Much narrower than the general topics of both astrology and medicine, to say nothing of magic, the study of astrological medicine in western antiquity is prohibitive for a number of reasons besides the ‘wretchedness’ of all things astrological. For one, several of the ancient texts have not survived or only survive in fragments. Moreover they were often written under the names of legendary figures such as the pharaoh and Hermetic sage Nechepso or even Hermes Trismegistus himself. Thus information as to any social reality behind this technical Hermetic tradition is scarce. So is information as to any social reality behind the affiliated pseudo-Zoroastrian and Solomonic traditions of the Hellenistic period and Roman Empire. The boundaries between these traditions are debatable, like the extent to which they represent belief and practice that are actually Egyptian, Persian, or Jewish.

‘Alien wisdom’ or not, titles attributed to such legendary figures are cited in Gnostic texts. The *Apocryphon of John* refers to a Book of Zoroaster (παρακολούθησεν θεοῦ γινώσκοντα) and may in fact contain an extract from it. *On the Origin of the World* refers to a Book of Solomon (παρακολούθησεν θεοῦ γινώσκοντα). Although perhaps unidentifiable with any other known pseudepigrapha, the presence of these titles in Ophite-Sethian texts brings with it the possibility of astrological medicine in Gnostic traditions.
Of course not every title attributed to Nechepso, Zoroaster, Solomon and their colleagues was about astrological medicine, iatromathematics, to employ the technical term. But the possibility of astrological medicine in Gnostic traditions is supported by instances of the iatromathematical doctrine of melothesia. According to this doctrine, the parts of the human body are associated with what seem to be the seven planets, followed by another elaborate melothesia in which the parts of the human body are associated with thirty astral rulers whose precise astrological function is unclear.6 The latter two of these instances of the doctrine may have been extracted from the aforementioned Book of Zoroaster. The start of a similar planetary melothesia related to the one in the Apocryphon of John is also found in On the Origin of the World, albeit not immediately in connection with the Book of Solomon referred to there.7

Besides a list of body parts, that is, parts of Adam's psychic body, the planetary melothesia in the Apocryphon of John has two sets of names for the seven astral rulers, plus their iconography (see table 1). The double-decanal melothesia and the other melothesia following it have a single name per astral ruler with its associated body part and no iconography (see table 2). The immediate superiors to these seventy-two and thirty astral rulers are also named. Why the lists of body parts, names, and iconography? Could there be some utility to knowing which part of the body is associated with a given astral ruler, what the names and iconography of the rulers are, together with the names of their superiors?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Authority</th>
<th>Iconography (face)</th>
<th>Name of Power</th>
<th>Psychic Body Substance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>α</td>
<td>sheep</td>
<td>Goodness</td>
<td>bone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>θ</td>
<td>donkey</td>
<td>Providence</td>
<td>sinew</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>υ</td>
<td>hyena</td>
<td>Divinity</td>
<td>flesh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>δ</td>
<td>seven-headed serpent</td>
<td>Lordship</td>
<td>marrow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>θ</td>
<td>serpent</td>
<td>Kingdom</td>
<td>blood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>χ</td>
<td>monkey</td>
<td>Eivy</td>
<td>skin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>θ</td>
<td>fire</td>
<td>Wisdom</td>
<td>hair</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Psychic Body Part</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Psychic Body Part</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>α</td>
<td>head</td>
<td>δ</td>
<td>head</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>θ</td>
<td>brain</td>
<td>χ</td>
<td>neck</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>α</td>
<td>t. eye</td>
<td>θ</td>
<td>r. shoulder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>θ</td>
<td>l. eye</td>
<td>χ</td>
<td>l. shoulder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>χ</td>
<td>t. ear</td>
<td>θ</td>
<td>r. hand</td>
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<tr>
<td>θ</td>
<td>nose</td>
<td>χ</td>
<td>l. hand</td>
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<tr>
<td>θ</td>
<td>lips</td>
<td>θ</td>
<td>r. fingers</td>
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<tr>
<td>θ</td>
<td>molars</td>
<td>χ</td>
<td>l. breast</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
of melothesia in Ophite-Sethian texts, least of all such an elaborate double-decanal melothesia as in the Apocryphon of John. Stripping off the bodily passions while ascending through the cosmic spheres would not have required knowledge of the names of the astral rulers with which the ears, nose, lips, teeth, molars, tonsils, uvula, throat, and so on, are associated. Practical application of this knowledge must have been otherwise.11

Upon conclusion of his exposé of asceint ritual, Celsus says that the Ophian Christians "profess also some magical sorcery (καὶ ὑπορευοῦνται ... μαγισσά τινα γοητείαν), and this is the summ of wisdom to them (καὶ τοῦτ' ἔστιν αὐτοῖς τῆς σοφίας κεφαλαῖον)." It is not plain what else Celsus has to say about this or how his statements fit together, as his work is only preserved in limited quotation by Origen. He does go on to say, however, that they "use some sort of magic and sorcery (χαρωμένους ... μαγείαν τοι καὶ γοητείαν) and invoke the barbarous names of certain daemons (καὶ καλοῦντας νόμιμα βαρβαρικά δαιμόνια τινῶν)." He refrains from delineating "all those who taught rites of purification (δοσὶ καθαρμούς ἐξίδαξαν), or spells which bring deliverance (ἡ λυτριός φόναξ), or formulas that avert evil (ἡ ἀπομυπεύμας φωνής), or noisy crashes (ἡ κτυπίας), or pretended miracles (ἡ δαιμονίως τοιχατρισμούς), or all the various prophylactics of clothes, or numbers, or stones, or plants, or roots, and other objects of every sort (ἐξωθήνας ἢ ἀριθμόν ἢ λίμνης ἢ φυτῶν ἢ βίζον στο παυσάνοιον καινοίαν ἀλεξίφαρακα)." But he testifies that he himself saw "books containing barbarian names of daemons and knowledge of portents (βιβλία βάρβαρα δαιμόνων νόμιμα ἱέρατα καὶ τερατείας)" in the hands of Ophian Christians.12

Celsus disparages them for this. Nevertheless, his disparagement does not invalidate his basic testimony. With disparagement of his own, Origen also claims that the Ophian Christians were involved in sorcery and magic, unlike orthodox Christians, so he asserts.13 From Origen's limited quotations of Celsus, it is reliable enough that Ophian Christians invoked daemons with unusual names and owned books with the names written in them. Why and how they invoked the daemons is not something that either Celsus or Origen specifies, at least not something that Celsus specifies as quoted in Origen. Prompted by his encounter with them, Celsus does have a few lines about amulets made from assorted media though. Could the Ophian Christians he encountered have used amulets alongside invocation?

11 Heavenly ascent: e.g Segal 1984; Culianu 1983; Couliano 1984.
Later, roughly a century after Celsus and within a few decades of Origen, Plotinus had similar things to say about some of his associates in Rome. They were Christians that his literary executor Porphyry referred to as Gnostics. Plotinus says that they “write chants, intending to address them to those beings (ἐπαναλαμβάνων γὰρ πρὸς ἑκείνας λέγοντες), not only to the Soul [i.e. World Soul, a.k.a. Wisdom, Sophia] but to the beings above it as well (οὐ μόνον πρὸς ψυχήν, ἀλλὰ καὶ τὰ ἐπάνω),” while below “they claim to purify themselves of sicknesses (καθαρίσσεται δὲ νόσους λέγοντες αὐτότως),” based on their assumption that “the sicknesses are daemons (τὰς νόσους δαίμονια εἶναι), and they claim to be able to drive these out by their word (καὶ ταύτα ἔξαιρεν λόγῳ φάκσκοντες δύνασθαι).” He does not mention amulets as such, but he does indicate that these Gnostic Christians wrote things as well as spoke them.

Plotinus is only slightly less disparaging than Celsus and Origen. He argues that the Gnostics were doing the same things prescribed in magical literature, even if they did not think so. Instead of what they were doing to heal themselves, Gnostics ought to live a philosophical life, according to Plotinus. Daemons do not cause sickness, anyway. This is in keeping with Plotinus’ stance on astrological determinism, namely that the stars indicate terrestrial conditions more than they actually influence them. Regardless, the highest order of things is what the philosopher is after. He should not worry so much about what goes on in the lower orders.

Taken together with what Celsus and Origen say, there is evidence in contemporary reports, then, that Gnostics invoked daemons and owned books with daemon names in them. This was because they believed that daemons cause bodily ailment, which they endeavored to cleanse themselves of and remove by their word. When this contemporary evidence is added to the instances of melothesia in Ophite-Sethian texts, the possibility of astrological medicine in these Gnostic traditions becomes plausible, and a reading of their myths within the context of iatromathematical texts is justifiable.

**Gnostic Myth in the Context Of Iatromathematical Texts**

Among the best preserved texts of astrological medicine are the *Sacred Book of Hermes to Asclepius* and the *Testament of Solomon*. Establishing a date of composition for either is difficult. All manuscripts of the *Sacred Book of Hermes* are medieval, although the text itself is likely ancient. Galen, for example, cites a comparable prescription of astrological medicine from a technical Hermetic text attributed to Nechepso. As for the *Testament of Solomon*, all complete manuscripts are also medieval. However, it was already being cited in late antiquity, and there are papyrus fragments of chapter eighteen that date to the fifth or sixth century. A recent argument places the final Christian version of the testament as early as 175–250 CE, while reiterating that its important eighteenth chapter on the decans would be at home in late Ptolemaic or early Roman Egypt and may have been in circulation as an independent text before the Common Era. Josephus attests the attribution of such texts to Solomon in the first century. He himself witnessed the therapeutic removal of a daemon by a Jewish practitioner. In accordance with Solomic prescription, the practioner used a gemstone amulet set in a ring with plant material.

The *Sacred Book of Hermes* is a manual. Having learned about the doctrine of melothesia, its practitioner is taught the zodiacal signs, names, iconography, and associated body parts of all thirty-six decans. In order to heal and protect the associated body part, the practitioner is instructed to make an amulet from whatever gemstone is proper to that decan and then set it in a ring with that decan’s plant. On the gemstone are to be engraved the name and above all the iconography of that decan. This is how the text opens:

I appended for you the shapes and forms of the thirty-six decans in the zodia, both how you must engrave (γλώσσαν) each one of them and wear it between the Ascendant and the Agathos Daimon and the Place concerning health. So after you do this, wear it, and you will have a great amulet. For as many sufferings as are sent upon humans from the influence of the stars (διὰ τῶν αἰώνων καθότων ἄνθρωποι) they are healed by these decans (τούτοις ἰάται). Therefore when you have reverenced (τυφήσας)

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14 *Ennead* 2.9.44: Armstrong 1966, 276–279; translation modified.
15 *Ennead* 2.9.13–14.
each decan through its proper stone and its proper plant and especially its shape, you will have a great amulet. For without this decanal arrangement there is no generation of anything, since the universe is encompassed by it.

Now the zodiacal circle, shaped into parts and members and joints, stands out from the cosmos. And part by part it is thus. Aries is the head of the cosmos, Taurus the neck, Gemini the shoulders, Cancer the chest, Leo the back, heart, and sides, Virgo the abdomen, Libra the buttocks, Scorpio the genitals, Sagittarius the thighs, Capricorn the knees, Aquarius the lower legs, Pisces the feet.

So each of the zodia has power over its own member and brings about some suffering related to that member (ἐξαρτον ὁν τῶν ζῳδιῶν έπεξε τ’ ὅς μέλος και ἀποτελεῖ περ’ αὐτό πάσος τι). Accordingly, if you do not want to suffer what you must suffer under the zodia (ἐπερ βολεί μη παθεῖ & δει παθεῖ ὃν’ αὐτόν), engrave the shapes and forms of their decans on stones. And after you put the plant of each decan underneath, and especially after you also produce its shape, wear the amulet as your body’s great and blessed remedy. Let us start then from Aries.

First decan of Aries. This one is named Chenlachori. As for its shape, given below, it has the face of a little child, hands raised up, holding a scepter as if carrying it overhead, the shins clad with greaves. This one dominates the sufferings that are related to the head (ός τοις κυριεῖ τ’ ὅς κεφαλήν γνωμέων παθών). Engrave it then just so on fine Babylonian stone, and after you put isophrus plant underneath, set it in an iron ring and wear it. Avoid eating boar’s head. For thus you will flatter (κοιναχεύεσθαι) each one of the decans when you engrave it on its stone along with its proper name also.21

The text proceeds formulaically through the remaining thirty-five decans. If working alone, the practitioner assumed in the Sacred Book of Hermes would have knowledge of astrology, botany, gem cutting, and metallurgy. He is able to recognize and has access to specific materials. As an artisan he possesses the tools and expertise needed to craft the prescribed amulets.

Emphasis on gem cutting and on the iconography of the decans in the Sacred Book of Hermes could be a reaction to more skeptical physicians like Galen. In a famous passage from his voluminous work entitled On the Composition and Specificity of Simple Remedies, Galen comes to write about the use of stones.22 Of green jasper he writes: “Some people bear witness that there is a special property to certain stones, such as in fact the green jasper does have. It benefits the stomach and the opening of the esophagus when it is worn. Some people,” Galen goes on to explain, “even set the stone in a ring and engrave on it the radiate serpent (ἐντιθέσαι τε καὶ δακτυλίῳ αὐτῶν ἐννοι καὶ γλύφοντι ἐν αὐτῷ τὸν τάς ἀκτίνας έχοντα δράκοντα), just as king Nechepso indeed prescribed in his fourteenth book (καθέτερα καὶ δ’ βασιλεύς Νεχέψως γέφυρεν εν τ’ αὐτή τας πεταλοδοκειακή τ’ ἐκατον). Now I myself have made a sufficient trial of this stone,” Galen adds. “After I made a little necklace of small stones of this type, I hung it from the neck just so as for the stones to reach the opening of the esophagus. They appeared no less beneficial when they did not have the engraving (τὴν γλυφὴν) that Nechepso prescribed.”

In this passage Galen thinks that the stone itself is a natural curative, but his contemporaries, whether pagan, Jewish, or Christian, were less certain that prescriptions like that of the legendary Nechepso were unnecessary. For them, the names and iconography of the astral rulers were key to healing and protecting the body.

While the Sacred Book of Hermes is a manual of instructions for engraving gemstone amulets, chapter eighteen of the Testament of Solomon mixes instruction and narrative. The iconography of the decans is not featured in the text, but it hardly shares the skepticism of Galen. As Solomon tells the story, he summons each decanal daemon to find out who it is. They respond one by one, answering with their name, the associated body part that they afflict or their influence on human life more broadly, and what should be done to counteract them. These measures are often speech oriented but also include the making of amulets of various media to be inscribed with the names of thwarting gods and angels. After giving its name, the first decan tells Solomon, “I cause people’s heads to suffer pain and I cause their temples to throb (κεφαλὰς ἀθροίματος ποιῶ ἄγανα καὶ κρατάρως σαλεῖας).” Conveniently enough for anyone who might be suffering from such a headache, before concluding its response to the king the decan mentions that when it hears someone invoke the archangel Michael to thwart it, it immediately withdraws (ρέους ἄγαναρος), that is, the headache will be gone.23

In terms of genre, this chapter of the Testament of Solomon is closer than the Sacred Book of Hermes is to the Apocryphon of John. The Gnostic myth is also told as a story, although the practical application of its doctrine of melothesia is less obvious. All three texts feature decanal names and associated body parts. But there are instructions for healing and protecting the

21 Sacred Book of Hermes to Asclepius 1–5: Ruelle 1908, 250–253; translation mine.
22 De simplicium medicamentorum temperamentis ac facultatibus, beginning at 9.2.1.
23 De simplicium medicamentorum temperamentis ac facultatibus 9.2.49: Kühn 1826/1962, 207; translation mine, with reference to Bonner 1959, 54; Jackson 1985, 77–78; see both, for issues of textual transmission and translation of the passage.
24 Testament of Solomon 18.5: McCown 1922, 531; Duling 1983, 978; translation modified.
body only in the sacred book and the testament, not in the apocryphon.

Chapter eighteen of the testament seems to have been composed through
narrative adaptation of a manual something like the sacred book: a decanal
melothesia and instructions for healing and protecting the body have been
placed within a narrative framework dealing with the career and reputation
of Solomon. Likewise in the apocryphon, an elaborate decanal melothesia
and another melothesia of thirty astral rulers are placed within a narrative
framework as the Savior retells the account of creation from Jewish script-
ture. The testament is also closer to the apocryphon in that its decans are
negatively called daemons.

Perhaps the source of this material in the Apocryphon of John was the
Book of Zoroaster referred to there. Whether a pagan or Christian text, it
could have been a manual of astrological medicine, complete with instruc-
tions for making amulets. The Sacred Book of Hermes and the Testament of
Solomon are limited to the thirty-six decans, but there is a second-century
papyrus from Oxyrhynchus, P.Oxy. 465, that features the names and iconog-
raphy of the seventy-two 'half' decans, their astrological influence on parts
of the body, households, cities, kingdoms. As the same double-decanal struc-
ture of the Greco-Egyptian cosmos is found in early Sethian and proto-
Sethian texts like the Gospel of Judas and Eugnostos respectively, the melo-
thesia of seventy-two astral rulers in the long manuscripts of the Apocryphon
of John does not necessarily represent a later development in Gnostic myth.

Speech and Amulets in Gnostic Astrological Medicine

More important than source criticism is the question of what use Gnostic
myth had with its instances of the doctrine of melothesia. The evidence from
Celsus, Origen, and Plotinus together points to the invocation of daemons
for purposes of healing and protecting the body. Celsus has a few lines about
amulets made from assorted media such as stones, plants, roots; and Ploti-
nus indicates that Gnostics wrote things as well as spoke them. Despite the
absence of any explicit instructions for making iatromathematical amulets
in Ophite-Sethian literature, a reading of their myths in the context of the
Sacred Book of Hermes to Asclepius and the Testament of Solomon shows how
the iconography and names of the astral rulers could have been used to heal
and protect the body.

Somewhat generously though not wildly reconstructed, astrological med-
icine in these Gnostic traditions as I understand it involved both speech and
the making of amulets. The planetary melothesia in the Apocryphon of John

and On the Origin of the World would have allowed for making amulets that
feature not only the names of any of the seven astral rulers but also their
iconography; the decanal melothesia in the Apocryphon of John would have
allowed for making amulets that feature the names of any of the seventy-two
astral rulers; and the other melothesia following it would have allowed for
making amulets that feature the names of any of the thirty astral rulers
whose precise astrological function is unclear but are said to be "particularly
active in the members (γενίτοι οὐραίοι)".

Hence, whatever the ailment in any given body part, from one of the
major organs to the toenails, it could be healed or prevented. Speech was
quick and less costly to be sure, and the vocalized word was forceful.

Still the making of amulets might have been valued precisely because of
the extra involvement and the power of iconography. Inscribed amulets
made from common media need not have required more than basic literacy,
whereas amulets made from metal foil or gemstones could only be had with
additional expertise and tools. Gnostics who wore gemstone amulets set in
rings or as pendants around their necks must have had knowledge of gem
cutting and metallurgy or else commissioned other, maybe non-Gnostic,
artisans to make them. The use of plants and the knowledge of botany as
assumed of the practitioner in the Sacred Book of Hermes are also possible.

Identifying an amulet as Gnostic has been a problem in the history of
scholarship. Objection to the excesses of previous generations of scholars,
while necessary, has had the infelicitous result that the study of amulets is
liable to be neglected in Nag Hammadi studies. If there is just a handful
of amulets that are identifiably Gnostic, this does not mean that Gnostics
were uninterested in wearing them. To find some amulets that are Gnostic
would be rather fortunate given that Christians were a small percentage of
the population of the ancient Mediterranean. A handful is all that might be
expected to be found.

26 For amulets and amulet making in general, see Kotansky 2003; for gems and gem cutting
in general, see Michel 2004b.

27 Counting gemstone amulets, which survive in the greatest number and are the most
durable, there is an estimated total of 5,000. See Michel 2003, 141. Among the major cata-
logs and studies are Bonner 1950; Delatte-Derchain 1964; Philipp 1988; Michel 2001b; Mastrocinque 2003; Michel 2004a. Christianity constrained maybe half a percent of the pop-
ulation as Celsus was writing in the second century; it was maybe one or two percent of the
population in the third century as Origen and Plotinus were writing. Refer to the projections
in Stark 1996, which increase exponentially in the fourth century. Of course, many Christians
were not Gnostics, so the Gnostic percentage of the population would be even lower. While
The Ialdabaoth Gem

Such good fortune was the late Campbell Bonner's when he examined some amulets from the New York gallery of a major art and antiquities dealer. Recognizing one of them to be "of a rare and important kind," Bonner first published it separately in 1949 and then again the following year in his Studies in Magical Amulets. On the front it features a lion-headed human figure standing between the names Αρείς and Ιαλδαβάοθ. On the back are the names of the seven planetary rulers, the first one abbreviated: Ια (Ιαλδαβάοθ), Ιαω, Σαβακω, Αθανα, Ευακ, Ωεος, Απαρχεος.

Bonner bases his estimation of the rarity and importance of the amulet on its seeming "to be truly Gnostic. Contrary to an opinion which was once widely held," he explains, "few of the amulets commonly called Gnostic have anything to do with the various speculative religious systems to which that word is properly applied," making it "all the more important that a genuine relic of Gnostic belief should be faithfully recorded." Bonner correctly identifies the gem as an amulet of the Ophite Gnostics, with reference to the myth in Irenaeus, Adversus haereses 1.30, and to the descriptions of the cosmological diagrams by Celsus and Origen. He rightly sees the names on the amulet as those of the planetary rulers and notes that the first ruler is described as leonine in Celsus and Origen, from which Bonner concludes that "[t]he lion-headed demon [on the front of the amulet] may therefore be accepted as Ialdabaoth." 28

Even though he did not have at his disposal the Coptic manuscripts of Ophite-Syrian texts, the bulk of which had only recently been discovered and remained to be published in critical edition, Bonner's interpretation of the amulet is remarkably accurate. With the publication of the Berlin Gnostic Codex, the Nag Hammadi Codices, and now the Tchacos Codex, further correspondences have come to light.

Most striking is a passage from On the Origin of the World, where it is said that the chief astral ruler "called himself Ialdaboth (ἰάλδαβοθ, scribal error for Ιαλδαβάοθ). But Ariel is what the perfect call him (ὅτι Αρείς ἐν καλλίτη κεφαλή ἐριάρηα), for he was like a lion (ὡς ζωος Λιον καθώς)." 29 Correspondence between this passage and the lion-headed figure standing between the names Αρείς and Ιαλδαβάοθ on the front of the amulet is extraordinary. It confirms Bonner's suggestion that Ariel is "only a secondary name or epithet of the lion-headed Ialdabaoth," though it may be more accurate to say that Ialdabaoth is a secondary name of Ariel. Bonner had also suggested that "the presence of the name Ariel in conjunction with Ialdabaoth can best be explained by its Hebrew meaning, which, according to some authorities, is 'Lion of God,'" i.e. Λύω. 30 And just as he suggested, On...
the Origin of the World connects the name Ariael with the chief astral ruler’s lionine appearance. What is more, On the Origin of the World also supplies a list of the names of the seven astral rulers that is virtually identical to the one on the reverse of the gem (see table 3).32

### Table 3. Lists of the names of the seven astral rulers

<table>
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<th>Irenaeus:</th>
<th>Origen:</th>
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<td>Iao</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Semitic but of disputed etymology. Iao (compare IVN), Saboth (πιγκρ), Adonai (ΠΙΠΙ), and Eloai (ΠΙΠΙ) are divine names and epithets from Jewish scripture that have been transmuted into Greek. Iao, Saboth, Adonai, and Eloai in particular occur everywhere on amulets and in the Greco-Egyptian ritual papyri. The last two names on the Ialdabaoth gem, Horeos and Astaphoas, are of uncertain derivation and occur only rarely, if at all, in the case of the last two names on the Ialdabaoth gem, Horeos and Astaphoas, are of uncertain derivation and occur only rarely, if at all, in the case of Horeos; the name Horeos occurs after variations of Iao in the demotic love spell. PDM XIV.3925. There are occurrences of the name Ialdabaoth and Ialdabaoth, but the name Ialdabaoth proper only occurs on one other amulet. A portion of this gem was already broken off when it was transcribed in the early 1800s, and since then the gem was lost. According to Bevilacqua, 1991, 26–28, who published the transcription but was unable to locate the gem, the transcription “is not very clear: the letters cannot be distinguished with safety.” At any rate, when the names of the seven planetary rulers of Gnostic myth do occur on amulets and in the Greco-Egyptian ritual papyri, they do not refer to multiple gods so much as one and same conglomerate deity. See e.g. PGM XII.384–307, where a single supreme god is invoked as ΙΑΟ ΙΑΟ ΙΑΟ ΙΑΟ ΙΑΟ ΙΑΟ ΙΑΟ. 33

Without Ὅραιος, 2x Sabaoth

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As for how the amulet was used, it is not pierced but would have been mounted in a setting and worn as a pendant or ring. This is clear from ancient literature on gem cutting, from the amulet’s shape, and from the fact that other gems of similar shape survive in their settings. When worn, the lion-headed human figure standing between the names Aariel and Ialdabaoth would have faced outward, distinguishing the wearer as one of the planetary rulers. The amulet also would have been used to thwart individual decanal daemons in chapter eighteen of the Testament of Solomon, this gem probably was not made to heal a single body part or

32 Layton 1989, 36. With Ialdabaoth supplied from 100.10–24. There are other more or less identical lists in: Irenaeus. Adversus haereses 1.30.5; II Rousseau-Doutreleau 1799, 369, 378; Origen, Contra Celsum 4.15; Bevilacqua 1991, 26–28, with Adoniaco supplied from 6.32; the “[teaching] of the Sethians” according to the so-called Coptic Book, Berlin Codex 2093c; and Schenke Robinson 2000, 247. And there are other lists without the name Horeos in: On the Origin of the World NHC II.3: 1989, 36; Apocryphon of John BG 8502.2 3.11–44.4; NHC II.11.2: 25–34; 12.15–26; NHC IV.1: 1985–26; BG 8502.2 41–42; NHC III.11: 17.22–18.6; Waldstein-Wisse 1995, 72–75. This is the order in which I have arranged the lists in Table 3. Correspondence between the Ialdabaoth gem and On the Origin of the World is all the more striking given the general lack of such precise correspondence between the extant gems and Greco-Egyptian ritual papyri. See Michel 2005, 144.

33 Pearson 2007, 47.
A Silver Foil Amulet

The Ialdabaoth gem is certainly Gnostic, as Roy Kotansky states in his entry on amulets in the *Dictionary of Gnosis & Western Esotericism.* He considers very few others as potential candidates. A metal foil amulet or lamella worn for protection by someone named Thomas, son of Maxima. After the Ialdabaoth gem is certainly Gnostic, as Roy Kotansky states in his entry on amulets in the *Dictionary of Gnosis & Western Esotericism.* He considers very few others as potential candidates. A metal foil amulet or lamella worn for protection by someone named Thomas, son of Maxima. After

A portion of this lamella's bronze case in fact survives. It was worn for protection by someone named Thomas, son of Maxima. After thirty-six carefully inscribed lines of unusual and exotic sounding names, the text reads: "sacred and mighty and powerful names of the great necessity (ἐγίγνεται ἵππος καὶ δύνατα ἕνωμα τα τῆς μεγάλης Ἀνάρεξ), preserve and protect from all sorcery and potions (ἀπὸ πάσης γοτίας καὶ φαρμακίας), from curse tablets, from those who died an untimely death, from those who died violently and from every evil thing, the body, the soul and every member of the body (καὶ πᾶν μέλος τοῦ σώματος) of Thomas, whom Maxima bore, from this day forth and for his entire future."36

Among the names invoked on this lamella are Pisandaptēs, spelled exactly as in the melothesia of thirty astral rulers in the *Apocryphon of John* (see table 2). Some other names appear to be connected as well.37 Overall, the thirty-six names on the lamella and the thirty names in the melothesia are admittedly quite different, yet they total approximately the same number. Moreover, the names on the lamella are invoked to protect every member of the wearer's body, and the astral rulers of the melothesia in the apocryphon are said to be "particularly active in the members (ἐν τὴν ἑνδοτοκοῦ)."38 Thomas, son of Maxima, was probably a Christian. I personally would not go so far as to state with confidence that he was a Gnostic. He could have been, and the lamella may be Gnostic. It also might not be. Either way, this metal foil amulet is significant for reconstructing the utility of Gnostic myth. Gnostics could have worn similar protective lamellae. Protection from sickness is not specified on Thomas' amulet but might be lumped in with protection from "every evil thing." Foremost on his lamella is protection from "all sorcery and potions (ἀπὸ πάσης γοτίας καὶ φαρμακίας), from curse tablets, and from the dead."39 If the astrological rulers of necessity could be invoked to heal and protect the body, they could also be invoked to harm it. Perhaps Gnostics worried about ritual attack from other people and wore amulets for protection, as Thomas, son of Maxima, did.40

As is the case with the reference to sorcery and potions on this lamella, in Ophite-Sethian literature the only reference to magic per se that I am aware of is negative. After directing readers to the Book of Solomon as well as the Archangelic (Book) of the Prophet Moses, *On the Origin of the World* refers to "magic and potions (μαγεία καὶ φαρμακία)" along with idolatry and blood sacrifice as "many kinds of error (ποινών)" introduced by the daemonic angels of the seven planetary rulers.41 Regarding astrology, according to the *Apocryphon of John* it also was introduced by Ialdabaoth's angels, so too

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36 Heintz 1996, 295–297; translation modified.
37 Such as Aremmouth (lamella) and Marephnounth (apocryphon).
38 NHC II.5 114.33–35; Apocryphon of John NHC II.1 15.13–23; III.1 22.8–23.6; IV.4 24.2–14; BG 49.9–50.4; and Waldstein-Wisse 1995, 194 for a similar melothesia from an Apocalypse of John that Theodore bar Konai attributes to the Audians.
39 Kotansky 2005, 70.
metals like gold, silver, copper, and iron. None of this prevented Gnostics from reading books of magic and astrology, any more than the chief astral ruler's introduction of monotheism prevented them from reading and rewriting Jewish scripture.

How Gnostic Astrological Medicine Worked

The thirty-six gods of Necessity invoked on Thomas' lamella were as likely to harm as to protect him. He calls them 'sacred,' and he might even be said to pray to them. But it hardly follows from this that he viewed Pisandrapétès and the rest as benevolent. With minor exceptions, the astral rulers in Ophite-Sethian literature, from Ialdabaôth to Pisandrapétès, are not benevolent either. Gnostics invoked them, wore amulets featuring their names and iconography, not because the astral rulers willed good for humans. On the contrary, Gnostics did so because the astral rulers were responsible for human suffering. They wanted to thwart Ialdabaôth and his inferiors. This can be seen by contrast and comparison, going back to the Sacred Book of Hermes and the Testament of Solomon.

In the Sacred Book of Hermes, the decans are to be reverenced and flattered. They are not called daemons. There is even a sense that the decans are positive and the zodiac is negative. The zodiac brings about suffering, which the decans heal. In order to avoid or stop a headache, for example, brought about by Aries, the prescribed gemstone amulet had to be worn when Chenlachôrí, the first decan of Aries, was most visible in the sky after crossing the eastern horizon and therefore most likely to look down and see its name and especially its iconography engraved on the gem. In order to counteract zodiacal influence, the practitioner reverenced and flattered the decans by displaying the proper amulet.

Astrological medicine in Ophite-Sethian traditions would have worked through similar display of such amulets as the Ialdabaôth gem, though I doubt that Gnostics were reverencing the astral rulers. In that regard, their iatromathematics had more in common with the eighteenth chapter of the Testament of Solomon, where together with amulets, speech is given a larger role among the measures to counteract the decans. These decans are called daemons. Not to be revered or flattered, they are to be thwarted, primarily by invocation of their superiors, such as one of the Judeo-Christian archangels. Astral rulers in Gnostic literature are daemons too, and their superiors are named. When the Savior tells his disciple in the Apocryphon of John the names of those that "were appointed (ναρραζητοαο) over all" seventy-two astral rulers in the double-decanal melothesia, and the names of those that "have power (ναρραζητοαο) over all" thirty astral rulers in the following melothesia, it is so that users of the apocryphon will be able to thwart them by invoking their superiors. A Gnostic was suffering from headache, he could invoke Michael to thwart Diolimodraza (see table 2), just as Solomon is told to invoke Michael to thwart the first decanal daemon in the testament. The distinction, however, is that in Ophite-Sethian literature even the archangel Michael is daemonic. So it is not a matter of countering evil with good; it is a matter of invoking a superior daemon against an inferior one.

What was astrological about Ophite-Sethian iatromathematics was the identity of the astral rulers as planetary, zodiacal, decanal, etc., the association of the astral rulers with parts of the human body through the doctrine of melothesia, and the use of their names and iconography for invocation as well as for making amulets to heal and protect the body. Other varieties of iatromathematics involved calculating the position of the stars on the birth chart and keeping time according to sidereal calendars. Astrological medicine in these Gnostic traditions may have also been similarly technical. Molded in the divine image, the psychic bodies of the Gnostics were created by the astral rulers along with their bodies of flesh. To heal and protect themselves, the Gnostics played the daemons' game, which they took seriously. They were not content to sit on the sidelines and live the

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42 NHC II 128, 5-30a.
43 Heintz 1996, 295–296 points out that this same amulet for protection against curse tablets "seems to be replicating deliberately their language." And not only do the thirty-six names that it invokes for protection loosely parallel the melothesia of thirty astral rulers in the Apocryphon of John, they closely match the names invoked in a rather violent love-spell in the Greco-Egyptian ritual papyrus for employing the ghost of a corpse to torment a desired woman, PGM XIXa.
44 As the opening of the text instructs, each gem must be worn when the decan is between the Ascendant and the Place concerning health. For the Places, see Bouché-Leclercq 1899, 280 figure 21. It would make little sense for the amulets to be worn when the decans are in this position on the actual birth chart. It must refer to the position of the decans in their daily crossing of the eastern and western horizons along with their zodiacal signs.
45 NHC II 17, 7–8; NHC IV 3, 27–14; Waldstein-Wisse 1995, 106–107.
46 See Udeir 1841/1858, 391–395, 400–440 for the position of the stars on the birth chart. P.Oxy. 415 for keeping time according to the Egyptian calendar, divided into seventy-two ‘half weeks’ of five days. An important manuscript of the eighteenth chapter of the Testament of Solomon also features the Egyptian calendar, divided more commonly into thirty-six periods of ten days. Refer to Duling 1983, 938; Klutz 2005, 27.
life of the philosopher indifferently resigned to Fate and Necessity, as was encouraged even in some of the philosophical Hermetica of their day.

The alchemist Zosimos of Panopolis records a dispute between 'Hermes' and 'Zoroaster' on this very issue. Against Zoroastrian claims to 'avert all the evils of Fate (ἀποτρέφεσθαι πάντα τῆς εἰμαρμένης τὰ κακά),' Hermes has it that the pneumatic should not "overpower Necessity by force (μηδὲ βασάζεσθαι τὴν ανάγκην)," but rather allow Necessity to work in accordance with her own nature and decree," and to "leave Fate to do what she wants to the clay that belongs to her (δὲ θελεὶ ποιεῖν τῷ ἐκατηγορίῳ μορφῷ), that is, the body."46 This Hermes is not the patron deity of the technical Hermetica; this is quite another from the Hermes of the Sacred Book of Hermes to Asclepius on engraving gemstone amulets so as to avoid suffering what must be suffered under astral influence. Here in the dispute between the two sages, the Gnostics who produced and used the Apocryphon of JOHN, with its reference to a Book of Zoroaster, would not have sided with the Egyptian sage. They would have sided with the Persian, despite their double-decanal melothesia and the general Hermetic pedigree of iatromathematics.47 With this Zoroaster, they claimed that the evils of fate can be averted, at least by the Gnostic holy generation and until their death.49

Further Gnostic Traditions Broadly Defined

Ophite-Sethian literature does not represent all traditions that might be grouped together as Gnostic. By way of conclusion, a small survey of other traditions and literature of ancient Gnosticism as Professor Pearson has outlined them suggests that the Gnostics whose astrological medicine I have been reconstructing were not alone in their practice of iatromathematics.

48 For the definite Egyptian context, regardless of attribution to Zoroaster, see Quack 2006, 272.
49 Averting death poses a special problem. Gnostics are free from the rule of the stars, except as it concerns their bodies of flesh, in that they will still die under the circumstances determined by the stars. But in the meantime, their psychic bodies are not subject to the astral influences that cause the rest of the human generations to sin. Compare Firmicus Maternus, Mathesis 1.51–3. Through the practice of iatromathematics, neither must they suffer ailment. The thrust of Gnostic astrological medicine would not have been to prolong life on earth under the astral rulers so much as to make it less painful. Death before the fated time, including suicide, was not an option. On that much, the Gnostics and Plotinus were in agreement.

According to Irenaeus, the Basilidians used “magic, spells, invocations, and all remaining jugglery (magia et incantationibus et invocationibus et reliqua universa periergia)." And they also concoct certain names, as it were, of angels. They report that some reside in the first heaven, others in the second, and thus they strain to relate in full the names, archons, angels, and authorities of the 365 heavens that they have fabricated." Irenaeus goes on: "They locate the positions of the 365 heavens just as the astrologers do (similiter ut mathematici); for accepting the astrologers' speculations (iliorum enim theorematas accipientes), they have adapted them to their own kind of teaching (in suum characterem doctrinae transitulerunt). And their ruler is named Abrasax, which is why he has the number 365 in himself."50

Heresiological rhetoric must be taken into account here, and I would not want to defend past identification of the several gemstone amulets featuring the name Abrasax (365: A=1 ß=2 ß=100 α=1 σ=200 α=1 ξ=60) as somehow Basilidian. A few could have been worn by followers of Basilides, yet I see no way to tell which ones. Basilidians may have studied the names of the angels and their astrological function for iatromathematical purposes, not only for achieving invisibility to pass through the realm of Abrasax. Epiphanius states that Basilides taught the doctrine of melothesia: Thus, he says, the human being has 365 members for this reason (εἴτε, ἐντέθεν, θυγάτηρ, καὶ ὁ ἀνθρώπος θείοις τριακοσίοις εἴρηται πάντα μέλη), so that he can assign one member to each of the powers (ὡς ἐὰν τῶν δυνάμεων ἀπονέμεσθαι ἐν μέλοις).51 If Basilides did teach such a doctrine of melothesia, it would have been even more elaborate than the double-decanal melothesia in the Apocryphon of John.

Epiphanius also states sarcastically of the Manichaeans that “they have astrology as a handy subject of boasting, and phylacteries—I mean amulets—and certain other incantations and spells (καὶ φυλακτηρία, φημῇ δὲ τὰ περίπατα, καὶ θλίψις ἑαυτῆς καὶ μαγγανίαν)." Some confirmation of this is to be had in Manichaean texts, such as the Kephalaia, where there are instances of the doctrine of melothesia. Manichaean astrology is notoriously opaque. The more transparent instances of melothesia are zodiacal, but the soul and body are also parsed in terms of five members or garments,

51 Panarion 24.7.6: Holl 1915, 264; Williams 2009, 81; translation modified.
as well as seven, nine, and eighteen garments. This human microcosm is further divided into four worlds of seven rulers, each with its associated body part. All told, there are thousands upon thousands of rulers inhabiting the body, causing it ailment.\textsuperscript{53} In the largely Manichaean \textit{Pistis Sophia}, the Savior explains to the disciples how the decans (\textit{ἀρκαν}) and their assistants (\textit{Ἀρχορφος}) enter the womb to construct the embryo, each one of them building a member (\textit{μακκως}). The Savior promises to teach the disciples the names of these astral rulers responsible for the creation of the body of flesh, which would have been useful in the practice of astrological medicine.\textsuperscript{54}

Never as widespread as the proselytizing Manichaeans, the Mandaeans have outlasted them to the present. Their main astrological text is the \textit{Book of the Zodiac}, a handbook of astrology and ritual. Mandaeans have zodiacal names referring to their nativities. These names are used in ritual practice, such as on inscribed strips of paper, rolled up in metal capsules and worn around the neck for protection against sicknesses, etc. Priests also wear an iron ring during exorcisms, for instance. Its features are presumably astrologically auspicious day ... In cases of illness, cures and herbs fall under astrological and confessedly of the powers of darkness, including the lion, scorpion, and serpent. To quote Lady Drower: "Most of the leading events..."

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\textbf{Bibliography}


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\textsuperscript{53} See especially Kephalaion 70; and BeDuhn 2001, 13–14.


Neugebauer, Otto. 1935. The Study of Wretched Subjects. Pages 11 in Isis 42.3.


In this essay, the focus of attention is upon a parchment codex that is part of the significant manuscript collection of the Institut für Papyrologie in Heidelberg. P. Heid. Inv. Kopt. 685. This text, to which I have given an appropriate title in the light of its contents, “The Magical Book of Mary and the Angels,” is one of a number of magical manuscripts, or manuscripts of ritual power, in the collection. P. Heid. Inv. Kopt. 685 consists of twenty parchment pages (ten leaves, or five sheets) assembled into a single-quire book. The five sheets were derived from the hide of an animal, and when prepared for the codex, the sheets were folded in half and bound together with parchment thongs tied on the outside at the “spine” of the book—the twenty-page book.

This Heidelberg book, “The Magical Book of Mary and the Angels,” may be compared, with its present contents, to other magical texts in the Heidelberg collection. According to the report of Richard Seider in “Aus der Arbeit der Universitätsinstitute: Die Universitäts-Papyrussammlung,” this text and others were acquired for the Heidelberg collection in 1929 by Carl Schmidt. Heidelberg papyrologist Friedrich Bibabel, in Griechische, koptische und arabische Texte zur Religion und religiösen Literatur in Ägyptens Spätzeit, classifies P. Heid. Inv. Kopt. 685 with a number of these texts as all being part of the acquisition. These texts are the following, here listed with new inventory numbers:

P. Heid. Inv. Kopt. 678 (curse to harm a man and leave him impotent)
P. Heid. Inv. Kopt. 679 (curse to harm a person through the use of wax dolls)

I dedicate this essay to Birger A. Pearson, a scholar and friend whose work on ancient texts has spanned many a year. [Professor Marvin Meyer died on August 16, 2012. Before his death, he gave the editors of this book permission to publish his contribution, in celebration of the career of his friend and colleague, Birger A. Pearson.]