

MIKAEL HAXBY

The First Apocalypse of James

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Mikael Haxby

The First Apocalypse of James

Martyrdom and Sexual Difference

Mohr Siebeck

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For Beth and Bob

Preface

This book began as a dissertation at Harvard University, under the supervision of Karen King. I remember when the Tchacos Codex was first published and my colleague Taylor Petrey asked Professor King if there was anything in the codex's new copy of the *First Apocalypse of James* that might be useful for his project on the resurrection. "No," she said, "I think this is a text for Mikael Haxby." She was, of course, correct. This newly-discovered copy of an ancient text filled in a number of missing pages from the version that had been found among the Nag Hammadi documents and published in the 1960s. With these previously lost pages now recovered, it turned out that the *First Apocalypse of James* included discussions of a set of issues in early Christian history that fascinated me, regarding martyrdom and state violence, ideas and practices of sexual difference, scriptural interpretation, and ethical development. I am thankful for the opportunity to devote years of my life to studying these problems, and for the support I received at school in that project.

Professor King was my mentor through the writing process as well as a constantly engaging and challenging dialogue partner. Professors Amy Hollywood and Laura Nasrallah were both generous with their support and feedback as members of my committee. I count myself fortunate to have been helped through the dissertation process by three such fabulous teachers, and I hope that their excellent work is reflected in this book. My colleagues in the graduate program Taylor Petrey and Katherine Shaner were invaluable readers and I cherish our long discussions of matters academic and not so academic. The members of the Columbia New Testament Seminar and the Nordic Nag Hammadi and Gnosticism Network read and commented on work that, in particular, turned into major new sections of this book not present in the initial dissertation.

It took several years for me to return to this project after leaving academia in 2016. Once again, it was Professor King's recommendation that I seek out the *Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament* second series from Mohr Siebeck. I thank Professor Jörg Frey for accepting the manuscript for the series and Professor Tobias Nicklas for his help with the second round of research and pointing me toward crucial recent scholarship. I am grateful for the help I received from Elena Müller and Markus Kirchner in updating this manuscript for publication. The revisions ended up being more extensive

than I had planned. The simple act of publishing a dissertation turned into an opportunity for me to revisit materials and questions that continue to fascinate me. In particular I was able to expand on two major sections. First, this book offers a more intentional intervention into debates about martyrdom, heresy, and docetism, arguing that the category of “docetism” serves to obscure certain deeper tensions within Christian theology. Second, I was able to revise the concluding section on sexual difference, which had always felt unfinished. I bring forward the importance of feminine divine figures and the “undefiled Sophia” to argue that this text represents a peculiar and different approach to questions of sexual difference that must be added to the panoply of ancient Christian engagements with these issues. A “Sophia-Christ dilemma” stands behind the articulation of sexual difference in the *First Apocalypse of James*, which must be understood on its own terms. In both cases, I believe that these interventions show how the close reading of a single, obscure text can make contributions to larger conversations in the history of ancient Christianity and the study of religion. The very category of “docetism” smuggles into academic analysis not only normative theological concepts but I hypothesize a certain anxiety within much Christian theology about the question of what seems and what is. The centrality of Sophia to the theology of this and many other early Christian texts points to the continued importance of divine female figures in Christian thought and the way that ongoing discussions about theology and politics in a Christian context remain shaped by the echoes of feminine divinities. I hope that these revisions offer a clearer and sharper intervention into several academic discussions I always found compelling and valuable.

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Introduction

On the First Apocalypse of James

“Since you asked about femaleness, listen.” These are among the first words spoken by Jesus to his brother James in the *First Apocalypse of James* (ΕΠΕΛΗ [Δ]ΚΩ[Ι]ΗΕ ΕΤΒΕ ΤΗΝΤΟΖΗΕ ΣΩΤ[Η]; 10.19–20).¹ This text, which continues in dialogue form with James requesting revelation and Jesus providing it, begins with an answer to a question that was not asked. It offers a puzzle – what was this question? – that highlights the importance of the concept or character of “femaleness.” In this book, I will seek to address the unraised question about femaleness from the first page of the text. As *IApocJas* moves forward, Jesus explains the nature of femaleness through theological revelation and discussions of female disciples and martyrs. These martyrs along with “femaleness” provide the keys to understanding *IApocJas*.

The text concludes with James’ martyrdom. The beginning and the end of the narrative thus bring forth the central concerns of *IApocJas*, sexual difference and martyrdom. As James receives revelation, he grows progressively more confident in his knowledge, and his fear of persecution and death subsides. These revelations principally concern the nature of “femaleness” as a figure in the divine realms, and through his discourses on the divine realms Jesus provides James the understanding he needs to endure persecution. Further, James learns of a set of female martyrs, who provide a moral exemplar in his training. The two leading, interrelated concerns of the *First Apocalypse of James*, then, are martyrdom and sexual difference.

¹ There are two extant versions of the *First Apocalypse of James*, both written in Coptic, one found in the Tchacos Codex and the other in Nag Hammadi Codex V. I have quoted here from the Tchacos Codex, which is the better preserved of the two. My practice through this book will be to cite primarily from the more complete Tchacos Codex version, except for passages which are better preserved in the Nag Hammadi version. For the lines quoted here, the parallel in Nag Hammadi Codex V is practically identical, lacking only the command to listen. “Since you asked about femaleness” (ΕΠΕΛΗ ΔΚΩ[Ι]ΗΕ ΠΙΣΑ ΤΗΝΤΟΖΗΕ; NHC V 24.26–27). I will discuss the manuscript evidence for *IApocJas* below on pp. 17–22. William R. Schoedel, “The (First) Apocalypse of James,” in *Nag Hammadi Codices V, 2–5 and VI with Papyrus Berolinensis 8502, 1 and 4*, ed. Douglas M. Parrott; NHS XI (Leiden: Brill, 1979), 65–104; Rodolphe Kasser and Gregor Wurst, eds, *The Gospel of Judas: Critical Edition* (Washington, DC: National Geographic, 2007).

A. Ideologies of Power and Sexual Difference in the Arena

This is a common concatenation of themes in early Christian literature. Christians and other persecuted groups developed notions of martyrdom in response to the risk of persecution and execution under Roman law.² Such notions of martyrdom were significantly determined by the typical space in which executions took place, the Roman arena. The arena was a key location for the working out of gendered power relations in the ancient Mediterranean world.³ The logic of the arena pressed upon the persecuted communities a need to embody certain virtues coded as male within ancient understandings of sexual difference.⁴ As Erik Gunderson argues, “Nearly every major theme

² G. E. M. de Ste. Croix, “Why Were the Early Christians Persecuted?” *Past and Present* 26 (1963), 6–38; A. N. Sherwin-White, “Why Were the Early Christians Persecuted? – An Amendment,” *Past and Present* 27 (1964), 23–27; G. E. M. de Ste. Croix, “Why Were the Early Christians Persecuted? – A Rejoinder,” *Past and Present* 27 (1964), 28–33; A. N. Sherwin-White, “The Early Persecutions and Roman Law,” in *The Letters of Pliny* (ed. A. N. Sherwin-White; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1966), 772–787; Timothy D. Barnes, “Pre-Decian Acta Martyrii,” *Journal of Theological Studies* 19 (1968), 509–531; Gary Bisbee, *Pre-Decian Acts of the Martyrs and Commentarii*, HDR 22 (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988); Candida Moss, *The Other Christs: Imitating Jesus in Ancient Christian Ideologies of Martyrdom* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010). Scholarly consensus holds that persecutions of Christians were sporadic and local until the reign of Decius around 250, and still rare until the early fourth century CE. A general precedent (not an official law) that Christianity was illegal seems to have existed by the early second century CE, as attested in Pliny’s letters, but it may not have been universally recognized, and governors and other authorities had broad discretion over the interpretation of the precedent. An ongoing scholarly discussion treats the question of the “origins” of martyrdom. In this book I will consider martyrdom as discourse and practice, constantly in a process of development and not determined by its origins. W.H.C. Frend, *Martyrdom and Persecution in the Early Church: A Study of a Conflict from the Maccabees to Donatus* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1981); G. W. Bowersock, *Martyrdom and Rome* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Daniel Boyarin, *Dying for God: Martyrdom and the Making of Early Christianity and Judaism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999).

³ Monique Clavel-Lévêque, “L’Espace des jeux dans le monde romaine: Hégémonie, symbolique et pratique sociale,” *ANRW* 2.16.3 (1986), 2406–2563; Carlin Barton, *The Sorrows of the Ancient Romans: The Gladiator and the Monster* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992); Erik Gunderson, “The Ideology of the Arena,” *Classical Antiquity* 15 (1996), 113–151; Alison Futrell, *Blood in the Arena: The Spectacle of Roman Power* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1997), 77–120; Elizabeth Castelli, *Martyrdom and Memory: Early Christian Culture Making* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 104–133; Christopher Frilingos, *Spectacles of Empire: Monsters, Martyrs, and the Book of Revelation* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004).

⁴ There is extensive literature on martyrdom and sexual difference. See Elizabeth Castelli, “I Will Make Mary Male: Pieties of the Body and Gender Transformation in Early Christianity,” in *Body Guards: The Cultural Politics of Gender Ambiguity*, ed. Julia Epstein and Kristina Straub (New York: Routledge, 1991); Chris Jones, “Women, Death, and

of the Roman power structure was deployed in the spectacles,” and this included the strict hierarchy maintained by “repression of women and exaltation of bellicose masculinity.”⁵ Truly “bellicose” masculinity was unavailable to prisoners about to be killed, but martyrdom texts offer another strategy: emphasizing the masculine self-control and steadfast endurance of martyrs.⁶ The texts employ gendered notions of philosophical virtue to establish that those executed in the arena embodied masculine character. As Elizabeth Castelli argues, “The masculine ideal of stoic fortitude dominates the arena, and it is so crucial to Christian claims to virtue that women can provisionally embody it.”⁷

In the *Martyrdom of Polycarp*, for instance, a voice comes from heaven as Polycarp enters the arena, saying, “Play the man.”⁸ Polycarp will demonstrate his self-control and endurance in the arena, quite literally performing gender. In early Christian literature, as Castelli points out, it was not only men who might embody masculinity in the arena. In the *Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas*, when Perpetua has a vision of herself engaging in combat in the arena, she imagines, “suddenly I became a man” to fight her opponent. She

the Law during the Christian Persecutions,” in *Martyrs and Martyrologies*, ed. Diana Wood (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993), 23–34; Elizabeth Castelli, “Visions and Voyeurism: Holy Women and the Politics of Sight in Early Christianity,” in *Protocol of the Colloquy of the Center for Hermeneutical Studies, 6 December 1992*, ed. Christopher Ocker (Berkeley, CA: Center for Hermeneutical Studies, 1994), 1–20; Virginia Burrus, “Reading Agnes: The Rhetoric of Gender in Ambrose and Prudentius,” *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 3:1 (1995), 25–46; Brent D. Shaw, “Body/Power/Identity: Passions of the Martyrs,” *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 4:3 (1996), 269–312; Tessa Rajak, “Dying for the Law: The Martyr’s Portrait in Jewish-Greek Literature,” in *Portraits: Biographical Representation in the Greek and Latin Literature of the Roman Period*, ed. M.J. Edwards and Simon Swain (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 39–68; Janice Capel Anderson and Stephen D. Moore, “Taking It Like a Man: Masculinity in 4 Maccabees,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 117.2 (1998), 249–273; Boyarin, *Dying for God*; Moore, *God’s Beauty Parlor: And Other Queer Spaces in and around the Bible* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2001); Elizabeth Castelli, *Martyrdom and Memory*; Frilingos, *Spectacles of Empire*; Virginia Burrus, “Torture and Travail: Producing the Christian Martyr,” in *A Feminist Companion to Patristic Studies*, ed. Amy Jo Levine and Maria Mayo Robbins (New York: T&T Clark, 2008), 56–71; Stephanie Cobb, *Dying to Be Men: Gender and Language in Early Christian Martyr Texts* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008).

⁵ Gunderson, “The Ideology of the Arena,” 140.

⁶ On the valuation of “endurance” as the paradigmatic masculine virtue of the martyr, see Shaw, “Body/Power/Identity,” 284–291. For a critique of Shaw’s emphasis on the feminine quality of endurance in ancient thought, see Cobb, *Dying to Be Men*, 134–135.

⁷ Castelli, *Martyrdom and Memory*, 121.

⁸ *Martyrdom of Polycarp* 9.1. The Greek is ἀνδρῖζου. For the text and translation, see Herbert Musurillo, *Acts of the Christian Martyrs* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), 106–131. See also the discussion in Castelli, *Martyrdom and Memory*, 61–62.

says that she interpreted this vision to mean that she must die in the arena.⁹ Both male and female martyrs might attain self-mastery and demonstrate their fortitude, but always within a system where the virtuous Christian is the masculine one. As Castelli puts it, “the gender binary need not always be binding though its intrinsic value system (the masculine is always necessarily more positively charged than the feminine) remains relentlessly intact.”¹⁰ This relentless hierarchical model structures early Christian martyrdom literature and enables, in Castelli’s reading, only certain strategies for authorizing martyrs.

Building on this scholarship, Stephanie Cobb argues that Christian martyrdom texts make use of a set of feminizing strategies, which contrast to the masculinizing ones. Cobb demonstrates first how martyrdom texts depict female martyrs as masculine, or even as becoming male, in order to show the greatness of the Christians.¹¹ Yet, Cobb’s readings also highlight how Christian texts used strategies of feminizing women martyrs – emphasizing their beauty, their motherhood, and the physical character of their bodies on display in the arena. In the *Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas*, the depiction of the martyrs’ deaths includes a story of Perpetua and her female slave Felicitas being sent into the arena “stripped naked” to the prurient horror of the crowd.¹² Cobb argues that this inverse strategy of feminizing the martyrs served to blunt the possibly radical nature of these texts’ masculinizing claims.

The texts, therefore, in various ways, attempt to balance appropriate behavior by, on the one hand, illustrating the necessity and possibility of women moving toward the ideals of masculinity, and, on the other hand, ensuring that the female martyr is placed safely back within the confines of proper, domestic femininity.¹³

The reading depends on identifying strategies as either masculinizing or feminizing, with one side empowering Christian women and the other restraining them. Cobb’s critique usefully challenges assumptions in the field that early Christian martyrdom texts simply and straightforwardly masculinize martyrs in order to valorize them. At the same time, Cobb suggests that “masculinization” and “feminization” are complementary strategies. The same hierarchical model of sexual difference is maintained. Masculinizing martyrs serves to authorize the Christian community to outsiders, while feminizing martyrs keeps women in their place inside the community.

⁹ *Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas* 10.7 (Musurillo).

¹⁰ Castelli, *Martyrdom and Memory*, 63.

¹¹ Cobb, *Dying to Be Men*, 97–107. See also Castelli, *Martyrdom and Memory*, 62–67 and 121–122.

¹² *Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas* 20.2 (Musurillo).

¹³ Cobb, *Dying to Be Men*, 122–123.

In a challenge to these descriptions of relentlessly hierarchical gender distinctions, Virginia Burrus suggests that martyrdom texts exhibit a more “complex gendering” than has often been acknowledged.¹⁴ She argues that the process of audience identification with the female martyrs opened up, first, “spaces for the production of novel female subjectivities that may provide sites of ambivalent identification for female readers.” At the same time, “for male authors and readers, they also, I suggest, offer an ambiguously ‘feminized’ male subjectivity.”¹⁵ Burrus suggests that strategies perhaps aimed at maintaining the gendered hierarchy of the arena also produced opportunities for more complex articulations of sexual difference. The female martyr who is unexpectedly masculinized and then hurriedly feminized becomes a site of complex identifications.

I believe the *First Apocalypse of James* can offer new insights to this debate. First, *IApocJas* features an exhortation to James that he imitate the example of female disciples and martyrs. This process by which a male Christian takes on a female martyr as a moral exemplar seems to embody precisely the “ambiguous” identification that Burrus suggests. Further, the extended discussion of the category of “femaleness” suggests a deeper and more direct engagement with questions of sexual difference than most of the traditional martyrdom texts ever attempt. Within these theological discourses, *IApocJas* develops multiple overlapping methods for authorizing female martyrs. These methods do not simply reduce to masculinizing or feminizing the martyr. Rather, the goal appears to be to identify different articulations of sexual difference, which could authorize a set of female martyrs as moral exemplars. I will ask, by what logic do these articulations of sexual difference work? What resources do they draw upon to articulate these improvisational visions of sexual difference?

Given that *IApocJas* offers a rich discussion of martyrdom and sexual difference, why has it been so little studied within these scholarly discussions? This is partly a function of the manuscript evidence. There are only two extant versions of the text, and one of them, from the Tchacos Codex, was published in 2007.¹⁶ While the other version has been available for decades in a copy found among the Nag Hammadi codices, a number of the most important passages on sexual difference found in the TC version of *IApocJas* are riddled with lacunae in their NHC V parallels.¹⁷ The publication of the

¹⁴ Burrus, “Torture and Travail,” 56.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 70–71.

¹⁶ For the full narrative of the Tchacos Codex’ path to publication, see Herbert Krosney, *The Lost Gospel: The Quest for the Gospel of Judas Iscariot* (Washington, DC: National Geographic, 2006). The edited codex was published as Kasser and Wurst, eds, *The Gospel of Judas: Critical Edition*.

¹⁷ Compare for example TC 25.17–29.15 and NHC V 39.15–43.19.

Tchacos Codex, then, opened up new opportunities to bring *IApocJas* to bear on scholarly discussions of martyrdom and sexual difference. But further, *IApocJas* has rarely been discussed in these scholarly discussions due to the lasting imprint of the discourse of heresy and orthodoxy.

B. Orthodoxy and Heresy

IApocJas is commonly labeled by modern scholars as “Gnostic.” Such an appellation derives from an ancient discourse of orthodoxy and heresy. Early Christian leaders developed the category of “heresy” to distinguish between true and false Christians, and by such means to draw the boundaries of normative Christianity.¹⁸ The use of such a power-laden category of approbation for historical analysis has consistently produced misleading and incomplete depictions of Christian history. Karen King’s genealogy of Gnosticism demonstrates that a certain incoherence in the category of “Gnosticism” is in fact essential to its use. “The discourse of orthodoxy and heresy has been employed to construe the relationship of Gnosticism and Christianity almost solely in terms of difference, and the relationship of widely varying so-called Gnostic materials in terms of similarity.”¹⁹ The purpose of “Gnosticism” within the discourse of orthodoxy and heresy is to lump together *unlike* things as “heresy” to provide an imagined other useful to self-definition. Scholarship that depends on the term “Gnostic” often undermines its own analysis by presuming the similarity of highly divergent ancient Christian materials.

Likewise, the discourse of orthodoxy and heresy presumes profound differences between “heretical” and “orthodox” materials, and so there has been a tendency in modern scholarship to segregate these materials once they have been so labeled. The history of early Christianity has often been written based on a presumption that “Gnostic” was equivalent to non-Christian. Because *IApocJas* has been considered one of these heretical materials, it has often been excluded from discussions of martyrdom and sexual difference in early Christianity. I will seek to consider *IApocJas* outside of the framework of orthodoxy and heresy, locating it among comparands within a capacious category of ancient Christian materials. I do not categorize the text as “Gnostic,” and I will not be asking whether the text exhibits “orthodox” or “heretical” features. Instead, I will consider how *IApocJas* fits among ancient discourses

¹⁸ Alain LeBoulluec, *Le Notion d'hérésie dans la littérature grecque II^e–III^e siècles* (Paris: Études augustiniennes, 1985).

¹⁹ Karen King, *What is Gnosticism?* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 53. On the incoherence of scholarly categories of “Gnosticism,” see also Michael Williams, *Rethinking “Gnosticism”: An Argument for Dismantling a Dubious Category* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996).

and practices of martyrdom and sexual difference, drawing comparisons to Clement of Alexandria's *Stromateis*, Justin's *Apology*, Heracleon's commentary on the Gospel of John, and the *Dialogue of the Savior* among many.

Before turning to discussion of martyrdom, I need to address one problematic ancient category that I do intend to use. A number of recent studies have proposed that Valentinianism remains a useful category for the study of ancient Christianity. The term itself is not without difficulty. There is little evidence of people who self-designated as "Valentinians," and there remains significant scholarly debate as to the doctrine or practice of Valentinus himself, a Christian teacher who lived in Rome in the middle of the second century CE.²⁰ As Geoffrey Smith points out, our evidence of Valentinians generally places them within and among Christian churches rather than as a clearly socially distinct "school" of Valentinus, and I follow Smith in refusing to take *IApocJas'* Valentinian character as a marker of its origin in some separate splinter group rather than within the social setting of early Christianity more broadly.²¹ But although it must be used with care, the term still successfully captures a set of intellectual and ritual concerns shared among a set of early Christian texts and also related at times by their (also Christian) opponents.²² This coherence can be seen in the highly consistent set of texts that scholars

²⁰ Christoph Marksches, *Valentinus Gnosticus? Untersuchungen zur valentinianischen Gnosis mit einem Kommentar zu den Fragmenten Valentinus*, WUNT 65 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1992); Gilles Quispel, "The Original Doctrine of Valentinus the Gnostic," *Vigiliae Christianae* 50.4 (1996), 327–352; Einar Thomassen, *The Spiritual Seed: The Church of the "Valentinians"*, NHMS 60 (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 417–429; Ismo Dunderberg, *Beyond Gnosticism: Myth, Lifestyle, and Society in the School of Valentinus* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 35–74; Ismo Dunderberg, "The School of Valentinus," in *A Companion to Second-Century Christian "Heretics"*, ed. Petri Luomanen and Antti Marjanen (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 64–99. Christoph Marksches has argued that the thought of the "Valentinians" bears little or no necessary relationship to the man Valentinus. Gilles Quispel argues by contrast for a close relation between Valentinus and the Valentinians. I prefer Ismo Dunderberg's model, in which he does not presume to delineate Valentinianism in order to exclude Valentinus but understands the category as a historical construct to include the thought and practice of Valentinus and those who followed him.

²¹ Geoffrey Smith, *Guilt by Association: Heresy Catalogs in Early Christianity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 166–169.

²² As Einar Thomassen puts it, "Nonetheless the movement possessed enough continuity, coherence, and specificity, and enough of a historical relation to Valentinus, to make it possible to identify various groups as 'Valentinians' over a span of at least 250 years." Thomassen, *The Spiritual Seed*, 5. See also Dunderberg, *Beyond Gnosticism*, 2–10; Philip Tite, *Valentinian Ethics and Paraenetic Discourse: Determining the Social Function of Moral Exhortation in Valentinian Christianity*, NHMS 67 (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 7–14. Karen King notes the relative coherence and consistency of the category of "Valentinianism" in contrast to "Gnosticism." King, *What is Gnosticism?*, 154–162.

identify as “Valentinian,” and the *First Apocalypse of James* appears among them in every case.²³

The discussions of “femaleness” in *IApocJas* build from questions about the relationship of oneness and plurality in the divine realms and how they first came to be. This structure of thought locates the text within Valentinian theological discourse.²⁴ God, in *IApocJas* “the One Who Is” (ΠΕΤΩΟΟΙ; 10.8–9) is originally perfectly one, before the plurality of the divine realms develops. *IApocJas* uses “femaleness” to refer to the negative aspect of this plurality, a world somehow separated from the realms of the One Who Is (10.21–27). This negative aspect of plurality is balanced by a more positive understanding of multiple figures in the divine realms including Jesus (10.12–19) and Sophia (22.5–6). The discourses on “femaleness” build from themes developed in Valentinian theology, and I will discuss them in relation to relevant Valentinian comparands. These shared patterns of thought, however, do not imply total equivalence between Valentinian texts. If the Valentinians were not a closed and separate community but people within Christian communities who shared various intellectual notions, then attributing *IApocJas* to the Valentinian tradition should not imply disregarding non-Valentinian sources when placing it in historical context. When *IApocJas* brings this theology to bear on various matters of concern, it enters into a complex series of disputes in no way limited only to those who share Valentinian theological beliefs about originary monism. The text’s engagements with martyrdom discourse, for instance, can only be understood by comparison to a wide range of materials, both Valentinian and non-Valentinian.

²³ Michel R. Desjardins, *Sin in Valentinianism*, SBLDS 108 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990), 5–7; Einar Thomassen, “Notes pour la delimitation d’un corpus valentinien à Nag Hammadi,” in *Les Textes des Nag Hammadi et le problème de leur classification*, ed. Louis Painchaud and Anne Pasquier; BCNH:E 3 (Québec: Les Presses de l’Université Laval, 1995), 243–263; Dunderberg, *Beyond Gnosticism*, 7–10; Tite, *Valentinian Ethics and Paraenetic Discourse*, 14–17.

²⁴ Thomassen has argued that *IApocJas* should not be read as a Valentinian text, but rather a Christian apocalyptic text which drew on Valentinian sources, including a Valentinian ritual dialogue. This study will challenge Thomassen’s reading by arguing that the ritual dialogue is essential to the text’s narrative arc and argument, and how these Valentinian theological and ritual materials are reflected through the text. Einar Thomassen, “The Valentinian Materials in *James* [NHC V,3 and CT,2],” in *Beyond the Gnostic Gospels: Studies Building on the Work of Elaine Pagels*, eds. Eduard Iricinschi et al.; Studies and Texts in Antiquity and Christianity 82 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013), 79–90.

C. Martyrdom

At first read, *IApocJas* seems straightforwardly a text about martyrdom. It concludes with the death of James by stoning. James' death is one of the paradigmatic early Christian martyrdom stories, which was told and re-told variously through the first centuries.²⁵ Further, the text clearly narrates James' progress in preparation for martyrdom. Jesus tells James, "You are ignorant concerning yourself" (ΚΟ ΔΕ ΗΑΤΙΣΟΟΥΗΕ ΕΡΑΚ; 10.6), and he urges James not to fear (NHC V 25.13). By the conclusion of the dialogue, James is no longer fearful, and he proclaims proudly, "I have come to believe all these things, and they are properly within what is in my soul" (ΔΕΙΡ̄ [Π]ΣΤΕΥΕ ΕΝΑΙ ΤΗΡΟΥ ΔΥΩ ΔΥΖ̄Π̄ [Π]ΕΤ̄Ζ̄Π̄ Τ̄Δ̄ΤΥΧΗ ΚΑΛΩC; 25.15–17).²⁶ He learns true knowledge, he conquers his fear, and he can become a martyr.

But as clear as James' path may seem, no martyrdom is straightforward. No death, not even a violent death, constitutes martyrdom in itself. Martyrdom cannot occur as bare fact. It is an interpretation of events for which argument is required. As Daniel Boyarin puts it:

For the "Romans," it didn't matter much whether the lions were eating a robber or a bishop, and it probably didn't make much of a difference to the lions, either, but the robber's

²⁵ Shelly Mathews, *Perfect Martyr* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 79–97. Mathews argues convincingly that the martyrdom of Stephen in *Acts* 7–8 should be read as an appropriation of the narrative of James' death. Christians most often mobilized the narratives of the death of James toward constructing a radical break between Jews and Christians, but a counter-narrative can be read in the Pseudo-Clementine *Recognitions* 1.27–71. For comparison of the accounts of James' death, with particular consideration given to the long excerpt of Hegesippus in Eusebius of Caesarea, *Ecclesiastical History* 2.23.4–18, see Wilhelm Pratscher, *Der Herrenbruder Jakobus und die Jakobustradition*, FRLANT 139 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1987), 103–109; F. Stanley Jones, "The Martyrdom of James in Hegesippus, Clement of Alexandria, Christian Apocrypha, including Nag Hammadi: A Study of the Textual Relations," in *SBL Seminar Papers, 1990*, SBLSP 29 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990), 322–335; Richard Bauckham, "For What Offense Was James Put to Death?" in *James the Just and Christian Origins*, eds. Bruce Chilton and Craig A. Evans; SNT 98 (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 199–218; John Painter, *Just James: The Brother of Jesus in History and Tradition* (Columbia, SC: The University of South Carolina Press, 2004), 118–131, 188–198; David J. DeVore, "Opening the Canon of Martyr Narratives: Pre-Decian Martyrdom Discourse and the *Hypomnēmata* of Hegesippus," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 27.4 (2019), 579–609. On the historical question of James' death, scholars broadly agree that the narrative in Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* 20.199–203 is more likely reliable, while Hegesippus builds a legendary narrative through the literalizing of early Christian metaphors about James' piety. For a well-considered evaluation of what constitutes historical reliability in relation to Josephus, see Mathews, 96–97.

²⁶ NHC V 38.12–15 is mostly lost, but what remains, "[I am] satisfied ... and they are ... my soul" (Δ[Η]ΟΚ ΔΕ Τ[Ι]ΤΩΤ Π̄ΖΗΤ ... ΔΥΩ ΣΕΨΟΟΠ Κ ... ΤΑΥΧΗ) agrees with the TC version.

friends and the bishop's friends told different stories about these leonine meals. It is in these stories that martyrdom, as opposed to execution or dinner, can be found, not in "what happened."²⁷

Only from these stories can martyrdom emerge. A death becomes martyrdom, for some people at least, when it becomes an object of a certain kind of discourse. Arguments and the telling of stories produce the case for differentiating one particular violent death from others. I consider martyrdom as a "discourse" in the Foucauldian sense. "Discourse" in this sense does not simply refer to linguistic communication, but to "a field of strategic possibilities" with rules and values peculiar to it, enabled and constrained by cultural location.²⁸ The discourse of martyrdom, then, itself enables all these various positions attested in debates as to which deaths should be treated as true martyrdoms.

It is not surprising, then, that in the first centuries CE the discourse of martyrdom became closely bound up with another active set of disputes around orthodoxy and heresy. Martyrdom played a central role in contestations among Christians as to who embodied "true" or "false" Christianity. Tertullian in his *Scorpiace* identified Gnostics and Valentinians as "opponents of martyrdom."²⁹ Irenaeus and Tertullian claimed that being martyred was a sign of orthodox, true Christianity. There has been a tradition in scholarship, likewise, to follow the heresiologists in considering "Gnostics" and the Valentinians to have rejected martyrdom. W. H. C. Frend argues that among the Gnostics, "the idea that martyrdom would bring the individual a reward was utterly rejected" because "persecution and martyrdom were in imitation of Christ's Passion and physical suffering."³⁰ According to Frend, martyrdom

²⁷ Daniel Boyarin, *Dying for God: Martyrdom and the Making of Early Christianity and Judaism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 94–95.

²⁸ Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge & The Discourse on Language*, trans. A.M. Sheridan Smith (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972), 37.

²⁹ Tertullian, *Scorpiace* 1 (ANF 3.633). See also Irenaeus, *Against the Heresies*, 4.33.9. For the text of the *Scorpiace*, see August Reifferscheid and Georgi Wissowa, eds., *Quinti Septimi Florentis Tertulliani Opera*, CCSL (Turnholt: Brepols, 1972), 2:1067–1097. For the text of *Against the Heresies*, see Adelin Rousseau and Louis Doutrelou, eds., *Irénée de Lyon: Contre les hérésies*, SC 100 (Paris: Cerf, 1965).

³⁰ W. H. C. Frend, "The Gnostic Sects and the Roman Empire," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 5.1 (1954), 31–33. Such assumptions about the nature of ancient martyrdom continue into the present. See, for example, Michael L. Budde's claim that Christian martyrdom should be understood in terms of the "witness of the body," wherein belief in the power and efficaciousness of Christ's body is necessary for martyrdom. "The 'body' giving witness is the church, the new people formed by God as disciples of Christ, whose murdered and resurrected body is the paradigmatic witness of God's love of and hope for the world." Michael L. Budde, "Introduction," in *Witness of the Body: The Past, Present, and Future of Christian Martyrdom*, eds. Michael L. Budde and Karen Scott (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2011), viii.

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