

In my previous post I reproduced the new discussion of Gnosticism in the second edition of my book *After the New Testament*. In this post and the two to follow I will reproduce my new discussions of the various “types” of Gnostic texts that I include in the anthology. Many scholars would consider this first type the most important historically: it is a group of texts produced by and for Gnostics known by scholars as the “Sethians.” Here is what I say about them in the book.

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### Sethian Gnostics

The group of Gnostics that scholars have labeled the “Sethians” are known from the writings of proto-orthodox heresiologists beginning with Irenaeus (around 180 CE) and from some of the significant writings of the Nag Hammadi library. They were a thriving sect already by the middle of the second century.

Members of the group may not have called themselves Sethians. Scholars call them this because among their distinctive features they understood themselves to be the spiritual descendants of Seth, the third son of Adam and Eve. Many of the books associated with the Sethians present detailed and complex myths that explain the origins of the divine realm, the material world, and the humans who inhabit it. These mind-stretching myths...

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