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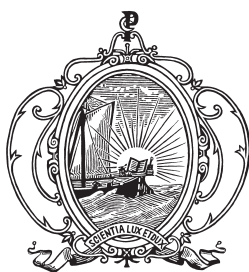
STUDIA PATRISTICA

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on Patristic Studies held
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MARKUS VINZENT

Volume 19:
The First Two Centuries
Apocrypha and Gnostica



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Creation and Epiphany? Theological Symbolism in the Creation Narrative of *On the Origin of the World* (NHC II 5)

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'As the lighting comes from East, so shall the Son of Man appear'
(Matth. 24:27)

ABSTRACT

In the creation narrative of *The Tractate without Title on the Origin of the World* there is a short passage (108.28-109.1) that gives an unusual interpretation of the creation of the world. The relevant sentences belong to the unit of the appearance and effect of Pistis Sophia's likeness after the vain claim of the first archon, Jaldabaoth, and refer to the purification of earth and of water. In order to explain what happened in the creation story, the author quotes a semi-logion from an unknown source and says: 'the holy water', since it gives life to all and purifies it'. The purpose of this article is to find answers for two questions: why does the author use this symbolic language and how does he adapt it to the theological system of the tractate. To achieve this twofold aim I examine first the passage and then I turn to the symbols of the text and make an attempt to show the possible Christian sources and parallels. The questions that I raise are not entirely new, distinguished scholars have commented to various extent on the presence of baptismal imagery in the tractate. I do not attempt to fully reconstruct the concept of baptism of the tractate, but like to demonstrate the centrality of baptismal imagery in this sentences.

The Tractate without Title on the Origin of the World is the fifth document in the Codex II of the Nag Hammadi Library.¹ It must have enjoyed wide popularity in certain circles because it survived in different versions, one among the Library's writings and another in the Codex Oeyen.² The presumed

¹ This article was supported by the OTKA project PD 112421.

² According to Layton's introduction, Codex II is largely written by one hand, Scribe A (Scribe B copied only the first 8 lines of page 47). Scribe A copied the writings of Codex XIII. The language of the two versions of this text is slightly different. The language of Codex II is 'Crypto-Subachmimic', as Layton wrote: 'It is reasonable to assume that the Coptic text of Codex II is the kind that might have been written by a speaker of A2 attempting, artificially, to conform to S, the prestigious and orthodox dialect of the greater Nile Valley and monasticism. In other words the language of Codex II is a literary language, which can be classed as Crypto-Subachmimic (Crypto-A2), showing the characteristics of a text written or translated by a native speaker of

Greek original has been variously dated between the second and fourth centuries.³

In the creation narrative of the tractate there is a short unit (108.28-109.1) that gives an unusual interpretation of the creation, at least unusual and unparalleled in the Nag Hammadi Library. The relevant sentences belong to the description of the appearance and effect of Pistis Sophia's likeness after the vain claim of the first archon, Jaldabaoth, but apparently digresses from the tractate's own terminology and conceptual framework – and those of the parallel narratives – by referring to the purification of earth and of water. The author elaborates on the subject and in order to explain what happened in the creation story, he quotes a semi-logion from an unknown source and says: 'The holy water', since it gives life to all and purifies it'.

The purpose of my article is to find answers for two questions: why does the author use this symbolic language and how does he adapt it into the theological system of the tractate. To achieve this twofold aim I examine first the passage and then I turn to the symbols of the text and make an attempt to show the possible Christian sources and parallels. The questions that I raise are not entirely new, distinguished scholars like Böhlig,⁴ Bethge,⁵ Tardieu,⁶ Painchaud,⁷ and Rasimus⁸ have commented to various extent on the presence of baptismal imagery in the tractate. In what follows, I do not attempt to fully reconstruct the concept of baptism of the tractate, but like to demonstrate the centrality of baptismal imagery in this sentences.

Subachmimic in which he attempts (without total success) to correct his own speech habits in conformity with another dialect – Sahidic in the case of Codex II... Codex XIII is of standard Sahidic. This fact could mean that the two codices were not produced at the same time. The British Library fragment is the Subachmimic version. Bentley Layton, 'Introduction', in *id.* (ed.), *Nag Hammadi Codex II, 2-7 together with XIII, 2, Brit. Lib. Or 4926(1) and P.Oxy. 1, 654-655*, vol. I (Leiden, 1989), 4-7.

³ For our purpose it is important to note that the most distinctive feature of the tractate's creation story is that the events of the narrative, in a more or less clearly recognizable way, follow the text and events of the biblical *Genesis* creation story, which has no parallel in the Nag Hammadi Library.

⁴ Alexander Böhlig and Pahor Labib, *Die koptisch-gnostische Schrift ohne Titel aus Codex II von Nag Hammadi*, Deutsche Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin, Institut für Orientforschung 58 (Berlin, 1962), 60.

⁵ Hans Gebhard Bethge, *Vom Ursprung der Welt. Die fünfte Schrift aus Nag Hammadi-Codex II neu herausgegeben und unter bevorzugter Auswertung anderer Nag Hammadi Texte erklärt*, Diss. (Berlin, 1975), 288.

⁶ Michael Tardieu, *Trois Mythes Gnostiques. Adam, Éros et les animaux d'Égypte dans un écrit de Nag Hammadi*, Études Augustiniennes (Paris, 1978).

⁷ Louis Painchaud, *L'Écrit sans titre*, Bibliothèque Copte de Nag Hammadi, Section: «Textes» 21 (Québec and Leuven, 1995), 358-9.

⁸ Tuomo Rasimus, *Paradise Reconsidered in Gnostic Mythmaking: Rethinking Sethianism in Light of the Ophite Evidence*, Nag Hammadi and Manichaean Studies 68 (Leiden, 2009).

The text:

Truly, the water was purified through the likeness of Pistis Sophia who appeared to the first ruler in the waters. As in a saying (eulogon), ‘through the waters’, since the holy water gives life everything (and) purifies it.⁹

The main character in the passage is Pistis Sophia’s likeness, who – as is well-known from other, parallel stories¹⁰ – appears before the rulers on the waters, and serves as heavenly model with human shape in the creation of man. The first sentence appears to describe an integral part of the creation, but the second sentence is strange in this context. If we read the passage more closely, we can distinguish two parts within the unit, with two different perspectives, that carry different aspects of the main motives, water and purification. With the first phrases the writer introduces a commentary on his own creation story with the purpose that while reworking the creation material, he might be able to draw up a new teaching that involves a new context. Furthermore, in the second sentence, where the perspective clearly changes, and the subject is the water, the first phrase appears to be a quotation (‘through the waters’) of a saying, after which the writer enumerates the two effects of holy water, namely life-giving and purification.¹¹ Unfortunately, the Greek formulas that were used here cannot be reconstructed with ultimate certainty and we should rely on the context suggested by the text.¹²

The water and the holy water

Turning to the motive of water, the first occurrence of the term ‘water’¹³ could refer to the tractate’s creation story,¹⁴ and be an allusion to the biblical

⁹ ΝΖΟΥΟ ΔΕ ΝΖΟΥΟ ΑΠΜΟΟΥ ΤΟΥΒΟ ΖΙΤῢ ΠΕΙΝΕ ΝΤΠΙΣΤΙΣ ΤΣΟΦΙΑ ΤΑΕΙ ΝΤΑΖΟΥΩΝΖ ΕΒΟΛ` ΜΠΑΡΧΙΓΕΝΕΤΩΡ ΖΝΝῢΜΜΟΟΥ ΖΝΝΟΥΕΓΛΟΓΟΝ ΘΕ ΑΥΧΟΟΣ ΧΕ ΖΙΤῢ ΜΜΟΟΥ ΠΜΟΟΥ ΕΤΟΥΛΛΒ ΕΠΕΙ QΤῢΖΟ ΜΠΤΗΡQ QΤΟΥΒΟ ΜΜΟQ.

¹⁰ For the stories see, e.g. Niels A. Dahl, ‘The Arrogant Archon and the Lewd Sophia: Jewish Traditions in Gnostic Revolt’, in B. Layton (ed.), *The Rediscovery of Gnosticism: Volume 2: Sethian Gnosticism*, Studies in the History of Religions, Supplements to Numen 41 (Leiden, 1981), 689-712.

¹¹ From this point, the first striking aspect of the quotation is discernible because the author gives this as a commentary on his own story while the creation story was apparently reported without much changes.

¹² The two effects of the holy water and the sentence that contained them are too general to identify with certainty the source or to suggest exact and definitive parallels from the contemporary religious or philosophical traditions.

¹³ The other term is the watery substance ΟΥCΙΑ ΜΜΟΟΥ (99.11) that could be a technical term from the Stoic tradition, see L. Painchaud, *L’Écrit sans titre* (1995), 243.

¹⁴ This is clearly an archaic element of creation and although its origin is totally absent, its first appearance is linked to jealousy and wrath (99.11, 14-15) and the close context of the term suggests the story as given in the LXX.

creation story.¹⁵ The coptic **ⲙⲟⲟϥ** could be a translation of the Greek ὕδωρ. Further, we should note that in the tractate it is the dwelling place of the rulers from where they emerge (from the abyss of water **ⲁⲃϥⲓⲕ ⲛⲉⲙⲟⲟϥ** 100,11).¹⁶ However, with the introduction of the term ‘holy water’ **ⲡⲙⲟⲟϥ ⲉⲧⲟϥⲁⲗⲃ** the context changes (and the plural form becomes singular). Other writings of the Nag Hammadi Library do not give any help because this is the only example of the use of this phrase.

In the scholarly literature it is beyond question that this passage provides a baptismal imagery. This can be accepted, in spite of the fact that the motive is unexpected and, moreover, the writer seemingly does not give further hints that would help us to unveil the meaning. This is why we have to ask why the author inserts this section into this narrative.

Concerning this question, the two terms supply our first clue, because with the use of the adjective ‘holy’ the writer makes a clear and substantial distinction between the waters of creation and the holy water, and by mentioning the benefits of holy water, he explains his doctrine: the water transforms the recipient into the state of life and purity and probably effects the entrance into the community.¹⁷ Although the term of holy water used in this sense (probably in the sense of the Greek λουτρόν) had various meanings which are of particular interest to us here, the presumably underlying Greek term does not help us, because λουτρόν and βάπτισμα are interchangeable in also in non-Valentinian and Valentinian texts of the first three centuries.¹⁸

The text seems to develop a mythological story, only to confirm the origin of the holy water, to shed light on the necessary theological background and on the heavenly origin of an earthly but holy element.¹⁹ It is as if the writer explained to the reader or the audience what the difference is between the first and the second creation that emerged with regards to the nature of water.

¹⁵ L. Painchaud, *L'Écrit sans titre* (1995), 270-1.

¹⁶ It is difficult not to see here that it could be a reminiscence of a theological teaching that was known e.g. to Origen, *First Homilies on Genesis*. This teaching plays an important role later in the tractate because the abyss is ‘the mother of the archons’ (100.24), the place of their punishment (100.24-5) and at the end of the times this abyss will be overturned (126.35) and the deficiency will be plucked out by the root and thrown down into the darkness (127.3-4).

¹⁷ Although the writer is silent about the identity of the recipient, but – as a good rhetor – he inverted the way he introduced them and reveals the benefits that are waiting for those who participate in it.

¹⁸ Peter Lampe, *From Paul to Valentinus. Christians at Rome in the First Two Centuries* (Minneapolis, 2003), 301. He gives a list for this statement: Justin, *1Apol.* 61.3; Clement of Alexandria, *Exc. ex Theod.* 4.78.

¹⁹ The question, whether its gifts should be interpreted in a physical or spiritual sense remains open because the writer gives no further details in the tractate that would enable us to determine his intention but he seems to explain to the reader how the difference grew between the two waters with regards to their different nature with the purpose to instruct or to make the audience acquainted with its origin.

Literally the passage wants to say that with the appearance of the image the water is purified and with the act of purification the water becomes holy, that is an empowered and active substance. The holiness of water carries the benefits of life-giving and purification. In this symbolic language the author states that the heavenly (or rather divine) qualities of the visible image of the invisible Pistis Sophhia appears through the visible element as a hidden reality in a visible form. All these features confirm that we are dealing with baptismal imagery.

The image of Pistis

Turning back to the first part of the quotation, the motif that we have to examine is the image of Pistis Sophia. According to our text: 'the water was purified by the image of Pistis Sophia'. This figure (*eine*) is the personified likeness of Pistis (the Coptic term could be the translation of the Greek term εἰκών), as her manifested wish,²⁰ and can have anthropological, soteriological and, as in this passage, cosmological meanings. The appearance of the term is bound to the creation story as indicated by the term 'light-man'.²¹ It is a well known feature in this group of writings that we find the word play with the uninflected Greek term φῶς that can be read either as 'light' or 'man' (based on *Gen.* 1:3).²²

In our case the connection is supported by another textual witness. In one variant of his vain claim,²³ the first ruler, Yaldabaoth says after Pistis Sophia's

²⁰ The tractate does not use the myth of Sophia's fall.

²¹ This heavenly figure is the immortal light-man (107.17-25), and, in other passage, is identified as god by the first archon, Yaldabaoth, and by the other rulers (112.30-31: πεχαυ χε μη παει πε πνουτε νταρτακο μπνερπον αρουωυβ πεχαυ χε ερε). Among his names occurs the angel, and the 'radiant man of blood' (108.19-20). According to the anthropological summary it is the first Adam, Adam of light, the representative of the pneumatic type who appeared on the first day (117.28-118.2). In Pistis' proclamation (103.18-23) this figure is pre-existent who will come (the term suggests a concept of embodiment) and judge. Accepting Painchaud's suggestion, the main source of the proclamation is *Isa.* 41:25 (LXX), L. Painchaud *L'Écrit sans titre* (1995), 295-6.

²² According to Quispel this exegetical identification of 'light' and 'human' is based on the LXX, in which the uninflected Greek word phōs can be read either as 'light' or 'man' (from *Gen.* 1:2), Gilles Quispel, 'Ezekiel 1:26 in Jewish Mysticism and Gnosis', *VigChr* 34 (1980), 1-13, 6. He wrote about the different uses of *ho phōs*, the man, and *to phōs*, the light. This exegetical tradition could be set in connection with our tractate's concept of Anthropos. For Quispel it is proof that the Gnostic Anthropos is derived from heterodox Jewish circles. King used Quispel's approach in the interpretation of *ApJohn*, Karen L. King, 'A Distinctive Intertextuality: Genesis and Platonizing Philosophy in the *Secret Revelation of John*', in Kevin Corrigan and Tuomas Räsänen (eds), *Gnosticism, Platonism and the Late Ancient World. Essays in Honour of John D. Turner*, NHMS 82 (Leiden and Boston, 2013), 3-22, 8. In our case, this could be correct, but the figure is not identified with the figure of Spirit hovering over the water (as in *ApJohn*, *HypArch*), so there are only similarities.

²³ In the tractate four variants of the proclamation of the archon occur.

proclamation: 'If something was before me, let it appear, in order that we might see its light' (107.35-108.3). To clarify the peculiar meaning we have to refer to Tatian and raise the possibility of a common source. According to Clement of Alexandria (and Origen), Tatian interpreted *Gen.* 1:3 as a request of the inferior ruler.²⁴ Clement refutes him with the following words: 'Against Tatian, who says that the words, "Let there be light" are supplicatory. If, then He is supplicating the supreme God, how does he say, I am God and besides me there is none else?'²⁵ Clement mentions some well-known motives in describing Tatian as a heretic.²⁶ For our purpose it is enough to note that (1) our tractate gives new evidence for this exegetical tradition and (2) that we are dealing with a very early form of a heterodox exegesis. But, unfortunately neither Clement, nor Origen did continue the refutation giving us more information on how Tatian interpreted the subsequent verses of *Genesis*. With Clement's account we only touched the starting point of our question.

In both versions of interpreting *Gen.* 1:3 the important features are that (1) the interpretation is clearly based on the creation story of this biblical verse, (2) it is connected to an inferior being, the ruler, and (3), probably the most important one is, that the light comes after the request.²⁷ The two version have all three features in common. Based on our tractate, the list can be complemented with further motives: (4) the image comes from Pistis, as her manifested wish, (5) it appears on the waters before the archons.²⁸ The account apparently leaves us without traces of baptismal imagery and presents only the mythological and theological elements of the creation.

²⁴ This interpretation could have been known in the Alexandrian tradition because it was preserved by Clement of Alexandria (*EcProph* 38) and Origen (*De or.* 24).

²⁵ The quotation is from Diogenes: Πρὸς δὲ Τατιανὸν λέγοντα εὐκτικὸν εἶναι τὸ 'γενηθήτω φῶς' λεκτέον· εἰ τοίνυν εὐχόμενος ἦδει τὸν ὑπερκείμενον θεόν, πῶς λέγει 'ἐγὼ θεὸς καὶ πλὴν ἐμοῦ ἄλλος οὐδεὶς; and later he adds to this: 'We have said that there are punishments for blasphemies, for nonsense, for our outrageous expressions; which are punished and chastised by reason'.

²⁶ Without the purpose of making Tatian a heretic, it is worth noting that not only the motive of request is common with our tractate but the quotation of *Isaiah* 44:6 occurs, too. This way, the blaspheme proclamation of the first ruler (107.31) is almost directly placed before the mentioned optative (ΧΕ ΑΝΟΚ ΠΕ ΠΝΟΥΤΕ Μῆ ΚΕΟΥΑ ΨΟΟΠ ΑΧῆΤ). Orbe suggested that Tatian identified the light with Christ, and in this reading the sense would be that the Demiurge asks God to send the Saviour into the world. A. Orbe, 'A proposito de Gen 1,3 (fiat lux) en la exegesis de Taciano', *Gregorianum* 42 (1961), 401-33, 425. Orbe made us aware of another argument in Origen, *Contra Celsus* VI 51-2 which gives us the same interpretation although Tatian is not mentioned by name.

²⁷ At this point it is worth noting that the motive of request could allude to baptismal imagery, particularly to the epiclesis in the consecration of water. Later I turn back to this suggestion.

²⁸ We should note that the above mentioned story of the appearance of the 'image' illustrates a distinctive feature of the tractate, concerning the temporal difference between appearance and reception – that is uncommon in the writings of the Nag Hammadi Library, because here there is a temporal distinction between hearing Pistis' proclamation and seeing the light-man on the side of the first archon, and seeing the light and the human form in it on the side of the archons.

In spite of the uncertainty at this point, whether or not we are faced with baptismal imagery, we can note that (1) it is clearly a symbolic-allegoric exegesis, where *Gen.* 1:3 is interpreted as a supplication, and (2) in this construction the light appears only after the request of the ruler. On the basis of Clement's and Origen's reports, we can conclude that Tatian's exegesis is very close to the quoted Valentinian creation account. Is there any trace to identify the meaning of the motif of the 'image' and to place the image in a baptismal context?

The motif of the 'image'

To get closer to the image of Pistis we turn to another Valentinian tradition. In the *Excerpta ex Theodoto*²⁹ we find two relevant passages that may be compared with our text in respect of the description of baptism, particularly, as the same term occurs.

Both accounts present descriptions of the transformation of the baptised and portray him or her being sealed, in the act of receiving the Name (86.1-2): 'He has the name of God through Christ as an inscription and the Spirit as an image'.³⁰ The faithful, the baptised person, obtains an inscription (*epigraphe*) of the name of God (through Christ) and an image (*eikon*), the Spirit.³¹ In the second passage, we read: 'For he who has been sealed by Father, Son and Holy Spirit is beyond the threats of every other power and by the three Names has been released from the whole triad of corruption. "Having borne the image of the earthly, it then bears the image of the heavenly"'.³²

Although the meaning of these spiritual and allegorical exegesis has been much debated,³³ but for our purpose it is enough to recall the most recent scholarly opinion.

²⁹ The texts are taken from Sagnard's edition: François Sagnard, *Clément d'Alexandrie: Extraits de Théodote*, SC 23 (Paris, 1948).

³⁰ 'Ἐπὶ τοῦ προσκομισθέντος νομίσματος ὁ Κύριος εἶπεν οὐ· 'Τίνος τὸ κτῆμα; ἀλλά· 'Τίνος ἡ εἰκὼν καὶ ἡ ἐπιγραφὴ; Καίσαρος· ἵνα οὗ ἔστιν, ἐκεῖν' δοθῇ. Οὕτως καὶ ὁ πιστός· ἐπιγραφὴν μὲν ἔχει διὰ Χριστοῦ τὸ Ὄνομα τοῦ Θεοῦ, τὸ δὲ Πνεῦμα ὡς εἰκόνα.

³¹ On the account of the motif of the Spirit, Sagnard notes the verses *John* 1:26 and 1:33, see F. Sagnard, *Extraits* (1948), 229.

³² Διὰ γὰρ Πατρὸς καὶ Υἱοῦ καὶ ἁγίου Πνεύματος σφραγισθεὶς ἀνεπίληπτός ἐστι πάση τῇ ἄλλῃ δυνάμει, καὶ διὰ τριῶν ὀνομάτων πάσης τῆς ἐν φθορᾷ τριάδος ἀπηλλάγη· 'φορέσας τὴν εἰκόνα τοῦ χοϊκοῦ, τότε φορεῖ τὴν εἰκόνα τοῦ ἐπουρανίου.

³³ See F. Sagnard, *Extraits* (1948), 229-39. Moreover, it was an argument for the connection between Tatian and Theodotus in the former scholarly disputes. It is enough to mention e.g. Grant who argued that both Tatian and Theodotus speak of 'the Spirit of God received at baptism as the Image'. R.M. Grant, 'The heresy of Tatian', *JTS* n.s. 5 (1954) 62-8, 65. He adds: 'It is difficult to tell, whether the 68th chapter of the *Excerpta* comes from Theodotus or is substantially modified by Clement, we cannot therefore ascribe Tatian's doctrine to Valentinianism'. This evaluation was debated later in the scholarly literature. In her monograph Hunt refutes Grant's opinion and stated that 'Tatian does not speak of the Spirit being received at baptism at all. He does see the divine Spirit as the "image and likeness of God", and perceives the Spirit as able to dwell within men,

Thomassen in his monograph identified these two passages as parts of the sealing process, as the term ‘*epigraphe*’ is used: ‘The seal (a) makes the initiate superior to, and invulnerable to the attacks of the powers; (b) confers “the image of the celestial” (τὴν εἰκόνα τοῦ ἐπουρανίου). The believer possesses “through Christ” the inscription of the Name of God, and the Spirit as an image (ἐπιγραφὴν μὲν ἔχει διὰ Χριστοῦ τὸ Ὄνομα τοῦ Θεοῦ, τὸ δὲ Πνεῦμα ὡς εἰκόνα).’³⁴

Do the passages distinguish between the receiving of the Name and the wearing of the image? Although Thomassen’s assumption could be right that these are parts of baptism, he himself noted that the text does not fit well the act of baptismal sealing which is accompanied by the invocation of the name of Trinity, since in the first sentence the singular name of God (through Christ) appears. I may point out another issue. The presence of the term ‘image’ allows us to search for another explication. ‘Image’ (εἰκών), as is clear in these passages, refers to the Spirit (of God) and is of celestial character (εἰκόνα τοῦ ἐπουρανίου) which brings us back to the tractate where the image of heaven could be meant by the Coptic expression: **ⲛⲛⲓⲛⲉ ⲙⲡⲉ**, 98,18. This image is the manifested will of Pistis, or in other words, her likeness.³⁵

Based on these terminological and conceptual parallels we suggest that the description by Theodotus and our quotation refer to the same baptismal context. Yet in the light of our text, we should make a distinction between the use of a baptismal formula (in the name of Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit), and the act of sealing and the wearing (Greek φορεῖ) of the celestial image (or the Spirit as image). The former would give us the sign of the believer, the latter be either a reminiscence of the consecration of water or allude to the teaching on the restoration of the original state of man in baptism, receiving the lost heavenly likeness, the εἰκών.

Conclusion

To sum up, the examined passages in the tractate in all probability are constituent parts or rather aspects of a developed baptismal theology.³⁶ I attempted

but I believe that Tatian is referring to the prophets here, and not to the baptised. Moreover, there is a Scriptural basis for everything that Tatian says about the Spirit and its indwelling, which refutes any dependence upon Theodotus and suggests instead a common use of Paul’. Emily J. Hunt, *Christianity in the Second Century* (London and New York, 2003), 27-8. For recent opinions, see William L. Petersen, ‘Tatian the Assyrian’, in Antti Marjanen and Petri Luomanen (eds), *A Companion to Second-Century Christian ‘Heretics’* (Leiden, 2005), 125-58.

³⁴ Einar Thomassen, *The Spiritual Seed: The Church of the ‘Valentinians’*, NHMS 60 (Leiden, 2006), 333.

³⁵ 98,16-19: ‘And immediately her will manifested itself as a likeness of heaven, having an unimaginable magnitude’.

³⁶ Next to our quotation that we have examined, the tractate has some shorter narrative that could involve baptismal imagery. These are: the appearing of the first archon after Pistis’ wish

to examine the motives of holy water and the appearance of the image after the ruler's supplication. If the quoted passages are supportive parallels, we can conclude that the writer used materials or at least teachings with which he would have been familiar and which also made their way into the parallel sources, hence, we would have a specific theological tradition and could even reconstruct a fraction of a baptismal context which was also shared by the particular Valentinian account.³⁷ In other words, the tractate's creation narrative is less surprising and its symbolic language witnesses the influence of a contemporary rite of the consecration of water with its agent and the act itself where mention is made of holy water and its effects.

with the interpretation of the name of Jaldabaoth (100:10-4), the three type of baptism (122:13-6), the watery serpents (hydras) of Egypt (122:16-20), the enthronement of Sabaoth (103:32-104:10).

³⁷ The concept of the water baptism can be found in the writings of the Nag Hammadi Library. The closest parallels come from the Valentinian tradition. In the fragment, *On Anoint*, where the prayer asks the Father: 'It is fitting [for thee now] to send thy [Son Jesus] Christ, and for him to anoint us, so that we may be able to trample upon the head of the [serpent]s and [...] of the scorpions and [all] the power of the Devil by means of [...] shepherd] Jesus [Christ]' (40.11-9). I follow Lundhaug's reconstruction: $\sigma\omega\epsilon$ [αράκ] ἴν[ο]υ ἀτῆναι μπεκωῆ[ρε ἰη]ς πεχριστος $\bar{n}q[\tau]\omega\zeta\bar{c}$ [mm]αν $\chi\epsilon\kappa\alpha\sigma\epsilon$ $\epsilon\eta\alpha\omega\beta\eta$ [βα]μ $\bar{n}\kappa\alpha\tau\alpha\pi\alpha\tau\epsilon\iota$ $\bar{n}\tau\eta[\epsilon]$ $\bar{n}\eta\eta[\alpha\eta]$ $\lambda\gamma\omega$ [nnα]πε $\bar{n}\eta\sigma[\gamma]\sigma\sigma\epsilon$ $\bar{m}\eta\tau\delta\alpha\mu$ [τηρ]ς $\bar{m}\eta\delta\iota\alpha\beta\omicron\lambda\omicron\varsigma$ [zi]τῆπα [...ππ]οιμην ἰ[η]ς πε[χρ]ης[τ]ος Hugo Lundhaug, 'Evidence of Valentinian Ritual Practice? The Liturgical Fragments of the Nag Hammadi Codex XI (NHC XI,2A-E)', in Kevin Corrigan and Tuomas Rasimus (eds), *Gnosticism, Platonism and the Late Ancient World. Essays in Honour of John D. Turner*, NHMS 82 (Leiden and Boston, 2013), 225-44, 226. According to the fragment the prayer asks for the sending of the Son, Jesus Christ (and not the Word) to the water. This concept occurs similarly in the *GospPhil* 72, 30-1: '[It was necessary that Jesus] went down into the water [to fulfil it] and to cleanse it', $\eta\epsilon\omega\omega\epsilon$ $\epsilon\tau\tau\epsilon$ $\eta\eta\varsigma$ β[ω]κ $\epsilon\pi\iota\tau\eta$ $\epsilon\pi\mu\omicron$ [ο]υ $\epsilon\eta\eta\alpha\chi\omicron\kappa\eta$ $\epsilon\beta\omicron\lambda$ $\epsilon\eta\eta\alpha\varsigma\omicron\tau\eta$ I quote Os' translation (who followed Schenke's reconstruction, Schenke, *Das Philippus-Evangelium (Nag-Hammadi-Codex II,3)*. Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der Altchristlichen Literatur (Berlin, 1997), *Baptism in the Bridal Chamber. The Gospel of Philip as a Valentinian Baptismal Instruction*, Diss. (digital dissertation, State University Groningen, 2007), 62. In relation to our tractate the main difference is as follows: Jesus is the actor and there is no trace of the a changed nature of the water. Adding to this difference, the three types of baptism in the tractate could be similar to that of the Valentinian type (in the *GospPhil* 66 with the mention of water, fire and light), but I am inclined that our tractate's concept – with its summary-form and the notes – is unlike these mentioned examples, rather I suggest there were polemical issues and critical attitudes with regards the Valentinian interpretation of baptism. For the Valentinian interpretation, see Einar Thomassen, 'Baptism among the Valentinians', in David Hellholm, Tor Vegge-Øyvind Nordeval and Christer Hellholm (eds), *Ablution, Initiation, Baptism. Late Antiquity, Early Judaism, Early Christianity* (Berlin, 2011), 895-915. Concerning the three types of baptism – in my reading, the *Book of Jeu* (Ch 45-8) offers better parallels but the three different baptisms are not listed as in our tractate but appear as three distinct, successive rituals. The three types of baptism, enumerated in the tractate, could present only the degrees of baptism that is given to the catechumens and the writer seems to have understood baptism in Spirit and in fire as one act accompanying the water baptism (as did his Christian fellow theologians, based on *Luke* 3:16 (or the par. *Matth.* 3:11).

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