

to the secondary literature. Here are a few randomly chosen comments on the comments. Döhler rightly notes that there is no reason to interpret the Peter/Simon controversy in light of the tensions other ancient sources say there have been between Peter and Paul. The latter is looked upon most positively and mentioned for his own sake, even if he is obviously not a main figure. I am not certain, however, if this happened in order to make it clear that the author of the *Acts of Peter* does not want to be part of this tradition, as Döhler suggests when writing, ‘Es ist sogar denkbar, dass das Auftreten des Paulus in den text aufgenommen wurde, um die Assoziation einer Parallel zwischen Paulus und Simon unmöglich zu machen’ (p. 146). Such a conclusion is perhaps somewhat gratuitous, even if the author of the *Acts of Peter* seems to have some knowledge of a tradition that links Paul to magic (*Acts of Peter* 4.96–7). Simon Magus’ entrance on the scene is most impressive. He presents himself in such a way and with such conviction that the crowds ask if he is perhaps Christ himself (4.80, ‘Numquid ipse esse Christus?’). Döhler points out that Simon seems only interested in deluding Christians, which makes him into a sort of pseudo-Christ (p. 189). Now that Paul has left, the crowds are helpless. Their question gives an acute sense of urgency to the scene, as such a figure is known to announce the coming of the end-time. This aspect is no doubt present in the background, but perhaps also present is a twist on that other motif – the crowds asking Jesus in the Gospels about his identity. Almost immediately Simon counters his own claims about being the ‘power of God’ by claiming too much when announcing his flight through the skies. This is a typical case of hubris, well known in ancient literature, that inevitably exposes the claimant as a crook or a person who does not want to recognise the limits of human power. Döhler sees this correctly, but also notes that a variant on the theme (about the flight of the soul) was well known in philosophical and then also came to be appreciated in Christian hagiographical tradition (pp. 191–2). Simon’s failure to deliver upon his promise exposes him for what he is: neither a saint, nor philosopher, but a crook: ‘Der Simon der Averc steht also in der Tradition all der gescheiterten menschlichen Flugbestrebungen’ (p. 192). One might add to this that it is proof that he is not the Christ for whom he was taken. The wonder is then that he still manages to stay in his role and that the crowds maintain their interest in him.

These few examples of the choices that Döhler has made in her edition and of the sort of observations one meets in the commentary may suffice to show that this is a most useful contribution to the study of the *Acts of Peter*, one that will have a prominent place in furthering the discussion.

LEUVEN

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Exposé du mythe valentinien et textes liturgiques (NH XI, 2). By Wolf-Peter Funk and Jean-Pierre Mahé. (Bibliothèque Copte de Nag Hammadi Section «Textes», 36.) Pp. xii + 162. Québec: Les Presses de L’Université Laval; Bristol, CT–Leuven: Peeters, 2016. €89 (paper). 978 90 429 3214 2
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The untitled second tractate in Nag Hammadi Codex XI, conventionally referred to as *A Valentinian exposition*, resembles the Valentinian systems reported by the

Church Fathers more closely than any other Nag Hammadi text. In particular, it has several features in common with the system attributed to 'Valentinus' in Irenaeus, *Adversus haereses* 1.11, and therefore appears to reflect an early phase in the evolution of the Valentinian system. The tractate had already been published by J. É. Ménard in an earlier volume in the *BCNH* series (vol. xiv, 1985), but the editors of the series evidently found a new edition to be desirable. The codex was badly damaged soon after the discovery in 1945 and as a result the challenges facing an editor are considerable.

The new edition of the text has been furnished by the eminent Coptologist Wolf-Peter Funk and rests on a solid linguistic basis. Introduction, translation and commentary are the work of Jean-Pierre Mahé; they provide good access to the text and are generally illuminating. All in all, the volume constitutes a significant advance over previous editions and studies of the text. It will be an indispensable point of reference for future work involving *A Valentinian exposition*.

Although many points in Mahé's introduction and commentary invite discussion, this present review will restrict itself to the more basic issue of the structure of the text itself as it appears in Funk and Mahé's presentation. The fragmentary state of the manuscript makes the reconstruction of the mythological narrative and the identification of its consecutive events an especially demanding task. Mahé's reconstruction is generally cogent, though not convincing in every respect.¹

The first half of the tractate (pp. 22–30) is devoted to a description of the Father, the Son and the unfolding of the Pleroma. Here it is in general possible to see what the text (somewhat repetitively) is speaking about. However, Mahé's identification of a reference to Sophia in 30.21–9 seems to me unfounded; the theme in these lines, and to the end of the page, seems to be the continuous production of aeons.

The (very fragmentary) p. 31 seems to me to give an account of the passion of Sophia; I see no reference to Jesus here.

Other passages in the text (33.36–7, and probably 33.16–17) make it clear that *A Valentinian exposition* clings to an older version of the Sophia myth, according to which Sophia in her passion gives birth to Christ as her son. (Cf. Irenaeus, *Adversus haereses* 1.11; Clement of Alexandria, *Exc.* 23.2, 32–3; Mahé in his introduction at pp. 25–6.) When Sophia hits the Boundary (Horos), Christ detaches himself from her and returns to the Pleroma. In later versions (Irenaeus' and Hippolytus' main systems), Christ was replaced by an Upper Sophia. It seems likely that Sophia's passion and the birth and return of Christ was narrated in the lost parts of this page.

Page 32 most probably described the repentance of Sophia and the benevolent reaction of the Pleroma. The term 'remembrance', a key word in such a context, seems to occur (*tipmeue* 32.23, 32–3; not identified by Funk and Mahé), but further reconstruction of the narrative must be conjectural.

On p. 33 the theme is how the fault of Sophia will be rectified. In 33.19 the correct restoration is surely *diorth]ōsis mpshōft*, 'correction of the error'. It is very

¹ I may be excused for referring here, for further details, to my own translation of *A Valentinian exposition* which is to be found in *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures*, ed. M. Meyer, New York 2007, 667–77, and the reconstructions suggested there.

unlikely that the crucifixion is alluded to in these lines, as Mahé's translation suggests. The story is that Sophia's son, probably referred to as 'Christ' in 33.17, is prevented by the Horos from going back down to help his mother; instead, the Father/the Pleroma generates his/its own son, i.e. Jesus, who will effect the restoration of Sophia.

On p. 34 Sophia herself speaks, in the style of the remorseful complaint of an abandoned woman – a *topos* borrowed from ancient rhetorical culture that might have occasioned some comment.

On p. 35 (continuing to 36.19), Jesus has descended to Sophia and is now busy creating the world. The preserved text presents us with three main problems. The first is the role of the Demiurge: normally Jesus the Saviour performs a preparatory work while the actual creation is delegated to the Demiurge. Although 'the Demiurge' is mentioned in 37.33 and 39.16, there is little indication of a division of labour between him and Jesus in the account on p. 35, and one is tempted to suspect that bits of text have been lost in the process of transmission. I am not convinced by the suggestion that *ktisis* in 35.14 is a name for the Demiurge.

A second problem is the exact nature of the 'seeds' of Sophia, said to serve as materials for the creation, and their relationship to the 'passions'. On this point, further efforts of analysis will be needed to bring clarification.

The third problem is that the normal Valentinian tripartition into the spiritual, the 'psychic' and the material does not appear, neither here nor anywhere else in the preserved text (cf., for example, 37.25–8). This peculiar absence may be linked to the problem of the unclear role of the Demiurge, who is usually represented as the first of the 'psychic' beings. Mahé proposes that the author deliberately avoided thematising the psychics as a distinct category, motivated by a hope that they would all eventually be converted to spirituals. This feature is also an indication of the early date of *A Valentinian exposition* (introduction at pp. 31–5). Mahé's proposals will need more careful scrutiny than is possible in this review.

In 36.19ff., the 'angels' accompanying Jesus the Saviour are introduced. They are an essential component of Valentinian soteriology, since they constitute the *syzygoi* of spiritual humans, the male partners with whom the latter are united in the *apokatastasis*. 36.19–22 should probably be restored as follows: *ntarefei g[a]r [ahrēi] nci Iēsous afeine a[n ...] mptērf* '[For] when Jesus descended he [also] brought the [...]s of the All'. A peculiar and hitherto unexplained idea appearing in this section, and elsewhere in *A Valentinian exposition* is the important soteriological function given to Sophia's *syzygos*, her abandoned partner in the Pleroma, who plays a rather anonymous role in other versions of the system.

On p. 37 we are back to the creation and the structure of the cosmos. The Demiurge is now explicitly mentioned, his creation of the human being is related, and the world is described, in good Valentinian fashion, as a school envisaged by Providence for the education of spiritual humans.

Unusually for a Valentinian tractate, *A Valentinian exposition* also contains a section on the defection of the Devil and his angels, as well as on the primeval history of the Book of Genesis, viewed as a continual struggle between spiritual and carnal powers (p. 38). The final page (p. 39) describes the eschatological *apokatastasis* by way of a series of ascents and syzygic unions. Some features of this

account deviate from known versions of the Valentinian system; Mahé's commentary is a good starting point for further study.

Funk and Mahé's edition also provides a superior text of the liturgical fragments (anointing, baptism and eucharist) that succeed *A Valentinian exposition* in the codex. Mahé argues confidently for the Valentinian character of these texts. Personally, I see no compelling indication that these texts are Valentinian, though in view of the context of their transmission as well as their contents this remains a quite likely assumption.

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Die Nag-Hammadi-Schriften in der Literatur- und Theologiegeschichte des frühen Christentums. Edited by Jens Schröter and Konrad Schwarz (with Clarissa Paul). (Studien und Texte zu Antike und Christentum, 106.) Pp. x + 319 incl. 1 table. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017. €89 (paper). 978 3 16 155365 3; 1436 3003.

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This volume is based on papers delivered at a conference in October 2015 at the Theological Faculty of the Humboldt University of Berlin, which commemorated the seventieth anniversary of the discovery of thirteen Coptic codices near Nag Hammadi. Each essay impressively demonstrates how particular texts from the Nag Hammadi codices contribute to our understanding of early Christian literature and theology. Many of the essays accomplish this goal by analysing genre classifications and interpreting the texts in relation to other Jewish, early Christian and Gnostic literature.

Jens Schröter, 'Einleitung' (pp. 1–13), provides a thorough overview of the variegated texts and genres in the Nag Hammadi codices, which problematises a direct alignment with the New Testament genres of Gospel, Epistle, Acts and Apocalypse. Christoph Marksches, 'Offene Fragen zur historischen und literaturgeschichtlichen Einordnung der Nag-Hammadi-Schriften' (pp. 15–35), raises questions about the delimitation of 'early Christianity', the placement of the Nag Hammadi codices within this timeframe, the original language and dates of particular texts and the problematic categorisation of genre. John D. Turner, 'The reception and transformation of philosophical literary genres in the Nag Hammadi writings' (pp. 37–66), shows that the *Apocryphon of John*, *Zostrianos*, *Allogenes*, and *Marsanes* were dependent on Platonic dialogues, which were transformed into apocalyptic otherworldly journeys, or appropriated to characterise knowledge of a transcendent reality.

The following three essays discuss apocalypses. Gregor Wurst, 'Apokalypsen in den Nag-Hammadi-Codices' (pp. 69–78), identifies the *Apocalypse of Paul*, *Apocalypse of Adam* and *Apocalypse of Peter* as apocalypses, not because of their titles, but rather their similar content – a heavenly being reveals a transcendental message to a human recipient. Jaan Lahe, 'Die Apokalypse des Adam als ein Werk am Rande der Theologie- und Literaturgeschichte des frühen Christentums' (pp. 79–96), concludes that the *Apocalypse of Adam* is a Gnostic, non-Christian, work with an Old Testament and Jewish background, but its thematic parallels with Christian apocalypses reveals its importance for understanding