was portrayed in some Jewish literature (Genesis 1, Proverbs 8, Sirach 24). Philo already saw creation taking place as God acting out his providential Will through his Wisdom and Logos. See Burton Mack, *Logos und Sophia: Untersuchungen zur Weisheitstheologie im hellenistischen Judentum* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1973).

²⁹ For Origen and Heracleon, see Berglund, *Origen's References to Heracleon*. Another obvious difference between Origen's view on Logos and that in *The Tripartite Tractate* is that Origen clearly associates Logos with the Son and Jesus, while in *The Tripartite Tractate* the Son as part of the godhead is differentiated from the Logos who is a lower Aeon.

similarities and points of comparison which in all likelihood would have intrigued Christian readers favouring Origen and the theological intricacies of these cosmological questions.³⁰ Furthermore, reading texts with which one does not fully agree is not necessarily less alluring, interesting or edifying than reading something which affirms one's opinions.

The passage marked off at 82:2–3 also deals with the Logos and describes how the youngest Aeon is returned to the fold from which he fell away by turning towards himself, praying and with the aid of remembrance. This is a part of the text where Valentinian theology coincides with what we know was of interest to early Christian monks in Egypt, perhaps in particular those reading Origen. At 82:2–3 we read of how introspection and prayer led to salvation, which is described as a 'blending'. The term *apokatastasis* is used in *The Tripartite Tractate* (123:19–27, 133:6–7) in the same way as it was presented by those whom we know supported the doctrine, such as Origen and Evagrius (as a return and integration into a whole).³¹ Furthermore, the notion of the Logos' 'turning towards himself' (82:2–3) would have sounded very familiar to monks engaged in introspection in order to be afforded visions, and who employed mnemonic techniques for reciting Scripture when praying or warding off demons or unwanted emotions and cravings.³² There was also a widespread idea among early Christians, especially in the early monastic world of Egypt, that earthly rituals corresponded

³⁰ Compare, for example, *The Tripartite Tractate* and Origen's *Peri Archon*. See Alberto Camplani, 'Momenti di interazione religiosa ad Alessandria e la nascita dell'élite egiziana cristiana', in *Origeniana octava: Origen and the Alexandrian Tradition (Papers of the 8th International Origen Congress, Pisa, 27–31 August 2001)*, vol. I, ed. L. Perrone (Leuven: Peeters, 2003), 31–42, see note 15; Jean-Daniel Dubois, 'Le "Traité tripartite" (Nag Hammadi I, 5) est-il antérieur à Origène?', in *Origeniana octava*, vol. I, 303–316.

³¹ See Ilaria L. E. Ramelli, *The Christian Doctrine of Apokatastasis: A Critical Assessment from the New Testament to Eriugena* (Leiden: Brill, 2013).

³² See, for example, Evagrius' *Antirrhethikos* where he lists Scriptural passages which should be memorised and which were useful against unwanted emotions.

with angelic rituals in heaven, that angels could aid humans and that humans could gain powerful support through introspection and the visualisation of heavenly domains.³³ Thus, monks reading about the Logos turning towards himself and experiencing communion with the heavenly beings above through prayer, remembrance and introspection would have found it familiar indeed.

The Origenist controversy at the turn of the fifth century coincided with the ban on not just Origen's writings but on other material which the victors of the ecclesiastical struggles considered potentially harmful, like apocryphal books.³⁴ However, these materials seem to have persisted in monasteries long after the ban had been imposed.³⁵ Why were monks not allowed to read apocryphal material and Origen? Some actually believed that apocryphal books were edifying if approached correctly,³⁶ but several authorities in the early monastic period expressed concern that not everybody could handle material that was considered speculative.³⁷ It was thought that those who did not possess the necessary knowledge and firmness of faith would be led astray by what they read.

The Tripartite Tractate's anthropology is structured around a hierarchy of different levels of knowledge.³⁸ The passage marked by *diplai* at 119:23–27 mentions the psychics. The version of Valentinian anthropology that envisioned three separate human 'races' (pneumatics, psychics and material) was well known to

³³ These themes are explored in great detail, partly with a focus on the monastic movement, in Ellen Muehlberger, *Angels in Late Ancient Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

³⁴ For more on this see Lundhaug and Jenott, *Monastic Origins*, chapter 6.

³⁵ As suggested by Lundhaug and Jenott, *Monastic Origins*, 177.

³⁶ See Lundhaug and Jenott's discussion of Priscillian and Ps.-Evodios and the use of apocrypha in monasteries in *Monastic Origins*, chapter 6.

³⁷ For a work on this theme – that only certain people were thought to be able to handle advanced theological questions, and especially for Origen's thoughts on this – see Gunnar af Hällström, *Fides Simpliciorum according to Origen of Alexandria* (Helsinki: Societas Scientiarum Fennica, 1984).

³⁸ Linjamaa, *The Ethics of The Tripartite Tractate*, 159–184.

several Church Fathers and the distinction would not have sounded alien to someone familiar with Scripture and ancient physiology and theory of emotions.³⁹ What we encounter in *The Tripartite Tractate* is most likely an adaptation of Paul's comment on different kinds of Christians (1 Cor 2:6–16), which in turn drew on contemporary philosophy and anthropology. People were thought to comprise a material part, a psychic part animating the material and a pneumatic (sometimes referred to as noetic) part which gave life to the psyche (soul).⁴⁰ In 1 Corinthians (2:6–16) Paul makes a distinction between *pneumatic* Christians who had the ability to grasp spiritual wisdom and *psychic* Christians who did not understand this higher form of knowledge. This idea that some people have spiritual gifts and some do not is also found in *The Interpretation of Knowledge* (15:10–19.37), but in *The Tripartite Tractate* the distinction between pneumatics and psychics (and hylics) is framed as one between fixed human categories.⁴¹ In *The*

³⁹ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* I, 5:6; Clement, *Excerpta ex Theodoto* 56:2; *Refutation of All Heresies* VI, 35:5–7. For a study on Valentinian anthropologic models and Church Fathers' reaction to them, see Ismo Dunderberg, *Gnostic Morality Revisited* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015), chapter 7.

⁴⁰ Philo seems to have married the ancient Greek model, where *nous* gave life and rationality to the soul, with the 'Judeo-Christian' version where this was attributed to the breath of God, *pneuma*. Philo held that the *pneuma* gave life to the *nous*, which in turn animated the soul that then organised and structured the body. See Geurt Hendrik van Koote, *Paul's Anthropology in Context: The Image of God, Assimilation to God, and Tripartite Man in Ancient Judaism, Ancient Philosophy and Early Christianity* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008).

⁴¹ This could and should, in my opinion, be problematised. I argue that in practice there was flexibility between these groups, but in theory they were fixed. A psychic who proved to be a pneumatic, a person who rose to a position of leader, would most likely have been considered a pneumatic all along. With fixed categories it would have been easier to explain shifts in social dynamics; for example, a leader (a pneumatic person) who left the group could be explained as a person who was a hylic at the core, but that people had simply not been aware of it until his/her hylic nature made itself known. Thus, I would like to add a nuance to Buell's discussion of fluid categories in *The Tripartite Tractate*. Denise Kimber Buell, *Why This New Race: Ethnic Reasoning in Early Christianity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 126–128.

contemplation entails.⁴⁵ Evagrius, like many other monks before and since him, emphasises that teaching and learning is directly related to spiritual warfare.⁴⁶ In *The Tripartite Tractate* the distinction between pneumatics and psychics also seems to be related to the topic of spiritual warfare.⁴⁷ We read that pneumatic people have come to this world ‘that they might experience the evil things and might train themselves through them’.⁴⁸ The operative word here is $\bar{\rho}\Sigma\Upsilon\Upsilon\Upsilon\Upsilon\Upsilon\Upsilon\Upsilon\Upsilon\Upsilon\Upsilon$ ($\gamma\upsilon\mu\nu\acute{\alpha}\zeta\omega$) which is a word used in patristic sources for the *exercise* of Christian life,⁴⁹ especially higher spiritual life and moral perfection.⁵⁰ However, in a monastic context $\bar{\rho}\Sigma\Upsilon\Upsilon\Upsilon\Upsilon\Upsilon\Upsilon\Upsilon\Upsilon\Upsilon\Upsilon$ is also used to refer to *preparing* to withstand attacks by evil demons, as in *The Life of Antony*.⁵¹ In *The Tripartite Tractate* 119:23–27, we read that even psychic people, those who are not made to fight evil, will receive full salvation, a concept that surely would have been a comfort to monks who did not have the stamina of a spiritual warrior like Antony, who spent time alone in the desert grappling with evil demons. This corresponds closely with what has been argued by Elaine Pagels and Lance Jenott, that there is a close

⁴⁵ *Kephalaia Gnostika* 25. The books to which Evagrius refers are unclear. The translation is by Dysinger, except that above I translate the word $\gamma\nu\omega\sigma\tau\iota\kappa\omicron\iota$ as ‘the knowledgeable’, whereas Dysinger just transliterates the word to *gnostikoi*. I do this in order not to get entangled with discussions of the category ‘Gnosticism’. www.ldy-singer.com/Evagrius/02_Gno-Keph/00a_start.htm

⁴⁶ See Evagrius, *Eight Spirits of Wickedness* and *Antirrhethikos*.

⁴⁷ This is certainly also a theme in *The Interpretation of Knowledge*, see NHC XI, 6:30–32, 14:34–35, 20:14–23; but here the distinction between pneumatic and psychic people is not made, insofar as we can tell from those parts that are left of the text. Compare also Rom 8:38–39; 1 Cor 2:8, 15:25.

⁴⁸ NHC I, 126:33–34: $\epsilon\Upsilon\eta\lambda\alpha\iota \Upsilon\bar{\rho}\Sigma\Upsilon\Upsilon\Upsilon\Upsilon\Upsilon\Upsilon\Upsilon\Upsilon\Upsilon\Upsilon \bar{\rho}\Sigma\Upsilon\Upsilon\Upsilon\Upsilon\Upsilon\Upsilon\Upsilon\Upsilon\Upsilon\Upsilon \bar{\rho}\Sigma\Upsilon\Upsilon\Upsilon\Upsilon\Upsilon\Upsilon\Upsilon\Upsilon\Upsilon\Upsilon$. Text and translation by Attridge, modified, in *Nag Hammadi Codex I*, ed. Attridge, 320–321.

⁴⁹ See $\gamma\upsilon\mu\nu\acute{\alpha}\zeta\omega$ in G. W. H. Lampe, *A Patristic Greek Lexicon* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), 324.

⁵⁰ Clement, *Stromata* VI, 10; VII, 7; Origen, *Contra Celsum* IV, 50.

⁵¹ See the Coptic *Life of Antony* 88:2. That there are many resemblances between Codex I and Antony’s letters has been established by Jenott and Pagels, ‘Antony’s Letters’.

correlation between Codex I and the Letters of Antony (where Antony is also engaged in battle with demons).⁵²

These readings of the passages the scribe has highlighted in *The Tripartite Tractate* should suffice to demonstrate that they would have spoken to many monastic readers. The *diploi*-highlighted passages, discussing angelic warfare, the Logos and the psychics – which should be read as biblical interpretation and allegory (of Genesis 6, the Gospel of John and Paul's letters, for example) – would undoubtedly have interested monks. But what can all this say about the particular monks who used the Nag Hammadi texts? As it happens, the *diploi* and other scribal markings we find in Codex VIII lend themselves to this discussion.

The Scribal Signs in Codex VIII

Codex VIII comprises a single quire of a total of 74 leaves, with only two texts between the covers. Most of the content consists of the text entitled *Zostrianos*, the longest tractate in the Nag Hammadi collection, concluding with a short text, *The Letter of Peter to Philip*. Codex VIII is in a badly fragmented state. Most of the damage is to the bottom of its binding area, especially in the right margins of the lower left sides of the pages and the lower half of the left margins of the right-side pages. There are markings of two different kinds in the left margins throughout the codex: lateral strokes (–), most often between two lines, and a forked marking not unlike the shape of a *diple*. While the *diple* signs from Codex I are written like the tip of an arrow, the forks in Codex VIII are most likely *corone* signs made to highlight a passage of particular interest

⁵² Jenott and Pagels, 'Antony's Letters'. It should be pointed out, however, that there is a discrepancy between the Antony in the *Life* and the one behind the letters. See, for example, Blossom Stefaniw, 'Of Sojourners and Soldiers: Demonic Violence in the Letters of Antony and the Life of Antony', in *Social Control in Late Antiquity: The Violence of Small Worlds*, ed. K. Cooper and J. Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 232–255.

or importance to a reader/scribe. While the *diplai* in Codex I were placed vertically next to the left margin – some completely in line with the margin, indicating that they were made by the scribe himself to mark out a passage – the markings in Codex VIII are placed next to or between two lines, which does not help us identify whether they were penned by the scribe or a later reader. The ending of a marked-out passage is indicated with the use of either a lateral stroke in the margin or dicola inside the text.⁵³ Let us now turn to see what these highlighted passages contain and whether a reason can be discerned for why they were highlighted, beginning with the longest text: *Zostrianos*.

Zostrianos (NHC VIII,1)

From the outset we might consider the fact that the texts that were deemed interesting enough – or perhaps complicated enough – to warrant the reader's/scribe's making notes in the margin are the two longest and more complex in the Nag Hammadi collection. The first instance of scribal and/or reading aids/markings in Codex VIII appears on page 26. Between lines 18–19 a *coronis* sign is found in the left margin, and after the first word on line 19 we find a colon. The passage which precedes the colon highlighted by the *coronis* and colon is a section dealing with the structure of the highest realm and the role of the different characters responsible for its creation and organisation. The lateral stroke in the margin followed by the colon marks the beginning of a discussion about souls whose first

⁵³ Bentley Layton takes these to be paragraph markings which are 'coordinated with dicola written in the text'. See his 'Introduction to Codex VIII', in *Nag Hammadi Codex VIII*, ed. John H. Sieber (Leiden: Brill, 1991), 5. This interpretation is stated by Layton without much elaboration or suggestion of clear motivation. What is more, Layton does not seem to interpret all the markings as paragraph markers, mostly only the *coronis* sign. How he interprets the lateral strokes is unclear; nor does he discuss the *diplai* which also appear in the text's left margin (and thus cannot be line fillers).

sentence reads, ‘Do not be amazed about the differences among souls’ ([ε]ΤΒΕ ΤΛΙΑΦΟΡΑ ΛΕ ΝΤΕ ΝΙΨΥΧΗ [μ]ΠΡΡ).⁵⁴ The topic, as John Sieber mentions in the NHMS edition,⁵⁵ is an important theme in the text. What are the differences between souls, which souls are saved and which are not, and why? As we have seen, this topic was also highlighted in Codex I. The discussion of the differences in souls appears again in the next highlighted passage in the text.⁵⁶ In the left margin of page 30, between lines 9 and 10, we find a lateral stroke as on page 26, this time with a colon appearing five lines later.⁵⁷ The marked-out sentence begins, ‘The son of Adam, Seth, comes to each of the souls as knowledge suitable for them.’⁵⁸

Unfortunately, a *coronis* and two lateral strokes in the left margin (at 32:5–6, 36:16–17 and 40:5–6) are found in a badly fragmented section of the text which makes it hard to discern the content of these lines. However, the lateral line on page 32:5–6 is followed by a section mentioning the words ‘every [...] of his soul’ (ΟΝ [...]) Ν[Ι]Μ ΝΤΕ ΤΕΡΨ[Υ]ΧΗ) (32:17–18). Page 36 mentions the divine beings Barbelo and Kalyptos shortly after a lateral stroke in the left

⁵⁴ If nothing else is indicated, the Coptic text of *Zostrianos* used here and throughout the book is the one edited by Layton in *Nag Hammadi Codex VIII*, ed. Sieber, and the translation is also by Sieber from the same volume.

⁵⁵ John H. Sieber, ‘Introduction to *Zostrianos*’, in *Nag Hammadi Codex VIII*, ed. Sieber, 9.

⁵⁶ Possibly also at 27:11–15, but unfortunately the ink is unclear. The passage mentions Sophia’s fall and the result of it: the creation of three different kinds of souls.

⁵⁷ Since the first word in the line below the marking is ‘Adam’, which is written with a superliner stroke, it appears at first glance that this is just an aesthetic detail where the scribe has protruded the superliner stroke into the margin. But a closer look makes it clear that the line marking out the colon on line 19 is placed above the stroke. What is more, the name Adam appears more than once as the first line in the left margin but never with a protruding superliner stroke in the margin: for example, further down on the same page.

⁵⁸ NHC VIII, 30:9–10: ⲃⲏⲓ ⲉϣⲣⲏⲏⲏⲏ ⲉϣⲣⲁⲓ ⲉ ⲧⲟⲩⲉⲓ ⲧⲟⲩⲉⲓ ⲛⲧⲉ ⲛⲓⲩⲩⲩⲩⲩⲩ ⲉⲩ[Ⲛ]ⲛⲟⲩⲟⲩⲉ ⲉϣⲣⲟⲩⲉ ⲉ ⲛⲁⲓ.

margin between lines 16 and 17. At 40:5–6 a line is found in the left margin, mentioning knowledge and Protophanes.

The next legible scribal markings are found on page 44. The first four lines are clearly marked out by a lateral stroke above the first line on the page and a *coronis* below line four, marking out the beginning of a new passage (see Fig. 4.2). The first word on line five is also included in this passage, as it is followed by a colon and a space. The passage reads as follows:

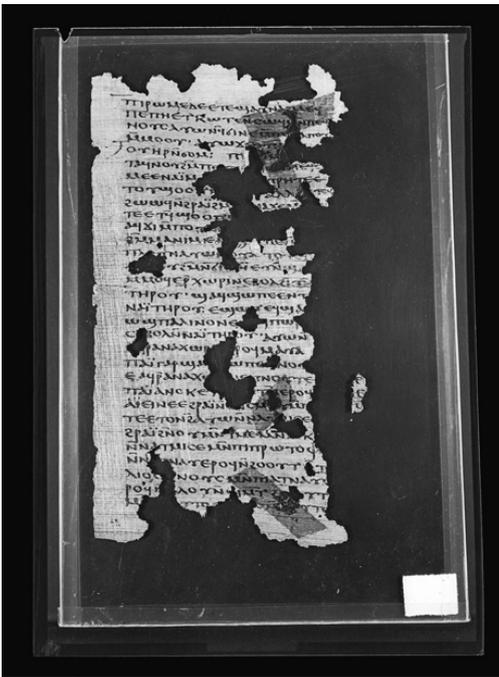


Figure 4.2 Page 44 in Codex VIII, illustrating a pronounced *coronis* in the left margin between lines 4 and 5, followed by a colon in line 5. At the top of the page, we find a lateral stroke which is used together with the *coronis* and colon to mark out a particular sentence. Photo by James M. Robinson. Image courtesy of the Institute for Antiquity and Christianity Records, Special Collections, Claremont Colleges Library, Claremont, California.

<p>The person who can be saved is the one who seeks himself and his mind and finds them both. Oh, he has great power!⁵⁹</p>	<p>ΠΙΡΩΜΕ ΔΕ ΕΤΕ ΨΑΥΝΑΜΕΘ ΠΕ ΠΗ ΕΤΚΩΤΕ ΝΩΩΨ ΜΗ ΠΕΡΗΘΟΥΣ ΔΥΩ ΗΘΘΗΕ Μ ΠΟ[Υ]Δ ΠΟΥΔ ΜΜΟΥ· ΔΥΩ ΧΕ ΟΥΝΤ[Δ]Ϛ Μ[ΜΔΥ Η] ΟΥΗΡ Η ΒΟΜ.</p>
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The *coronis* between lines 4 and 5 indicates that this is the beginning of a new section in the text. What follows gives details about the topic of the marked-out passage in which we learn that those who are saved have the possibility to pass through the obstacles and become united with God above.

On the next page, page 45, the first six lines are highlighted. As far as one can see, this is the only right-side page in Codex VIII where a *coronis* is placed in the left margin. There could well have been others, but due to the bad fragmentation that has generally been inflicted on the left margin on most of the right-side pages, we cannot determine how many. Above the first line on page 45, we find a *coronis* in the left margin and six lines later a colon has been placed between two words. The passage runs as follows:

<p>And I said to the child of the child Ephesech who was with me: 'Can your Wisdom instruct me about the scattering of the people who are saved and who they are?'⁶⁰</p>	<p>ΔΥΩ ΠΕΧΔΪ Μ ΠΑΛΟΥ ΝΤΕ ΠΑΛΟΥ ΕΤΚΗ ΝΜΜΔΪ ΗΦΗΧΨ ΧΕΥΗ ΒΟΜ Η ΤΕΚΟΦΙΑ Ε ΤΑΜΟΕΙ Ε ΠΙΧΩΩΡΕ ΕΒΟΛ ΝΤΕ ΠΡΩΜΕ [Ε]ΤΟΥΝΟ[Υ]Ϛ Μ ΜΜΟΥ· ΔΥΩ ΧΕ Η[Ι]Μ Η[Ε]</p>
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This passage seems to continue the theme of the differences among souls and details of who will and will not be saved. Following this is a passage wherein the divine character Ephesech explains why there is a multiplicity of forms in the world, saying that it is because substances turn inward towards themselves, become

⁵⁹ NHC VIII, 44:1–5. Text by Layton, trans. Sieber, modified, in *Nag Hammadi Codex VIII*, ed. Sieber, 108–109.

⁶⁰ NHC VIII, 45:1–6. Text by Layton, trans. Sieber, modified, in *Nag Hammadi Codex VIII*, ed. Sieber, 110–111.

separate and seek things that have no existence, instead of uniting and becoming one. This causes devolution and birth, and even though the substance is immortal it becomes trapped in the material body (45:11–46:15). This is why powers (πλδουμ) have been placed in the world to save the immortal substance that becomes trapped.

The next legible reading sign does not appear until twenty pages later on page 64, line 13. This marks the ending of a detailed passage describing how Zostrianos corresponds with different characters. It ends with an admonition to the author: ‘Zostrianos, [learn] of the things about which you asked’ (ΖΩΣΤΡΙΑΝΕ Ϛ[ΩΤΜ] ΕΤΒΕ ΠΗ ΕΤΚΩΤ[Ε Π]ΩΟΥ).⁶¹ After this follows the new passage discussing the immortal and undivided spirit. The following page is damaged and we cannot see where the marked-out passage ends.

On page 80, line 11, a lateral stroke has been placed in the left margin, followed by a colon seven lines later. If this were a paragraph marker, as some have claimed,⁶² one would have expected the *coronis* to have been placed next to the line with the colon, making it clear that this began a new section, as in the example from page 64. It is more likely, however, that, again, we have a partial passage marked out for particular interest. The marked-out lines on page 80, which unfortunately are fragmented in the right margin, run as follows:

It existed . . .	ΠΗ ΕΠΕΡΩΟΟΠ ΠΔ[. . .]
the ever perfect one . . .	† ΜΝΤΠΑΝΤΕΛΙΟΣ Π[. . .]
that one, since . . .	ΕΤΜΜΛΛΥ· ΧΕ ΠΗ ΜΕ[. . .]
pre-existent and . . .	ΩΟΡΠ Π ΩΟΟΠ ΔΥΩ [. . .]
rest upon all these, it . . .	ΚΗ ΘΥΖΝ ΠΔΙ ΤΗΡΟΥ ΕΡ[. . .]
pre-existent being known	ΩΟΡΠ Π ΩΟΟΠ ΕΥΕΙΜ[Ε]
as three powered. ⁶³	ΕΡΟΡ Π ΩΜΕΤΒΟΜ·

⁶¹ NHC VIII, 64:13. Text by Layton, trans. Sieber, in *Nag Hammadi Codex VIII*, ed. Sieber, 140–141.
⁶² Layton, ‘Introduction to Codex VIII’, 5.
⁶³ NHC VIII, 80:12–18. Text by Layton, trans. Sieber, modified, *Nag Hammadi Codex VIII*, ed. Sieber, 158–159.

Again, it is the all-powerful Spirit which existed before anything which is discussed in this marked-out passage, just as in the marked-out passage on page 64. Following this, the text turns to describing how the invisible Spirit has never been ignorant, that it is Barbelo who begets error and becomes ignorant.

Before summarising the topics in the above marked-out passages, let us briefly survey the second text in the codex where we also find the markings: *The Letter of Peter to Philip*.

The Letter of Peter to Philip (*NHC VIII,2*)

The last nine pages of Codex VIII contain *The Letter of Peter to Philip*, a section of the codex that is comparatively well preserved and legible. On the first page (132), a *diple* is found in the left margin at line 21, the only place where a *diple* is placed where we would have expected a *coronis*. It is faint but visible and marks out the following sentence: ‘Preach in the salvation!’ (ὤρε σελῶ θραῖ θρῆ πι[ο]ιχι) (132:21). The next line reads, ‘which was promised us through our Lord Jesus Christ’.⁶⁴ This is a single line being highlighted and not a shorter passage, and suggestively, this is the reason the *diple* has been used instead of a *coronis*, which is placed between two lines and not next to a line.

On page 136 we find a shift in the narrative, which is marked with a *coronis* between lines 15 and 16. The last word of the previous line ends with a colon, indicating the beginning of a new passage. The previous passage has dealt with the Demiurge who, with the help of his minions, creates the visible world, while that marked by a *coronis* begins a new theme in the story, providing information about the Saviour who steps down into the body. This is a clear instance of a paragraph marker.

⁶⁴ 132:21–133:1: ΕΤΑΥΕΡΗΤ ΜΜΟϞ ΠΑΝ ΕΒΟΛ ΘΙ[Τ]Η ΠΕΠΧΟΕΙΣ Ιϛ ΠΕΧ[ϛ]. Text and trans. Frederik Wisse, in *Nag Hammadi Codex VIII*, ed. Sieber, 234–235.

On page 138 we find one clear lateral stroke in the left margin, without any colon in the text.⁶⁵ This could signal that it was added by someone other than the scribe or that the marking is used (by the scribe or a later reader) to highlight a sentence or section of particular interest. The previous passage describes demons attacking the ‘inner man’, and the reader is encouraged to fight evil powers by teaching in the world. This topic reconnects to the marked-out sentence on the first page of the text, where a *diple* highlights a call for the disciples to teach in the world. The marked-out sentences on page 138 deal with a related matter, namely, the worldly results of Jesus’ recommendation: suffering of a different kind. The sentence reads, ‘If he, our Lord, suffered, how much (must) we (suffer)?’⁶⁶ This quote paraphrases and connects with several key passages in Scripture (perhaps most obviously 1 Peter 2:21) and is one of the very few (if not the only) marked-out sentences that clearly does so. Keeping in mind that the prior passage called for the disciples to teach in the world (which echoes the admonition in the marked-out sentence on the first page of the text), it would seem that what we have here is a reaction to the consequences of *imitatio dei*.

The last page of the text (140) contains, at a quick glance, several markings in the margin; however, only one of them, between lines 14 and 15, is clearly a scribal or reading sign. This time it is hard to determine if it is a paragraph marker or something else. Line 15 does contain a colon marking out a new passage, yet it is not a *coronis* in the margin followed by colon, as on page 136, but a straight lateral line. It could have been added at a later time by someone other than the scribe or mean something other than a paragraph marker.

⁶⁵ A faint and shorter stroke appears in the left margin of line 4, page 138, but it is unclear whether this is a scribal or reading sign. There is not much to indicate that the text between the two marks on page 138 was meant to be highlighted as a whole section, since it deals with separate subjects, as do the individual lines marked out.

⁶⁶ 138:15–16: ΕΥΧΕ ΠΤΟϞ ΠΕΡΙΧΘΕΙΣ ΔΔΖΙ ΜΚΑϞ ϞΙΕ ΔΟΥΗΡ ΒΕ ΔΙΟΠ. Text and trans. Wisse, in *Nag Hammadi Codex VIII*, ed. Sieber, 244–245.

It appears just before the final episode of the text and thus could be a sub-paragraph or meant to emphasise the words of Jesus which follow at the marked-out place: 'Peace to you [all] and everyone who believes in my name. And when you depart, joy be to you and grace and power. And be not afraid; behold, I am with you forever.'⁶⁷

Summarising the Markings in Codex VIII

Are the many markings found in the margins of Codex VIII simply paragraph markers, as Layton, for example, has suggested?⁶⁸ As we have seen, there is much that would indicate that there is something entirely different going on. From a quick overview of the way the markers are employed (see Table 4.1), it becomes obvious that they are not used uniformly and, in fact, deal with a multitude of themes.

Zostrianos makes up most of the codex and this is without doubt one of the more complex narratives in the entire Nag Hammadi collection. It is a long and very detailed text, whose background many scholars have tried to elucidate. In 2013, Dylan Burns wrote the following about previous studies of *Zostrianos*:

Research into *Zostrianos* has focused on its metaphysics and relationship to contemporary 'Pagan' thought, leading a vast majority of scholars to regard it as a 'Pagan' apocalypse, perhaps even designed to appeal to contemporary Greek philosophers. Yet an attentive reading of its frame narrative and routine investigation of its characters' backgrounds in Greco-Roman literature leads one to consider instead a milieu for *Zostrianos* that is deeply colored by

⁶⁷ 140:17–23: ΤΡΗΝ ΠΗΤΗ [ΤΗΡ]ΤΗ ΜΗ ΟΥΟΝ ΜΗ ΕΤΗΔΩΤΕ ΕΠΑΡΑΗ· ΕΤΕΤΗΔΩΚ ΔΕ ΕΦΕΨΩΠΕ ΠΗΤΗ ΝΟΙ ΟΥΡΑΥΕ ΜΗ ΟΥΖΜΟΤ ΜΗ ΟΥΒΔΜ· ΜΠΡ ΒΔΒΩΗΤ ΔΕ ΕΙΣ ΘΗΤΕ ΤΠΕΜΗΤΗ ΨΔ ΕΠΕΘ. Text and trans. Wisse, in *Nag Hammadi Codex VIII*, ed. Sieber, 248–251.

⁶⁸ Layton, 'Introduction to Codex VIII', 5.

Table 4.1 *Scribal markings in Codex VIII*

Page	Marking	Content of passage
26	<i>coronis</i> with colon on the same line	differences in souls
30	lateral line with colon five lines after	differences in souls
32	lateral line, no colon (damaged page)	the soul
36	lateral line, no colon (damaged page)	Barbelo
40	lateral line, no colon (damaged page)	knowledge and Protophanes
44	lateral line followed by <i>coronis</i> and colon four lines later	knowledge of oneself is salvation
45	<i>coronis</i> followed by a colon six lines later	diversity of people
64	<i>coronis</i> with a colon on the same line	immortal spirit
80	lateral line followed by a colon seven lines later	immortal spirit
132	<i>diple</i> parallel to line	admonition to preach
136	<i>coronis</i> with colon in same line	Saviour steps down into body
138	lateral line, no colon in text	admonition to accept suffering
140	lateral line with colon on same line	quote by Jesus

contemporary Jewish and Christian apocalyptic literature, even rejecting the authority of Hellenic tradition.⁶⁹

Burns' study draws much-needed attention to the Christian influence in this text, while, as he writes, previous scholarly interest has chiefly focused on the text's relation to pagan philosophy.⁷⁰ Drawing attention to *Zostrianos'* similarities to Christian theologoumena also provides us with much-needed contextualisation for Codex VIII as a whole. Taking these factors into account, a Christian context which speaks readily to many of the marked-out passages discussed

⁶⁹ Dylan Burns, 'The Apocalypse of Zostrianos and Iolaos: A Platonic Reminiscence of the Heracleidae at NHC VIII,1.4', *Le Muséon* 126:1–2 (2013): 29–43. Quoted passage is from pages 29–30.

⁷⁰ For the platonic background of the text, see Alexander J. Mazur, *The Platonizing Sethian Background of Plotinus's Mysticism* (Leiden: Brill, 2020).

above is certainly the monastic one. To demonstrate this, in the following section I situate the passages discussed above in relation to the activities transpiring in Pachomius' monastery, as told to us by a certain bishop named Ammon.

The Letter of Ammon Read in Light of Codex I and Codex VIII

There are from the outset key aspects in the frame story of *Zostrianos* which bring to mind a monastic setting, or at least an ascetic one. The text is portrayed as the words of a disillusioned seeker of spiritual growth, Zostrianos, a person who sees himself as one of the elect placed on earth to teach others and to develop his spiritual knowledge. Yet he is so dissatisfied with his worldly context that he draws away into the desert: 'I became terribly upset and felt depressed about the small-mindedness that surrounded me. I dared to do something, and to deliver myself unto the beasts of the desert for a violent death.'⁷¹ An intellectually curious Christian monk would undoubtedly have found the text of interest, especially the many similarities which the frame narrative has with monasticism. The codex's second text preaches on what is presented as the duty of Christians to spread the word of God and accept the suffering bestowed by *imitatio dei*, along with numerous references to the struggle against evil spirits and the need to protect oneself against their onslaught by standing firm and speaking the truth. To take on the suffering of being a devout Christian, especially one who devotes his or her life to spiritual growth and spreading the word of God, is, as we know, a recurring theme in monastic literature.

⁷¹ NHC VIII, 3:23–28: ΤΟΤΕ ΕΙΜΟΚΘ Η ΘΗΤ ΕΜΛΑΤΕ ΔΥΩ ΕΕΙΘΚΜ ΕΤΒΕ ΨΜΠΚΟΥΕ[Ι] Η ΘΗΤ ΕΤΚΩΤΕ ΕΡΘΕΙ ΔΕΙΡ ΤΟΔΜΑ Ε ΕΙΡΕ Η ΟΥ[Λ]ΔΔΥ ΔΥΩ ΕΤΑΔΤ ΠΠΘΗΡΙΟΗ Η[Τ]Ε ΤΕΡΗΜΜΟC: ΕΘΡΑΪ ΕΥΤΑΚΟ ΕΦΗΔΥΤ. Trans. Burns, in 'The Apocalypse of Zostrianos', 30.

To illustrate how well the marked-out passages fit into the monastic world, particularly a Pachomian environment, let us familiarise ourselves with the opening passage of *The Letter of Ammon*. This text, it is stated, is written by a certain bishop named Ammon to a fellow bishop who had requested that Ammon tell him of his three years living as a Pachomian monk at the monastery at Pabau, at the time under the leadership of Pachomius' predecessor Theodore (314–368).⁷² The letter starts with a reference to the imitation of one's betters: 'Since you admire Christ's holy servants, you have been eager to imitate their piety.'⁷³ In the first episode in the letter, as Ammon is introduced to the monastery, the monks are described as gathering around Theodore to ask him to address their 'faults before them all'. Theodore goes on to refer to Scripture, for instance, Hebrews 11:26 which speaks of Moses, who gladly takes on sufferings for the sake of Christ. Theodore states: 'But you, why do you bear the reproaches for Christ so grievously?' Psalms 40:2 is also quoted: 'He drew me up from the desolate pit, out of the miry bog, and set my feet upon a rock, making my steps secure.' He addresses the monks' fear of demons and quotes Ephesians 6:12: 'for our struggle is not against blood and flesh but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.' This first passus in *The Letter of Ammon*, with its strong focus on bearing one's sufferings with a steady heart, fighting demons and overcoming one's bodily faults, ends with Theodore's saying, 'Guard against your secret [thoughts]', and paraphrasing Psalms 19:12–13: 'Pray, saying: "Cleanse me from my hidden [sins], and spare your servant from alien [ideas]"', to which he adds, 'For you have a mighty battle on either side.' The monks are advised to make

⁷² James E. Goehring, *The Letter of Ammon and Pachomian Monasticism* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1986).

⁷³ *The Letter of Ammon* 1:3–4, see also 12. Trans. James Goehring, in *The Letter of Ammon and Pachomian Monasticism*, 159.

themselves firm of mind, to be aware of their weaknesses and know their limitations.⁷⁴ So far, *The Letter of Ammon* and Codex VIII both touch upon many of the same broader themes.

Next, *The Letter of Ammon* goes on to discuss the hardships that are to come, and to identify the different people who oppose them. Theodore explains that there is a dual threat: from 'our own race' and from pagans. He is asked who threatens them from their own race, to which he answers: the Arians. But he also instructs his listeners not to fear this because 'the persecution by the pagans will end, and then that which presses upon the church from [our own] race will cease'.⁷⁵ This fits the interest the scribe/reader of Codex VIII has highlighted on pages 26, 30 and 45 as well as the passages in *The Tripartite Tractate* mentioning the psychic race who will be saved in the end even though they are imperfect Christians. There are other passages in *The Letter of Ammon* which make it clear that there are differences between people. The Pachomian brothers who are weak in faith and fear the consequences of the coming turbulence are described as those who still live in the flesh, or 'those of the flesh' (σαρκικοί). However one chooses to interpret the letter, several kinds of difference are mentioned: those within the monastic hierarchy where the lower kinds are likened to the body, as well as with three peoples from a broader anthropological perspective: pagans, erroneous Christians and right practising Christians.

The topic at the centre of the Arian controversy is the theme of several of the passages marked out in *Zostrianos*, including that on page 64 of Codex VIII which makes it clear that the highest being is a three-powered one. Arians claimed, as is well known, that God and Jesus were not of the same substance, a stance rejected in the sentences marked out by a reader/copyist of *Zostrianos*.

⁷⁴ For example, see chapter 21 and the episode where a monk breaks the fast at night in his cell. Theodore tells the monks that one should be careful not to overextend oneself so as to fall prey to demons and sin.

⁷⁵ Trans. Goehring, in *The Letter of Ammon and Pachomian Monasticism*, 162.

It must be noted that *The Letter of Ammon* is written in a context of ecclesiastical struggle and that theological biases might have been embedded in the description of the monastic milieu of a Pachomian monastery.⁷⁶ However, as Hugo Lundhaug has argued, several texts in the Nag Hammadi collection show signs of having been rewritten in light of the new Post-Nicene theological milieu. For example, in *The Concept of Our Great Power* in Codex VI, a group of neo-Arians called Anomoneans are refuted explicitly by name (40:5–9).⁷⁷ The *diplai* in Codex I and *corone* in Codex VIII highlight passages that reflect general Pachomian practices (spiritual warfare) and theological issues from a Post-Nicene context. While the marginal markings made by the readers/owners of the texts do not reflect direct rewritings – which, as Lundhaug argues, is reflected in other parts of the Nag Hammadi collection (a question revisited in Chapter 7) – the marginal markings could be viewed as another example of the way Pachomian monks actually handled the texts in their Post-Nicene context: marking out passages of theological relevance and collecting insights that supported their theological inclinations and broad interests.⁷⁸ The difference in marked-out passages between *Zostrianos* and *The Letter of Peter to Philip* concerns theological versus social topics. The marked-out passages in *Zostrianos* deal with the nature of the godhead, the salvific nature of self-knowledge and the differences among the peoples on earth. *The Letter of Peter to Philip* contains marked-out passages and

⁷⁶ For more on the relation between the letter and the Arian controversy, see Goehring, *The Letter of Ammon*, 202ff.

⁷⁷ For more on this passage, see Hugo Lundhaug, ‘Textual Fluidity and Post-Nicene Rewriting in the Nag Hammadi Codices’, in *Nag Hammadi à 70 ans: Qu’avons nous appris? / Nag Hammadi at 70: What Have We Learned?*, ed. Eric Crégheur, Louis Painchaud and Tuomas Rasimus (Leuven: Peeters, 2019), 50–52.

⁷⁸ Previous scholars have argued that Nag Hammadi texts reflect anti-Arian tendencies, for example Hugo Lundhaug regarding *The Gospel of Philip* (in *Images of Rebirth*, 377–394), and Roelof van den Broek regarding *The Teachings of Silvanus* (in ‘The Theology of the Teachings of Silvanus’, *Vigiliae Christianae* 40:1 (1986) 1–23).

sentences dealing with social matters, such as an admonition to preach and not to fear suffering, which is likened to imitating Christ who stepped into the body and suffered for his teachings. In *The Tripartite Tractate* the marked-out passages highlight general ascetic practices, like engagement in spiritual warfare, but also reflect theological themes associated with Origenism, proclivities also resonating with the interests of Pachomian monks. The proposition that there is evidence of Origenism within both the Pachomian context and the Nag Hammadi codices (a topic revisited in the following chapters) has previously been argued by Lundhaug and Jenott, and recently reiterated by Christian Bull.⁷⁹

Conclusion

The short sentences marked out with *diploi* and *corone* in the two codices that have been surveyed in this chapter do not deal with one and the same topic, nor should we expect that. The texts derive from different original contexts and cover a wide array of different subjects. But they all deal with topics that a Christian subject of burgeoning Egyptian monasticism would have found of interest. This is indicated by what we know from monastic sources about such interests, and there is a case to be made that a Pachomian context is a particularly good fit, as indicated by, for example, *The Letter of Ammon*. I would argue that we would not be hard pressed to imagine that Pachomian monks put in charge of copying the texts of Codex I and VIII made their marks due to their own and their fellow monks' interests. The fact that other Nag Hammadi texts, as we shall see later, were most likely rewritten in the light of the new theological situations arising in the middle of the fourth century supports this reading. As the marginal markings reflect the

⁷⁹ Lundhaug and Jenott, *Monastic Origins*, 207–214; Bull, 'The Panopolis Connection'.

interests of Pachomian monks, they could be viewed as one way in which Pachomian monastic readers actually used the texts: as reference, inspiration and support in traversing the theologically debated topics of the latter part of the fourth century.

In the remaining chapters, as we continue to survey uncharted perspectives of the material aspects of the Nag Hammadi codices, the practical use of the texts within a monastic setting in Upper Egypt during the fourth to fifth centuries are further elaborated. With regard to the use of *diplai* and *corone* in monastic textual communities, there remains much to be done and the present discussion should be seen as only a preliminary and modest attempt to pave the way for further studies.⁸⁰

⁸⁰ One interesting and most likely fruitful endeavour would be to situate the use of the Nag Hammadi *diplai* in relation to relevant archaeological evidence from the same time and area. For example, at Trimithis, approximately 700 kilometres west of Nag Hammadi, archaeological excavations discovered a school from the same period as the texts under discussion here. The site at Trimithis showcases an advanced classroom setting (of unclear religious origin) with Greek texts on the wall that exhibit the use of *diple* signs beside several lines. Their exact function is not clear, but some appear in the left margin, as in some of the cases in the Nag Hammadi texts. Thus, we should not exclude the possibility that the marginal markings appearing in the Nag Hammadi texts had pedagogical functions similar to those found in the classroom in Trimithis, which were used for educational purposes. The passages highlighted with *diplai* deal with topics we know were of great interest for Pachomian monks, and it is not impossible that these *diple* signs were used as teaching aids, marking out passages for exegesis and theological discussion. Raffaella Cribiore, Paola Davoli and D. M. Ratzan, 'A Teacher's Dipinto from Trimithis (Dakhleh Oasis)', *Journal of Roman Archaeology* 21:1 (2008): 169–191.