rewriting could take place. *Eugnostos*, a treatise describing the architecture of the transcendent world, and containing no features that are obviously “Christian” in the sense familiar to us, was reused by the composer of *Wisdom of Jesus Christ*, in which it was set in the framework of a revelation dialogue as teaching materials for Jesus speaking to his disciples. Thus, the reframing of a theological-mythological treatise as a Christian dialogue is a more widely attested phenomenon. This kind of process obviously reflects a desire in some circles to bolster the Christian legitimacy of the doctrines contained in such treatises by recasting the texts as gospel-like apocrypha. This secondary apocryphisation of texts that were originally written as mythological treatises may be seen as a reflection of the general process of canonisation of scripture in the late second and third centuries. When the original treatises were written, their authors apparently did not feel the same need to authorise their teachings by employing the literary forms found in canonical scripture. They seem to have been written before apostolic canonicity became an issue among Christians. This is an important point, whose significance will become clearer towards the end of this lecture.

The Valentinians, as we know, wrote mythological treatises. In this respect, they continued using an already existing literary form, exemplified by the source reported in *Haer. 1.29*, a text that Irenaeus claims also served as a main source for the doctrine of Valentinus. If Irenaeus is right, that text is to be regarded as an *Urtext*, not only of the *Apocryphon of John*, but of the Valentinian system as well. It is now time to examine the doctrinal aspects of this relationship.

5 The mythological system of Irenaeus, *Haer. 1.29*

Irenaeus begins his presentation in *Haer. 1.29* by focusing on the figure of Barbelo:

*Quidam enim eorum aenom quendam numquam senescentem in urginali spiritu subiciunt, quem Barbelon nominant: ubi esse Patrem quendam innominabilem dicunt. Voluisse autem hunc manifestare se ipsi Barbeloni. Ennoeam autem hanc stetisse in conscpectu eius et postulasse Prognosin. Cum prodiisset autem et Prognosis, his rursum petentibus prodiit Incorruptela, post deinde Vita aeterna.*

Some of them posit an unageing aeon dwelling in a virginal spirit that they call Barbelo. There was also an unnameable Father, they say; he wanted to reveal himself to that Barbelo. This Thought came forth, stood before him, and asked to be given Foreknowledge.
After Foreknowledge had appeared, the two of them asked and Incorruptibility came forth; after that, Eternal Life. (1.29.1)

The highest deity, the unnameable Father, is not further described, except that in the course of the following narrative he is also called “the great Light” and “the Greatness”. Barbelo (whose name remains a mystery to scholarship) is the figure who sets the protological process in motion. We are told that the Father wished to reveal himself to Barbelo. But then we are told that the Father’s wish manifested itself as his Thought, Ennoia, who stood before the Father as a distinct being and began to request favours of him – the three qualities of Foreknowledge, Incorruptibility and Eternal Life. The Father’s self-revelation to Barbelo seems to be understood as a generative process by which Barbelo herself is brought into being as his Thought: the Father wills and thinks, and his Thought emerges as a distinct being. Perhaps an earlier mythological theme of a primordial revelation to Barbelo has been overlaid by a more philosophical theory of divine self-reflection producing the first duality. I don’t know.

29 The paraphrase of Theodoret of Cyrus: ὑπέθεντο γὰρ αἰῶνά τινα ἀνώλεθρον ἐν παρθενικῷ διάγοντα πνεύματι, ὃ Βαρβηλὼθ ὀνομάζουσι, τὴν δὲ Βαρβηλὼθ αἰτήσαι πρὸ γνώσεως παρ’ αὐτοῦ. Προελθούσης δὲ ταύτης, εἶτ’ αὐθές αἰτησάσης, προελήλυθεν Ἀφθαρσία, ἔπειτα αἰώνια Ζωή (Haer. fab. 1.13; RD I/1, 328).

30 The Apocryphon of John, on the other hand, contains a long section at the beginning of the narrative in which the supreme deity is described at length in the language of negative theology (BG 22:17–26:11; NHC II, 2:26–4:15 parr). This section can be assumed to be a later addition, not only because Irenaeus shows no sign of knowing it, but also because the name of the deity in the Apocryphon, the Invisible Spirit, never appears in Irenaeus’ report. An analogous situation exists with the Valentinian treatises: the treatises reported by Irenaeus pass quickly over the Father himself in order to concentrate on the generation of the Pleroma. Only the Tripartite Tractate from Nag Hammadi starts out with an extensive description of the unknowable Father in the same style as the Apocryphon of John (NHC I, 51:8–54:35). Since Tri. Trac. appears to have been composed later than the Valentinian treatises reported by the church fathers, it seems as if the inclusion of this kind of material might be a secondary development in the redaction history of the Valentinian system texts. Extensive negative theologies appear to have been a later fashion.

31 Though voluisse 1.29.1 is probably a rendering of the Greek ἐννοηθῆναι (RD I/1, 302), the primordial divine act has a volitional as well as a cognitive aspect. Thelema will later in the narrative be introduced as an independent hypostasis, distinct from Ennoia.

32 All the entities and qualities produced by the Father will have roles to play in the later narrative by combining into generative pairs (“syzygies”); only Barbelo is left out from this activity. This suggests that she is in fact identified with Thought, which there appears as the partner of Logos, and that the name Barbelo, which is redundant from the point of view of the internal logic of the narrative, is a remnant of an earlier mythology.
Having been granted the three attributes she requested, Barbelo/Ennoia is filled with joy and gazes into the Father’s Greatness. By that act, she gives birth to a third figure called the Light, who is similar to the great light of the Father. In order to make the offspring perfect, the Father anoints it and it becomes Χριστός. In philosophical terms, we may here detect a process of emanation comprised of three stages, similar to what we find in the Platonist tradition: an initial outward movement producing a second being, followed by the turning of this entity towards its source, and finally, as a result, the consolidation of the emanated entity by means of an illumination received from the source.

The Light-Christos asks to be given two attributes: Intellect (nous) and logos. This request having been granted, we are then told that all the elements which have so far been put into play form a total of four conceptual pairs – syzygoi – that are instrumental in the further process of generation: Ennoia and Logos pair up to produce a figure called Autogenes, the Self-generated one; Incorruptibility and Christos bring forth four luminaries (Armogenes, Raguhel, David, Eleleth) that attend to Autogenes; Eternal Life and Will produce four mental faculties (charis, thelesis, synesis, and phronesis) that are to assist the four luminaries. The fourth pair, Nous and Prognosis, is, strangely, not credited with any particular task in the further process of generation as reported by Irenaeus (1.29.2).

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33 In quibus gloriantem Barbelon et prospicientem in Magnitudinem et conceptu delectatam in hanc, generasse simile ei Lumen. Hanc initium et luminationis et generationis omnium dicunt. Et uidentem Patrem Lumen hoc, unxisse illud sua benignitate, ut perfectum fieret: hunc autem dicunt esse Christum (1.29.1). Theodoret: Εὐφρανθεῖσαν δὲ τὴν Βαρβηλὼθ ἐνκύμονα γενέσθαι καὶ ἀποτεκεῖν τὸ Φῶς. Τοῦτο φασὶ τῇ τοῦ Πατρὸς χρισθὲν τελειότητι ὀνομασθῆναι Χριστόν.

34 For Platonism, cf. in particular Krämer, Geistmetaphysik, 312–37 and Halfwassen, Spuren, 146–48, 161–64, who argue that the πρόοδος-ἐπιστροφή-doctrine elaborated in later Platonism may be traced back to the Old Academy (Speusippus). The Gnostic and Valentinian evidence suggests that the doctrine was around and exerted influence in the first half of the second century, and probably earlier as well. Pursuing the Platonist connections in detail lies, however, beyond the scope of this lecture.

35 In the following, the name “Christos” will be used for this specifically Gnostic figure, which belongs to a context and an age where the “Christ” of traditional Christian theology is still unknown.

36 In the Apocryphon of John, the names of the four luminaries are Harmozel, Oroiael, Daueithe, and Eleleth. The different forms of the two first names may be due to corruption in the transmission of Irenaeus’ text and constitute a rather uncertain basis on which to build hypothesis about the literary relationship between the Apocryphon and Haer. 1.29, as Antti Marjanen attempts (“The Apocryphon of John,” 242).
Furthermore, we are told that Autogenes, with Aletheia, Truth, as his partner, emits the Perfect Human Being, Adamas. He possesses Perfect Knowledge as his partner, and is endowed with invincible power given directly by Barbelo herself. Adamas is said, somewhat enigmatically, to have given birth to a “tree” (1.29.3).

Finally, the Holy Spirit, also named Sophia Prounikos, is emitted by “the first angel who stands by the Monogenes”. Lacking a partner, she produces an offspring in ignorance and presumption (ignorantia et audacia); this is the Protarchon, who will go on to create the world and make himself its master.

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37 The precise meaning implied by the name Προύνικος is hard to pin down. The basic sense of the noun is that of a “porter”, a servant, hired or employed, who transports something from one place to another. Motion seems to be an integral part of the concept. But προύνικοι could also be portrayed as being impetuous and hard to control, for instance in comedy; the word therefore connotes emotional as well as physical motility. In the Gnostic context, the term seems to have acquired a technical significance as a description of the outward movement represented by Sophia, which creates division and plurality, and also, sometimes, her impulsivity. The frequent translation of the word in this context as “lewd”, should in any case be avoided; no moral judgment is involved, I think, in calling Sophia προύνικος. For an excellent study of the term, see Pasquier, “Prouneikos”.

38 Deinde ex primo Angelo qui adstat Monogeni emissum dicunt Spiritum sanctum, quem et Sophiam et Prunicum uocant (1.29.4).
The account may be schematically represented as follows:

The Unnameable Father

- Will
- Foreknowledge
- Incorruptibility
- Eternal Life

Barbelo = Thought = The Virginal Spirit

Light = Christos

Intellect (Nous)

Logos

Syzygoi:

- Thought + Logos
- Incorruptibility + Christos
- Eternal Life + Will
- Intellect + Foreknowledge

Autogenes + Truth

- Adamas the Perfect Human + Perfect Knowledge
- Tree

Four luminaries:
- Armogenes
- Raguhel
- David
- Eleleth

Sophia Prounikos = The Holy Spirit

Four assistants:
- Grace
- Desire
- Understanding
- Deliberation

Protarchon

It is fairly evident that the document reported by Irenaeus is itself a composite work and the product of a perhaps extensive process of rewriting, compilation and experimentation. For instance, the final section that tells the story of Sophia introduces vocabulary that has not been used in the previous account: the luminaries are now “angels”, and Christos is referred to as the Monogenes. Thus, a different source may here be suspected. Moreover, the protology itself appears to have been constructed on the basis of two distinct sets of materials. On the one hand, it has a grid that consists of a vertical structure with a succession of distinct levels. On the other hand, it introduces a certain number of concepts, qualities and attributes that are instrumental in moving from one level to
the next and ultimately form generative pairs. The protological process progresses through the interaction of these two sets of respectively static and dynamic components. I consider it likely that the introduction and elaboration of the dynamic components and, in particular, their systematisation as syzygies, represents a secondary phase in the history of this tradition of system building, and that the vertical succession of levels constitutes a more fundamental feature of the system.\textsuperscript{39} This assumption is supported by the fact that other early systems seem to restrict themselves to narrating the successive levels of the divine hierarchy without the apparatus of concepts and attributes that intervene in the unfolding of the transcendent world in the system of \textit{Haer.} 1.29 and the \textit{Apocryphon of John}. A case in point is \textit{Eugnostos}. Another instance is the second system attributed by Irenaeus to the “Gnostics”, in 1.30, whose protology is also simply an account of the levels following vertically after the paternal first principle.\textsuperscript{40} I shall now proceed to a comparison of the divine hierarchies in the two “Gnostic” systems of \textit{Haer.} 1.29 and 1.30 in the hope of finding some common denominators that can guide us toward a core of ideas that were constitutive for “Gnostic” theology in its most primitive phase.

6 The protologies of \textit{Haer.} 1.29 and 1.30 compared

If we concentrate on the vertical levels alone, \textit{Haer.} 1.29 seems to presuppose the following structure:

\textbf{39} In particular the three attributes requested by Barbelo and the two requested by Christos seem to be introduced primarily in order to provide members for the four syzygies who will play an active part in the subsequent generative process. The Thought and the Will, on the other hand, are concepts that appear in several comparable protological texts and probably therefore represent a more primitive layer of the system.