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## Baptism in the bridal chamber

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### 3. Genre

In its present form, *GPhil* does not resemble any known genre.<sup>36</sup> With its abrupt changes of subject between paragraphs, it somewhat resembles a collection of excerpts. Yet no one has been able to convincingly explain why some very similar paragraphs are not grouped together but are spread across the text. Ménard regards Schenke's division into paragraphs as the source of what he thought to be a misinterpretation of genre, but nevertheless he maintains this division for his own translation.<sup>37</sup> Some have suggested that it might be a homily or homiletic treatise structured around certain themes.

Rewolinski (1978) and Tripp (1979) regard *GPhil* not as a collection of excerpts but rather as a collection of notes for a preacher or teacher. Rewolinski investigated works in three genres before deciding that none of them fit *GPhil*. He suggests that the paragraphs might be notes 'never to be used apart from the presence of the teacher-mystagogue'.<sup>38</sup> Tripp sees the work as a loose compilation of sermon notes, mostly originating with the author, sometimes quoting others. Luttikhuisen, who produced a Dutch translation in 1986, sees this possibility as well,<sup>39</sup> as does Rudolph in 1988.<sup>40</sup>

But Isenberg and Layton, who produced the 1989 standard text edition in the *Coptic Gnostic Library*, assume the collection hypothesis. In 1990, Schenke concludes the collection-hypothesis has become the general consensus among the scholars in the field (see chapter 3.1.4 below). In the next section, I will review the opinions of Isenberg, Layton, Schenke and Turner and highlight some of the weaknesses of the collection hypothesis. Then I will develop the alternative, - that the work consists of notes for a baptismal instruction. I will do so in two steps:

- What was the *structure* of early Christian baptismal instructions, and how can this relate to the division of *GPhil* into parts and units, as distinguished in chapter 2?
- How did *notes* function in oral delivery, and can the concept of notes explain the form and style of *GPhil*?

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<sup>36</sup> For a summary of the various proposals, I refer to the *Forschungsgeschichte* in Martha Lee Turner (1996), *Philip*.

<sup>37</sup> Ménard (1967), *Philippe*, p 6. 'Comme on peut le constater, il serait mieux de ne pas trop insister sur les divisions de Schenke et d'abandonner comme modèle de comparaison un ouvrage de type de l'*Évangile selon Thomas*. D'autres ouvrages gnostiques comme les *Extraits de Théodote*, ou même, l'*Apokryphon de Jean* ou l'*Évangile de Vérité* seraient mieux indiqués. Et l'on peut se demander alors s'il est tellement exact de parler, dans le cas du nouvel *Évangile*, de collection de sentences ou de florilège.'

<sup>38</sup> Rewolinski (1978), *Sacramental Language*, pp 51-53; quoted in Turner (1996), *Philip*, p 49.

<sup>39</sup> Luttikhuisen (1986), *Gnostische Geschriften I*, p 62: 'We kunnen het evangelie naar Filippus het beste karakteriseren als een aaneenrijging van korte gedachten over mystieke onderwerpen. Daarbij kan men zich afvragen of het de bedoeling van de auteur is geweest dat de tekst in één keer zou worden gelezen. Het ligt m.i. meer voor de hand dat we te maken hebben met notities die bedoeld waren voor verdere meditatie of als uitgangspunt voor onderricht (bijv. onderricht rond de toediening van sacramenten).'

<sup>40</sup> Rudolph (1988), 'Response', p 229.

### 3.1 Current scholarship

#### 3.1.1 Isenberg's excerpts from a baptismal instruction

Isenberg wrote a dissertation on *GPhil* in 1968. He has also written introductions to *GPhil* in the various editions of *The Nag Hammadi Library*. In his introduction to the revised edition of 1988, he gives the following characterization of *GPhil*:

The *Gospel of Philip* is a compilation of statements pertaining primarily to the meaning and value of sacraments within the context of a Valentinian conception of the human predicament and life after death.... The *Gospel of Philip* is not organized in a way that can be conveniently outlined. Although some continuity is achieved through an association of ideas ... a series of contrasts ... or by catchwords ... the line of thought is rambling and disjointed.... It is possible that the compiler of this collection purposely disjointed what were once whole paragraphs of thought and distributed the pieces in various places in this work.

In his lengthier introduction in *The Coptic Gnostic Library*, Isenberg gives various examples of the way in which the compiler disjointed his source material. He believes an author, as opposed to a compiler, cannot have been responsible for such an action.

Though not impossible, it is certainly unnatural and unexpected for an author to dismember the continuity of thought his literary work possesses and to distribute the pieces variously, especially in such a way that an isolated segment of thought will make little or no sense in the context in which it occurs.

This statement begs the question of what did motivate the compiler. In 1968 Isenberg suggests that this may have been 'to heighten the effect of the mysterious',<sup>41</sup> but he does not discuss this question in the introductions, nor the question why an author – as opposed to a compiler – could not have wanted to achieve such a mysterious effect. He does, however, discuss the sources of the compiler:

Because of the contents of the GPh and the literary types it displays, it is probable that the compiler-editor has taken his excerpts chiefly, if not entirely, from a Christian Gnostic sacramental catechesis. The work offers explanations for sacramental rites of initiation, discusses the meaning of sacred names, especially the names of Jesus, and provides paraenetic material about the ideal life of the initiated. It gives exegesis of biblical passages, makes use of typology, both historical and sacramental, and in expected catechetical fashion argues often on the basis of analogy and parable. In these and other ways the GPh resembles the orthodox Christian catecheses of the second to fourth centuries, as exemplified in the writings of Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, Ambrose, Gregory of Nyssa, Cyril of Jerusalem, John Chryostom, and Theodore of Mopsuestia.

It is possible that a small part of the work's contents may have been excerpted from a Gnostic gospel.... But material like this could also derive from a Gnostic catechesis ...

In Isenberg's opinion the original author can still be heard:

Because the compiler-editor intervenes chiefly in the selection and arrangement of material, the voice of the original author (as distinct from the later compiler) can still be heard. He speaks as a catechist to catechumens preparing for the initiation rite. He expounds for them the meaning of the scriptures, addresses them as members of a

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<sup>41</sup> Isenberg (1968), *Philip*, p 53; quoted by Turner (1996), *Philip*, p 33.

closed community. Twice ... he uses the second person singular to describe the experience of the individual initiate. He carries on a polemic against 'some who say' things he opposes ... but who are not present in his classroom to respond.

Curiously, he sees the nearest relation in a work of a completely different nature:

The genre of the GPh may thus be designated a collection of excerpts, a kind of florilegium. It resembles most the *Excerpta ex Theodoto*, transmitted with the works of Clement of Alexandria.

Certainly, the excerpts (henceforth *ExcTh*) have a superficial resemblance but that still does not give them resemblance in genre. *ExcTh* is probably an unfinished product, collected by Clement – sometimes with notes – as preparation for a future refutation. Christoph Marksches remarks that this document only received its title (ἐπιτομή) in an 11<sup>th</sup> century copy:<sup>42</sup>

The work is thus a fragmentary counter-commentary rather than an epitome.... The contamination of perhaps four different Valentinian sources may best fit the genre 'ἐπιτομή', but the Excerpta are not a particularly characteristic specimen of the genre.

### 3.1.2 Layton's isolated excerpts

Layton produced the critical text edition for Isenberg's translation in *The Coptic Gnostic Library*. But elsewhere, in the introduction to his own translation, Layton takes a different approach to the source material than Isenberg:<sup>43</sup>

The work called *The Gospel according to Philip* is a Valentinian anthology containing some one hundred short excerpts taken from various other works. None of the sources of these excerpts have been identified, and they apparently do not survive. To judge from their style and content, they were sermons, treatises, or philosophical epistles (typical Valentinian genres), as well as collected aphorisms or short dialogues with comments. Only some of the sources can be identified as definitely Valentinian.

Because probably more than one Valentinian theological perspective is represented in GPh, it would be misleading to reconstruct a single theological system from the whole anthology. Rather, individual groups of excerpts can profitably be studied in isolation, with comparison of other works or fragments of Valentinianism or of classic gnosticism.

Nevertheless, a certain number of keywords and themes ... strikingly recur in many of the excerpts. They indicate the particular interest of the ancient compiler, who was especially concerned with theology of sacraments (possibly baptism most of all). With due caution, they can be used to identify excerpts that belong together.

Because Layton assumes various sources, and only a few of them demonstrably Valentinian, he consistently argues that one excerpt cannot be used to explain another, unless the case can be made that they came from the same source. But the more sources one assumes, the more surprising it is that none of them have survived. There are no excerpts – as opposed to possible allusions – from other documents found at Nag Hammadi. How is this possible? Were the Nag Hammadi documents later than *GPhil*, were they unknown, or were they considered to be less authoritative than the sources quoted by *GPhil* (which have since all disappeared)?

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<sup>42</sup> Marksches (1997), 'Valentinian Gnosticism', p 433.

<sup>43</sup> Layton (1987), *Gnostic Scriptures*, p 325.

Layton does not explain why these excerpts were brought together. If it were a simple notebook, we would expect that a number of excerpts would come first from one source, then another. But that is clearly not the case with *GPhil*, where very similar texts are found in various parts of the work. Like Isenberg, Layton refers to *ExcTh* as if they belonged to the same genre of ‘Valentinian anthology’.<sup>44</sup> Published anthologies were often rearranged in line with the purpose of the anthology, for example to amuse, to instruct or to make the audience acquainted with a certain topic or writer.<sup>45</sup> A collection as such is therefore not yet a ‘genre’, in the sense that a common set of conventions rules the interactions of author, text and reader. A published collection of mystic sayings and a private notebook with excerpts from and comments on rival theologians cannot be said to belong to the same genre.

### 3.1.3 Turner’s detailed collection hypothesis

Martha Lee Turner has to date produced the most detailed argument for *GPhil* as a collection.<sup>46</sup> In a summary presentation of her dissertation she explains why many scholars have reached diverging and often opposing conclusions about *GPhil* or elements thereof:<sup>47</sup>

Many assessments have either stopped with a description of the features of the text, or have postulated a compositional process on the basis of a few features, and then moved on to whatever sort of interpretation that process would warrant. The problem is not, however, that investigators have been too speculative, but that speculations have neither been carefully (enough) framed nor carefully (enough) tested. A satisfactory theory about the formation of *The Gospel according to Philip* should:

- be based on very carefully observed characteristics of the text
- hypothesize a process or processes by which such characteristics could have come about
- explore the implications of that process, and test each implication against the observed characteristics of the work and as many external factors as possible.

The following characteristics she sees as ‘reasonably non-controversial’:

- short units that seem capable of functioning independently
- seemingly random sequences of units without discernible connections
- sequences connected through catchword associations and analogous development
- irregularly recurring themes and metaphors
- sectarian terminology and conflicting or divergent usages of terms like Jew and Hebrew

She describes how in Graeco-Roman culture many of the educated elite excerpted the works they had read. Some of them reorganized and published these collections. Turner analyzed another nine collections from antiquity (four with wisdom maxims, two with poetry, two for educated ‘distraction’, and one private scholarly notebook). She finds that some of their characteristics and organizing principles can also be observed in *GPhil*. From her overview she draws the following conclusion:

<sup>44</sup> ‘GPh is not the only Valentinian anthology to survive, for among the works attributed to the late-second-century intellectual St. Clement (Titus Flavius Clemens) of Alexandria is a collection of excerpts from writings of the theologian Theodotus, known as Clement’s *Excerpts from Theodotus*’, p 325.

<sup>45</sup> A purpose was often stated explicitly, cf. Proverbs 1:1-2 (to learn wisdom), Logion 1 of *The Gospel of Thomas* (to find life), and the preface to Aulus Gellius’ *Attic Nights* (to entertain and teach his children).

<sup>46</sup> Turner (1996), *Philip*.

<sup>47</sup> Turner (1997), ‘Coherence’.

The congruence of *The Gospel according to Philip* with the characteristics of this continuum suggests that the work is a notebook which has been rearranged a little, to conform to the aesthetic of an even texture without excessively large blocks of any one author, source or subject...

But Turner's evidence can also be interpreted in another way. According to her table on page 254, *GPhil* shares only four out of 27 'characteristics and organizing principles' with *ExcTh*. The situation is not much better with the other collections that she surveyed.<sup>48</sup> We should instead conclude that each collection shares only a limited number of features with any other collection, *unless they belong to the same culture and genre*, like Greek poetry anthologies or Egyptian instruction collections. Secondly, there is no 'control group' in Turner's study. Perhaps other types of documents exhibit some of these features as well. The synoptic gospels, for example, with their short pericopes from different sources, share more of her 'characteristics and organizing principles' with *GPhil* than *ExcTh*.<sup>49</sup> Her analysis, therefore, does not prove that *GPhil* is any sort of notebook. On the contrary, her analysis helps us to realize that a collection is not in itself a genre, and that the conventions that rule a poetry anthology are not at all comparable to those of Pliny's notebooks or a document of wisdom maxims.

Turner realizes that there must be a purpose behind a collection to characterize it. She suggests that the collector of *GPhil* wished to produce a 'sourcebook for speculation'. She argues on page 117:

... that the jostling and jarring of contradictory and divergent opinions within *The Gospel according to Philip* is an aspect of the potential which its collector saw in its diverse materials, and that an interest in such provocative juxtapositions as we find there is intelligible within the religious and intellectual context of Gnostic speculation.

Turner means that the collection has been brought together in order to stimulate new speculations and myths, as yet unknown to the compiler. She quotes Irenaeus to demonstrate that gnostic Christians had relatively free use of various sources and concepts to produce their own myths and teachings. But Irenaeus argues this regarding gnostic Christian thinking in general, not because he knew of sourcebooks for speculation. In fact, Turner presents no definitive proof that such notebooks ever existed.<sup>50</sup>

Turner is correct in that there must be various sources behind *GPhil*, sometimes deriving from different, even conflicting, traditions. But that does not only apply to collections, but also instructions, homilies, and many other genres. In addition, the use of words like Jew and Hebrew in different senses is not evidence in itself. We see this usage occurring throughout early Christian literature. In chapter 2.2.2 above, I agreed with Turner's identification of a major caesura before §110. She believes that this

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<sup>48</sup> The total number of features is 27; 11 of these are found in *GPhil*. The overlap of these 11 features with the other works is as follows: *Pirqe Avoth* 2, Plutarch 2, *Garland of Philip* 3, *Excerpta ex Theodoto* 4, *Garland of Meleager* 6, *Instruction of Ankhsheshonq* 6, *Instruction of P. Insinger* 6, *Sentences of Sextus* 6, and Aulus Gellius' *Attic Nights* 7. For reference: the number of shared features between the two Egyptian Instructions is 10 out of 12.

<sup>49</sup> Like *GPhil*, the *Gospel of Matthew* can be said to have (1) a compiled intro, (2) attributions of origin removed from source material, (3) relatively short units, (4) inclusions of some longer units, (5) variation in unit size, (6) a few motif clusters, and (7) some thematic sequences.

<sup>50</sup> Turner could have mentioned the *Gospel of Thomas* as a specimen of this genre. I suppose that she does not do so, because that *Thomas* uses enigmatic sayings to bring the reader to a truth the author already knows, whereas Turner believes that *GPhil* was also intended to stimulate speculation of a truth to be further discover also by the compiler himself.

indicates that two collections were joined together, but she does not explain why. If the compiler added the second collection, it is difficult to see why he did not rearrange this lengthy addition as he had supposedly done with the other sources. If two independent collections were joined together later, we need to answer the question why these two sections, although certainly different, resemble one another more than they resemble any other piece of ancient literature.

The idea that here we have a collection derived from various sources brings Turner to the same conclusion as Layton:

The importance of these findings for the interpretation of *The Gospel according to Philip* is obvious. If there was no one author, and if the materials derive from multiple communities of faith, we cannot talk meaningfully of the document's position, its author's beliefs, or its community's practices (although, of course these are all possible approaches to material from any one source within it). Unless redactional contributions can be clearly identified and isolated, we cannot talk of the 'redactor's meaning' either. (p 255)

But what if there was indeed a single author behind all this, who paraphrased and quoted other sources and in addition wrote and rewrote material himself? Turner does not devote much effort to disproving Isenberg's idea that all of the material could have come from one single baptismal instruction. She only demonstrates that Isenberg's arguments do not necessarily prove his position. She does not actually explore how other genres, most notably that of a baptismal instruction, might have produced these results.<sup>51</sup>

#### 3.1.4 *The development of Schenke's position*

Schenke introduced the division of *GPhil* into 127 paragraphs in 1959. From the outset his enumeration was connected to the idea that the work is a *florilegium*. In 1990, in his introduction (in Schneemelcher's *Neutestamentliche Apokryphen*), he finds that this has become the scholarly consensus:

Es sieht jetzt aber so aus, als habe sich im Laufe der weiteren Arbeit an der Erschließung des EvPhil (besonders Isenberg, Layton) die Auffassung vom Florilegiums- bzw Anthologiecharakter des Textes bestätigt und als sei sie bereits im Begriff, sich allgemein durchzusetzen. Isenberg und Layton verweisen dabei – wie vor ihnen schon Wilson – auf die Excerpta ex Theodoto des Clemens von Alexandria als die nächste formale Parallele.

He proceeds to describe the various types of paragraphs and agrees with Isenberg that they seem to be disjointed and rearranged in the final product:

Was in diesem Florilegium gesammelt worden ist, sind teils kürzere, teils längere theologische Aussagen zu Fragen der Sakramente und der Ethik. Sie stehen unvermittelt, oder nur durch Ideenassoziation bzw. Stichwortanschluß verbunden, nebeneinander, gelegentlich sogar ohne expliziten Bezugspunkt, und repräsentieren ihrerseits ganz verschiedene Textsorten mit ihren unterschiedlichen Stilen: Aphorismus, Logion, Vergleich, Bildwort, Gleichnis, Paränese, Polemik, Exegese, Abhandlung. Dabei scheint nicht selten ursprünglich and sachlich

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<sup>51</sup> Only in an aside on p 178 does Turner (incorrectly) dismiss the idea of a baptismal instruction on the basis of the distribution of sacramental references. I will return to this point at the end of chapter 3.2.3 below.

Zusammengehöriges – aus welchen Gründen auch immer (Isenberg hält es für den Absicht des Kompilators) – auseinandergerissen zu sein.

He notes that even if these excerpts had come from various sources, they nevertheless were used by Valentinian communities. In other words, the excerpts are Valentinian or at least inspiring for Valentinians:

Es ist ein gnostischer, und zwar ein valentinianischer Text: von einem Valentinianer für Valentinianer kompiliert, geschöpft aus Werken, von denen viele, wenn nicht alle (wie Layton voraussetzt) valentinianisch waren, als Evangelium benutzt zunächst von valentinianischen Gemeinden. Gleichwohl ist er nur in dem Maße und Grade valentinianisch, wie es bei einem Text solcher Sorte, also bei einer Anthologie, möglich ist.

He allows for several trends within the source material, perhaps even from various Valentinian and non-Valentinian schools:

Wiewohl also von valentinianischem Charakter, läßt sich das EvPhil aber (seiner Natur gemäß) nicht auf eine bestimmte valentinianische Schule zurückführen und festlegen. Seine valentinianischen Exzerpte mögen aus Werken verschiedener Schulen zusammengetragen sein. Auch müssen nicht alle gnostische Elemente, die sich in ihm finden, valentinianisch sein. Man hat vielmehr von vornherein damit zu rechnen, daß auch Gedankengut anderer gnostischer Richtungen mit in das EvPhil eingeflossen ist, wie es ja sehr bald von nicht-valentinianischen Gnostikern gebraucht werden konnte.

At this stage, Schenke accepts Isenberg's idea of a single baptismal instruction as the source of these excerpts only as a 'Grenzhypothese':

Wie weit das literarische Feld war, auf dem diese Blüten gepflückt worden sind, ist natürlich unbekannt. Aber es verdient als Grenzhypothese festgehalten zu werden, was Isenberg zu dieser Frage erwägt, nämlich daß es durchaus möglich ist, daß fast alle diese Exzerpte bloß aus einem einzigen Werk stammen, das dann eine umfangreiche christlich-gnostische Sakramentskatechese gewesen sein müßte.

Although quite familiar with Turner's work, in his 1997 commentary Schenke moves in the opposite direction to Turner.<sup>52</sup> Isenberg's standpoint is no longer sidelined in a 'Grenzhypothese' but has become the cornerstone of his exegesis:

Während der Beschäftigung mit dem EvPhil über die Jahre und während der vorbereitenden Sondierungen für dieses Buch hat sich meine Auffassung vom Wesen des EvPhil unter dem Einfluß von Isenberg (und Layton) in zwei wesentlichen Punkten geändert bzw. konkretisiert.

Der erste ist, daß, wenn das EvPhil schon ein Florilegium bzw. eine Anthologie ist, diese nicht notwendig aus vielen Schriften zusammengetragen worden sein muß, sondern im wesentlichen aus einer einzigen stammen kann.

Der zweite Punkt ist praktisch nur die andere Seite von ein und derselben Idee Isenbergs, nach dem diese Hauptquelle ein Text war, der dem Typ der späteren Taufkatechesen entspricht, womit der Gedanke gegeben ist, daß alles, was im EvPhil gesagt wird, einzig und allein um den Sachverhalt von Bekehrung und Initiation kreist und also auch die Sakramente, von denen über Taufe und Salbung hinaus gehandelt wird, auch Teile ein und desselben großen Initiationsrituals sein müßten.

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<sup>52</sup> In her preface Turner thanks Schenke for reading and annotating an early version of her text.

... Und die andere Seite derselben Sache ist nun, daß ausgerechnet ich selbst, der ich bei manchen in dem Ruf stehe, das EvPhil gegen seine Natur durch die Paragrapheneinteilung ‘zerhackt’ zu haben, mich nun um die Erkenntnis des inneren Zusammenhang all dieser Teile zu mühen habe.

In his detailed analysis and commentary, Schenke proves that the individual paragraphs in *GPhil* can fruitfully be interpreted as belonging to a single baptismal instruction. In this he agrees with Isenberg. But he does not discuss Isenberg’s suggestion that the compiler rearranged the excerpts. In the next section, I will consider an alternative scenario: is it possible that the excerpts or notes follow the order of the original work?

## 3.2 The structure of baptismal instructions

The structure of gnostic or mainstream Christian baptismal instructions has developed over time. Unfortunately, there is little information about the structure of such instructions in the second and third centuries CE (the period in which *GPhil* originated). But we can understand the scarce references better, if we take into account the formative influences that resulted in the well-known instructions of the fourth century.

### 3.2.1 Formative influences

In this section I will discuss four contributaries to Christian baptism. John the Baptist started with a ritual that marked a renewed dedication of Israelites to their God. As Gentile believers came to join the early Church the ritual assumed characteristics of the conversion ritual of Jewish proselytes. In the second and third centuries the Christians in their Graeco-Roman context developed their initiation ritual along the same lines as contemporary mystery religions and philosophical schools.

*A Jewish baptismal ritual.* Jesus and his followers were baptised by John the Baptist. Jesus’ disciples continued this practice.<sup>53</sup> John’s message seems to have been both eschatological and ethical.<sup>54</sup> The required response was conversion (in lifestyle) and confession of sins, upon which people were baptised in the Jordan or other streams spilling forth from wells. Although John had pupils (like Jesus and Peter), his baptism was open to any believing Jew. In this sense, we are talking about a movement and not a sect. Jesus had a core group of followers who travelled with him and maintained a communal purse. There was also a wider group of sympathizers and followers with whom Jesus shared communal meals.

After Jesus’ death, his followers continued to baptise, perhaps even more so than before his death. Some instruction preceded the baptism.<sup>55</sup> The instruction seems to have included information about the coming of God’s reign, about Christ, and about his commandments.<sup>56</sup> The status of Christ was apparently added to John’s

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<sup>53</sup> John 3:26, Acts 1:22, 19:3.

<sup>54</sup> Matthew 3:1-12, Mark 1:1-8, Luke 3:3-17. Note that the element of forerunner may have received more emphasis in these Christian reports. Josephus, in *Antiquities* 18, explicitly confirms the ethical part (117), and implicitly the potentially ‘revolutionary’ aspect of John’s preaching (118). See also Gibson (2004), *John*.

<sup>55</sup> In the book of Acts baptisms often follow a single conversation about Christ. This may have worked out quite differently in practice, but it does make clear that the author of Acts believed that the early church did not require an elaborate framework of instructions prior to baptism.

<sup>56</sup> Cf Acts 2:14-41, Acts 8:5/36, and Matthew 28:19-20.

eschatological and ethical teaching. As the later gloss in Acts 8:37 indicates, it appears that after a while the confession of sins lost its central position to a confession of faith:

36. ...and the eunuch said, 'Look, here is water! What is to prevent me from being baptized?'

37. And Philip said: 'If you believe with all your heart, you may.'

And he replied: 'I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.'

A number of Jesus' followers in Jerusalem seem to have started out with some form of community. Those who were admitted to the community submitted to baptism and shared in the meals and prayers. People brought possessions for shared use by the community.<sup>57</sup> The model for this type of community may have been comparable to that of the Essenes, who also shared communal property.<sup>58</sup> The description by Josephus shows affinities with the *Rule of the Community* found at Qumran in various manuscripts.<sup>59</sup> According to this document, a new member was admitted in three phases. In the first year he had no access to communal immersions for purification nor was he allowed to partake in the meals. In the second year he was allowed to attend the purifications, but not the meals, and his possessions were put in the care of the community.<sup>60</sup> After the second year, he was permitted to attend the meals as well and his property was integrated with that of the community. During those first two years, the new member was both instructed and tested in his insights as well as his adherence to the law and community rules (6:13-23). The 'covenant' was renewed annually by all the members (2:19). The (frequent) purification through immersion was held ineffective for 'anyone who declines to enter':<sup>61</sup>

He will not become clean ... nor shall he be purified by all the water of ablution.... For it is by the spirit of the true counsel of God that are atoned the paths of man, all his iniquities, so that he can look at the light of life.... And by the compliance of his soul with all the laws of God his flesh is cleansed by being sprinkled with cleansing water and being made holy with the waters of repentance.

The gradually imparted information (9:12-19) included instruction on the nature of the sons of man and their eschatological reward (3:13-15), when God will cleanse the righteous, as with 'lustral water' (4:20-22). New recruits could 'revert to the truth and shun all injustice', and they were taught 'all the precepts of the Community' (6:15).

*Proselyte baptism.* Several questions had to be dealt with when non-Jews were admitted to the community of Jesus' followers. Could they be admitted without first becoming Jews? After some debate, it appears that they were not required to become

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<sup>57</sup> Acts 2:42-46, although this may have been just one short-lived form of Christian community.

<sup>58</sup> *Jewish War* 2.119-161 and *Antiquities* 18.18-22; cf. also Philo's *Contemplative Life*, which Eusebius read as a description of a Christian monastery (*History* 2.17).

<sup>59</sup> 1QS plus 10 fragments from cave four. Fragment 4Q259 seems to represent the oldest extant version and has been dated to the end of the second century BCE. See García Martínez and Van der Woude, *De Rollen van de Dode Zee*, pp 182-219.

<sup>60</sup> An ostracoon found at Khirbet Qumran in 1996 by James F. Strange confirms that upon entry the actual contribution was indeed recorded and archived. The find was dated to 20-68 CE and published by Frank Moore Cross and Esther Eshel in *Israel Exploration Journal* 47, 1997, see Flusser (1997), 'Ostracoon'.

<sup>61</sup> 3:4-9; translations from García Martínez and Tigchelaar (1997/98), *Dead Sea Scrolls*. The relationship between internal and external cleansing is also found in Josephus' description of John the Baptist (*Antiquities* 18.117) and I Peter 3:21.

Jews but could be saved as ‘resident aliens’.<sup>62</sup> That means that they were supposed to live as righteous Gentiles, more or less according to the rules for the *gerim* in Leviticus, later known as the Noachide Commandments. What did they have to learn upon admission? Huub van de Sandt and David Flusser argue that a Jewish ethical instruction is used in the *Didache* (which may be early second century CE or even late first century):<sup>63</sup>

The introductory clause of the instruction with regard to the proper wording and correct practice for the ritual of baptism (‘Having said all this beforehand’) is likely to indicate that the previous Two Way teaching was used as a catechetical instruction preceding Christian baptism....<sup>64</sup>

There is no doubt that pre-baptismal instruction was given to adults before the actual rite of baptism and the same procedure applied to Jewish immersions of proselytes. Perhaps it suffices to conclude that the later lines of demarcation between catechetical instruction and liturgical celebration were not drawn so sharply in the first century.

In the first centuries CE, rabbinic Judaism developed a consensus regarding the requirements of proselytes upon conversion. As Shaye Cohen rightly observes, this proselyte baptism is not a mystical initiation.<sup>65</sup> It is a legal regulation for the admission of Gentiles into the community of Jews. In the Babylonian Talmud, tractate *Yevamot* 47a-b, and in *Gerim* 1:1, can be found the following six elements, including three instructions:

- presentation and examination
  1. preliminary instruction:
    - a. commandments
    - b. punishment for neglect of the poor
    - c. punishment for eating forbidden foods and violating the sabbath
    - d. reward of the righteous in the world to come
- circumcision (males only)<sup>66</sup>
- immersion
  2. instruction during immersion: some of the commandments<sup>67</sup>
  3. exhortation after immersion: congratulations, hope and comfort

D.A. Fiensy and D.R. Darnell believe that second and third century CE Hellenist synagogal prayers have been preserved in the *Apostolic Constitutions*.<sup>68</sup> They identify 7.39.2-4 as an outline for catechetical instruction,<sup>69</sup> and 8.6.5-8 as a prayer on behalf of catechumens. They translate the outline as follows:

Let the one who is to be instructed in piety be taught before baptism: knowledge concerning the unbegotten God [...<sup>70</sup>]. Let him learn the order of a distinguished

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<sup>62</sup> Acts 15. Cf Barret (1998), *Acts*, on this chapter 15, and Bockmuehl (2000), *Jewish Law*, chapter 7.

<sup>63</sup> Van de Sandt and Flusser, *Didache* (2002), pp 280-281.

<sup>64</sup> The *Jewish Two-Way* document; also preserved in pseudo-Barnabas (about 130 CE).

<sup>65</sup> Cohen (1999), *Beginnings of Jewishness*, chapter 7, p 234.

<sup>66</sup> Not mentioned in *Gerim*.

<sup>67</sup> The instruction was spoken while the candidate was immersed to his or her neck (and the water covered all private parts).

<sup>68</sup> In: Charlesworth (1985), *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, Volume 2, p 671f.

<sup>69</sup> I note that it is not unlike the approach taken in Augustine’s preliminary catechism, *De catechizandis rudibus* 18-25; around 400 CE this was an instruction prior to being admitted as a catechumen. It was not yet the instruction prior to baptism.

<sup>70</sup> Fiensy and Darnell identify the clause between brackets, which I omitted, as a Christian addition (‘understanding concerning the only begotten son, and full assurance concerning the Holy Spirit.’).

creation, the sequence of providence, the judgment seats of different legislation, why the world came to be and why man was appointed a world citizen. Let him understand his own nature, of what sort it is. Let him be educated in how God punished the wicked by water and fire, and glorified the saints in each generation: I mean Seth, Enos, Enoch, Noah, Abraham and his descendants, Melchisedek, Job, Moses, both Joshua and Caleb, Phinehas the priest, and the holy ones in each generation. And how God, though he foresaw, did not abandon the race of men, but summoned them at various times from error and folly into the understanding of truth, leading them from servitude and impiety to freedom and piety, from iniquity into righteousness, from eternal death into everlasting life. Let the one who offers himself learn during his instruction these things and those that are related to them.

*Mysteries.* In the second century, Christianity changed from a movement among Jews and god-fearers into a separate Graeco-Roman cult dominated by non-Jews.<sup>71</sup> As the movement grew, it created permanent meeting rooms in dwellings, sometimes with an additional room for baptism like the one found at Dura Europos (see the picture on the cover page.<sup>72</sup> Their communal meals and baptismal ceremonies reminded Greeks and Romans of the mystery religions that were also gaining popularity around the Mediterranean. In fact, the similarities were so striking that Justin Martyr claimed that the mystery cults, such as Mithraism, had copied their rites from (prophesies about) Christianity.<sup>73</sup> As in Christianity the initiates had been ritually cleansed and celebrated sacred meals. The model for many new cults was the cult of Demeter enacted annually in Eleusis.<sup>74</sup> Because this cult was linked to that city and a particular time of the year, it could not itself be exported. But it did provide the model for the development of other cults, such as of Isis and Dionysus.<sup>75</sup> Initiates first submitted to a period of fasting and purification. Then the initiation rituals took place at night, when the people were hungry and tired (which probably intensified the experience). During enactment of the mysteries, a mystagogue retold the myth and explained the rites. Prayers, rituals and simple representative objects were used to relive the myth. The newly initiated had to keep everything secret so that the rituals would remain mysterious for those to be initiated later on.

We can recognize the atmosphere of late-antique mysticism also in mainstream Christianity. Around 200 CE, Tertullian favours Easter and Pentecost as the best dates for baptism because of their symbolic value in the re-enactment of Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection.<sup>76</sup> This is not unlike the re-enactment of the Demeter story in Eleusis at the correct time of year. Later in the third century, the *Apostolic Tradition* specifies that initiands should fast and spend the night before baptism awake, listening to the final instructions (20:9). About then, the mystagogue also explained the mysteries themselves (23:4).<sup>77</sup>

*Philosophy.* In that same period, the second century, Christianity began attracting intellectuals familiar with the traditions of philosophical schools. In antiquity,

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<sup>71</sup> For an overview, see Burkert (1987) *Ancient Mystery Cults*, Turcan (1989) *Cultes orientaux*, and Cosmopoulos (2003) *Greek Mysteries*. Burkert argues that these cults should be researched in their own right, and not merely in their relationship to Christianity as was done by Angus (1924), *Mystery-Religions*, Reitzenstein (1927) *Mysterienreligionen*. Cf also Tripolitis (2002), *Religions*.

<sup>72</sup> Described by White (2000), 'Architecture', p 713.

<sup>73</sup> Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho* 70. Worshippers of Mithras came together in small cult groups in natural or artificial caves. These men (women were not allowed) shared meals and rituals. Cf. Clauss (1990) *Mithras*.

<sup>74</sup> Cf. Mylonas (1961) *Eleusis*, and Kerényi (1967) *Eleusis*.

<sup>75</sup> Cf. Witt (1971) *Isis*, and Kerényi (1976) *Dionysus*.

<sup>76</sup> Tertullian, *Baptism* 19.

<sup>77</sup> See also chapter 6.3.4 below.

philosophy and religion were not separate. Philosophy was all about learning to live and think wisely, including the metaphysical aspects of life. Entering a school of philosophy was often not unlike entering a religious order, with dietary rules and communal meals. Neo-Pythagorism and Middle Platonism regarded knowledge of God as the ultimate goal of life and thought. Pythagoreans demanded years of preliminary study and the adoption of a particular lifestyle before initiating pupils into the mysteries of this philosophy. Justin Martyr, in his *Dialogue with Trypho*, tells us how he explored several philosophies from various schools of thought before finding Christianity. He remained a philosopher but established a Christian school. The idea of Christianity as a school of thought is also found in Galen (around 200 CE). But Galen accused Christians of accepting everything on faith instead of (rational) philosophical argument. Nevertheless, he acknowledged that Christianity was surprisingly effective at inducing a philosophical lifestyle, something for which the mystery cults were not renowned.<sup>78</sup>

Most people are unable to follow any demonstrative argument consecutively; hence they need parables, and benefit from them ... just as now we see the people called Christians drawing their faith from parables and miracles and yet sometimes acting in the same way [as those who philosophize]. For they include not only men but also women who refrain from cohabiting all through their lives; and they also number individuals who, in self-discipline and self-control in matters of food and drink, and in their keen pursuit of justice, have attained a pitch not inferior to that of genuine philosophers.

Galen does not mean that philosophers disregarded the mysteries, but they were rather seen as something appealing to pathos instead of logic. Philosophers did not expect initiatory discourse to meet the requirements of logical proof. Aristotle is reported to have said that those who are being initiated are not to learn anything but to experience something and be put in a certain condition.<sup>79</sup>

### 3.2.2 *The structure of Christian baptismal instructions*

As we will see, each of these formative elements left its marks on early Christians baptismal instruction. We can recognize ethical, mystical and metaphysical elements. The question is now whether there developed a recognizable structure, with which we can compare *GPhil*. Unfortunately however, like the *hieros logos* of the mystery cults, baptismal instructions were not published in the second and third centuries, – at least not their mystagogical parts.<sup>80</sup> We only get a clear view on them in the fourth century. When the church became favoured by the imperial authorities, an enormous influx of new converts had to be accommodated. Younger and smaller churches, with inexperienced priests and bishops, requested support from ancient Sees, in order to give proper instruction to their candidates. As a result, churches in Antioch, Milan

<sup>78</sup> Translation Walzer, *Galen* 15-16 (Arabic excerpt from Galen's lost summary of Plato's *Republic*) in: Grant (2003), *Second Century*, p 12.

<sup>79</sup> See Synesius, *Dio*, 1133: 'For the sacred matter (contemplation) is not like attention belonging to knowledge, or an outlet of mind, nor is it like one thing in one place and another in another. On the contrary - to compare small and greater - it is like Aristotle's view that men being initiated have not a lesson to learn, but an experience to undergo and a condition into which they must be brought, while they are becoming fit (for revelation).'

<sup>80</sup> As Cyril of Jerusalem put it to his initiands: 'It is not our custom to explain these mysteries, which the Church now explains to you who are leaving the class of catechumens, to Gentiles. For we do not explain to a gentile the mysteries of Father, Son and Holy Ghost, nor do we speak clearly to catechumens about the mysteries. But many things we often speak about in a veiled way, so that the believers who know may understand, and they who do not know may not be harmed.' *Catechetical Lectures* 6.29 (NPNF II vol 7, p 42, with minor modifications).

and Jerusalem set their instructions down in written form and had this material duplicated for wider use. These publications reflect the state of baptismal instructions as presented in the fourth century.

Cyril of Jerusalem has left us a condensed report of his baptismal instructions given annually at Easter. From the pilgrim's diary of Egeria we know that giving such instructions in the Jerusalem church could take several hours. There was ample time for prayer, exorcism, anointment, singing, bible-reading, instruction and discussion. The structure of this series of instructions was as follows:

- After a short introductory *Procatechesis* came another seventeen *Catechetical Lectures*, following to a great extent the order of the traditional Jerusalem credo.
- Five *Mystagogical Catecheses* were delivered<sup>81</sup> in the days following baptism. Only the initiated could attend.
- Although no sample text has been left to us, in 351 CE a final exhortation was foreseen, as is announced in the last Catechesis programme summary.<sup>82</sup>

...and at the end of all, how for the time to come you must behave yourselves worthily of this grace both in words and deeds, that you may all be enabled to enjoy the life everlasting.

Gregory of Nyssa's *Great Catechism* (about 385 CE) is not a baptismal instruction itself but a written treatise for catechists, as explained in the prologue. Gregory distinguishes three parts in a baptismal instruction:

- Books 1-32: Depending on the background of the candidates (pagan, gnostic Christian, Manichaeian, etc.) an appropriate set of instructions must be given to persuade them of the apostolic truth. Gregory devotes half of his text to this part, which is obviously the most difficult for inexperienced instructors. He offers examples that the instructors might find useful for each group. The final outcome of this instruction should be the candidate's decision to be baptised.
- Books 33-39: Concerning the ceremonies themselves, mystagogical instructions are needed to guide the candidate's experience and understanding of the mysterious rites (baptism, anointing and the eucharist). In this part, there is no discussion of other religious groups.
- Finally in book 40, Gregory notes the need to repeat ethical instructions to the newly baptised and to exhort them to practise their beliefs. He gives no examples, probably because any priest or bishop would have been delivering sermons to this effect on a regular basis.

From Ambrose of Milan we have only his mystagogical instruction (dated to around 387 CE). These include references to previous instructions given prior to baptism. From John Chryostom we used to know of only two, positively identified, baptismal instructions. However in 1955 additional instructions were discovered that enabled scholars to reconstruct his entire cycle as it was delivered in the years 386-390 CE. Prior to baptism he spoke about faith, after baptism about the mysteries. His friend, Theodore of Mopsuestia, left us two series (dated to around 392 CE), which were discovered in 1932. The first series deals with the credo and announces a later series on the mysteries. Then there is a series covering the *Our Father*, baptism (three

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<sup>81</sup> Some scholars suppose that these instructions are from Cyril's successor John. Alexis James Doval (2001), *Cyril of Jerusalem, Mystagogue*, chapter 2, has recently investigated this question in some detail and concludes that Cyril is the author.

<sup>82</sup> *Catechetical Lectures* 18.33; NPNF II vol 7, p 142.

instructions) and the eucharist (two instructions). It seems that this mystagogical instruction was delivered just before baptism.

In the fourth century, therefore, it seems that baptismal instructions were delivered in three parts. The first part led up to the candidate's final decision. The middle part was mystagogical in nature and concerned the mysteries themselves. The third part was ethical in nature. Jean Daniélou called these parts *explicatio*, *demonstratio*, and *exhortatio*.<sup>83</sup> Can we, however, assume that such a division was in place even earlier?

### *The Instructor by Clement of Alexandria*

Looking back to around 200 CE, there are indications that Clement of Alexandria stood between the largely ethical instruction of the *Didache* and the instructions of the fourth century CE. His three major works<sup>84</sup> seem to address respectively (1) interested Gentiles, (2) those who (have just) become Christians, and (3) those who are Christians. The middle group is addressed in the *Instructor (Paedagogus)*, as Eric Osborn observes:<sup>85</sup>

In the *Paedagogus*, Clement sets out a Christian *katêchêsis*. His programme is described in *Stromateis* 6.1.3. The work is clearly directed towards catechumens and presents a picture of the whole Christian life (paed 2.1.1). In this work Clement brings together the instruction which he has given to catechumens, pointing them on the Christian way and offering a handbook to guide them.

The instruction somehow accompanies baptism:<sup>86</sup>

We are cleansed of all our sins, and are no longer entangled in evil. This is the one grace of illumination, that our characters are not the same as before our cleansing. And since knowledge springs up with illumination, shedding its beams around the mind, the moment we hear, we who were untaught become disciples. Does this, I ask, take place on the advent of this instruction? You cannot tell the time. For instruction leads to faith, and faith with baptism is trained by the Holy Spirit.

In the final sections of the third book of the *Instructor*, it is clear that Clement's catechumens have received a new status. They have been 'translated into the Church' and have been 'united' with the Bridegroom. At that point the work of the paedagogue is finished and the work of the teacher of adults begins.

We find various references to baptism in book 1, and the Eucharist is discussed in book 2, but the main focus in *Instructor*, like in the *Didache*, is on ethical training. This is set out in the introduction to book 1, and it is the main theme of the last two books.

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<sup>83</sup> Daniélou (1960), 'Catéchèse', p 29.

<sup>84</sup> It is clear that his major works stand in some relationship to one another, but how exactly has divided scholarly opinion. Eric Osborn has recently discussed the various proposals:

'The crucial passage in the first chapter of the *Paedagogus* distinguishes between the divine logos who invites men to salvation (*protreptikos*), then guides them to right action and the healing of their passions (*paidagôgos*) and finally teaches, explains and reveals first principles, clarifying symbolic and ultimate statements (*didaskalikos*).' Osborne (2005), *Clement*, p 5.

The first two works can be recognized from their titles: *Exhortation to the Greeks (Protrepticus)* and *Instructor (Paidagogus)*. The question has always been whether the *Miscellanies (Stromateis)* are the same as this 'Didascalus'.

<sup>85</sup> Osborne (2005), *Clement*, p 14, referring to the study of U. Neymeyr (Leiden, 1989), *Die christlichen Lehrer im zweiten Jahrhundert*, p 58.

<sup>86</sup> *Instructor* 1.6 (1.30.2); ANF vol 2, p 216-217.

Finally, there are notes of postbaptismal instruction preserved under the title *To the Newly Baptised*, but its ascription to Clement is far from certain.<sup>87</sup> The document contains no sacramental language but summarizes moral instruction for the newly initiated.

### 3.2.3 Comparison with the structure of the Gospel of Philip

In chapter 2.3 I concluded that *GPhil* can be divided into three parts. It seems that this subdivision fits in well with the three-part structure of some mainstream Christian baptismal instructions discussed above in chapter 3.2.2:

- **Part 1.** Prior to baptism the instructor spoke about faith. This part could be tailored to the background of the candidates in order to correct specific misconceptions. Discussion of the actual sacraments was limited; first the candidate had to make his or her final decision.

*Comparison:* As Martha Lee Turner observes, the use of sacramental language is restricted in the first part of *GPhil*, except for in the fourth unit where the rituals of baptism, chrism and eucharist are mentioned. In line with Gregory's *Great Catechism*, the seven units seem focused on convincing a specific audience: people with a Christian background who are to be persuaded of the superiority of a gnostic Christian baptism (see chapter 4.3 below).

- **Part 2.** Shortly before, during or after the ceremonies, mystagogical instructions were given to explain the meaning of the rites. They covered at least the immersion, the anointment and the eucharist. These instructions were only for the newly initiated or those who were to be initiated that very night.

*Comparison:* In the second part of *GPhil* we see that there is open dialogue about the sacraments. In these three units there is little polemic against mainstream Christians; instead, the sacraments are discussed at length.

- **Part 3.** A short exhortation might follow baptism. This exhortation might take place after the eucharist was celebrated. Other people could be present; therefore the sacraments were not discussed.

*Comparison:* As Turner observes, almost all the exhortation in *GPhil* is located in the last part of the text, following a major stylistic caesura. This part seems more like a homily, as the paragraphs are longer and easier to comprehend.

Let me now return to Martha Lee Turner's rebuttal of Isenberg's idea of excerpts from a baptismal instruction. In her discussion of a table on page 179, 'The Distribution of Sacramental References in *The Gospel according to Philip*', Turner states:

A glance at this table should put to rest any claims that the majority of the material in *The Gospel according to Philip* is sacramental in nature, or that the work as whole – as distinct from some of its sources – is some kind of sacramental catechesis. (p 178)

On the contrary, however, the distribution of sacramental references follows precisely and in detail the distribution pattern of other series of baptismal instructions. All of these concentrate the sacramental references in the mystagogical part. And even the preliminary discussion of the sacraments in the fourth unit of *GPhil*, finds a parallel in

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<sup>87</sup> Quasten (1950), *Patrology* vol 2, p 18, judges the ascription to Clement to be 'possible'; Moreschini and Norelli (2005/1995), *Literature*, p 226, include the fragment among Clement's writings. Young, Ayres and Louth (2004), *Literature*, p 117-118, note its early ascription, but do not include it in their list of works whose ascription to Clement is certain.

the third lecture of Cyril of Jerusalem. Contrary to Turner's own interpretation, her table actually presents a strong argument in favour of the thesis that *GPhil* is structured like a baptismal instruction.

### 3.2.4 Other Gnostic Christian baptismal instructions

Baptismal instruction in gnostic Christian circles developed in the same setting as mainstream Christian baptismal instruction. Valentinus started out with a Christian study group, as a teacher with pupils. At some point in time, followers of Valentinus started to celebrate their own mysteries. According to Tertullian, they took considerable time to persuade and instruct new recruits prior to baptism.<sup>88</sup> During the ritual itself they, like all other mystagogues, must have used initiatory discourse to put their initiates in a certain state and give them the *gnosis* that would change their religious identity. This is well expressed in *ExcTh* 78,2:

It is not only the bathing that liberates, but also the *gnosis*: Who were we, what have we become? Where were we, where were we thrown into? Whereto do we hasten? From where were we stolen? What is birth? What is rebirth?

The 11<sup>th</sup> codex found at Nag Hammadi contains an untitled, badly damaged text now known as *A Valentinian Exposition*. In her introduction in the *Coptic Gnostic Library*, Elaine Pagels suggests it is 'a catechism for initiates "into gnosis," and concludes with prayers related to rites of initiation, baptism and eucharist.' The speaker explains the mystery (22.15) to people who have been initiated or will soon be initiated (22.18). He discusses the Son (23.18 and 24.18) and the revelation that the candidates will enter (23.34). The only-begotten son is the high priest who may enter the Holy of Holies (25.35). He also discusses the crucifixion (33.19). Then follows a lengthy discussion of the problem of creation. The unification of Sophia and Jesus, and that of the angels with the 'seeds', restores the *plerôma* or fullness of God (page 39). Next, there are five supplementary texts regarding the anointing, the water of baptism and the eucharist. Some parts are clearly prayers, others contain explanations. Their close connection to the preceding exposition supports the idea that here we are dealing with fragments of texts actually spoken in preparation for and during rites that included exorcism, anointment, baptism and the eucharist.

Sethian Gnosticism, if this term is to be used, developed a different baptismal practice. Sevrin found the *Gospel of the Egyptians* to be most useful in reconstructing this practice (see 6.4.2 below).<sup>89</sup> The title of the work is listed in the colophon (69.6), which might be a later addition. In the incipit and several other places the work is called the '*hiera biblos* of the Egyptians'. This reminds of the term '*hieros logos*', which is the technical term used by King Ptolemy Philopator when he obliged the initiation priests of Dionysus to hand over a sealed copy of their mystagogical teaching to the authorities. It was sealed in order to preserve its sacred character but the authorities could break the seal in the event of a judicial inquiry.<sup>90</sup> Such a book was not necessarily the (oral) mystagogical instruction but its written basis at least, which included a summary of myth and ritual. Likewise, the *Gospel of the Egyptians* contains the essential elements of Sethian teaching on the origin of the world, salvation and baptism. It also includes several baptismal hymns. John Turner (2000)

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<sup>88</sup> Tertullian, *Against the Valentinians* 1 (1.1-4).

<sup>89</sup> Sevrin (1986), *Dossier Baptismal Séthien*.

<sup>90</sup> Burkert (1987), *Ancient Mystery Cults*, p 70.

suggests ‘it may be that the *Gospel of the Egyptians* was read aloud during the administration of each phase of the ritual’.<sup>91</sup>

In both cases, it seems that, as in the case of Ambrose (chapter 3.2.2 above) only the mystagogical instruction has been preserved that was spoken prior or during the initiation rite.

### 3.3 Notes for instruction

If *GPhil* is to be understood as a baptismal instruction we need to explain (1) why the paragraphs are so condensed and separated, (2) why the often very subtle textual markers reveal sophisticated sub-compositions, and (3) why there is a stylistic difference between the first two parts and the third part. Can Rewolinski’s suggestion, that the paragraphs of *GPhil* are teacher’s notes, or Tripp’s idea that they are a preacher’s sermon notes, explain these features?

#### 3.3.1 Unedited notes

Basically, there are two types of notes. Teachers made notes as *aides-mémoires* and students made notes of what they heard so that they could write up the subject afterwards. Quintillian said that one of the reasons for writing the *Institutio oratoria* was the fact that two books on rhetoric were already circulating under his name. He deplored their quality, as they had been made on the basis of student notes ‘in as much as their pen could follow’ what was spoken. The point is of course that, like many other teachers, Quintillian often did not write down his own lessons (10.7.30) in full but preferred to rely on short loose-leaf memoranda or notebooks. These speaker’s notes might be published later, sometimes in summary, like those of Cicero by his freedman Tiro, sometimes in a well-polished version, like those by Sulpicius.

The situation was no different among early Christians. Although preachers had different working methods, it is clear that speaking from memory was encouraged and that several teachers used memoranda. Structuring techniques like those distinguished in chapter 2 above are highly useful when committing a lengthy text like *GPhil* to memory, even more so when one has to learn a text composed by someone else, as in this situation described by Augustine:

There are, indeed, some men who have a good delivery, but cannot compose anything to deliver. Now if such men take what has been written with wisdom and eloquence by others, and commit it to memory, and deliver it to the people, they cannot be blamed, - on the assumption that they do this without deception.<sup>92</sup>

When a fellow teacher asks Augustine to give him a model for instructing new recruits (*On the Catechising of the Uninstructed*), Augustine takes pains to explain that every case is different. He favours good preparation, but the delivery should always be interactive and responsive to the listeners. If a moment calls for acceleration, digression or a different order of presentation, the teacher must always be prepared to do so.

One reason for not writing down the text in full might be the secrecy attached to the mysteries. The text was meant for teachers only and hence there was no need for

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<sup>91</sup> Turner (2000), *Gnosticism*, p 93.

<sup>92</sup> *On Christian Doctrine* 4.29(63); NPNF I vol 2, p 596.

untrained people to be able to read it. Around 300 CE, Iamblichus describes a similar situation in *On the Pythagorean Way of Life*.<sup>93</sup>

And their dialogues and talks with one another, their memoranda and notes,<sup>94</sup> and further their treatises and all their publications, of which the greater number are preserved until our own times, they did not make readily intelligible to their audience.... But in accord with the 'silence' legislated for them by Pythagoras, they engaged in divine mysteries and methods of instruction forbidden to the uninitiated, and through symbols,<sup>95</sup> they protected their talks with one another and their treatises. And if someone, after singling out the actual symbols, does not explicate them and comprehend them with an interpretation free from mockery, the things said will appear laughable and trivial to ordinary persons, full of nonsense and rambling. When, however, these utterances are explicated in accord with the manner of these symbols, they become splendid and sacred instead of obscure to the many.... And they reveal marvellous thought, and produce divine inspiration in those scholars who have grasped their meaning.<sup>96</sup>

### 3.3.2 *The difference in style between Cyril's instructions and mystagogy*

One example of distinct stylistic differences between parts of a baptismal instruction can be found in Cyril's baptismal instructions. Alexis Doval<sup>97</sup> concludes that the process of publication was different for each part:

- Cyril delivered his *Catechetical Instructions* in the year 351 CE, *ex tempore*. Others took notes and wrote the published version, as is clearly stated at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> lecture. Elements of oral delivery are still recognizable, and it should be taken into account that these are summaries of the extensive and interactive instruction that had taken place.
- These five *Mystagogical Instructions* were delivered in 385 CE. Nevertheless, because of the consistency of the teaching they fit in very well with the series delivered more than thirty years before. They no longer show signs of oral delivery and they are shorter than the previous set. It seems likely that they are a polished version of speaker notes.
- An exhortation was never published. Whereas a moral exhortation is preserved in the *Didache* and in Clement's writings, we find no example in the fourth century instructions aimed at training other teachers. It was perhaps not considered necessary, as exhortation would have been a weekly routine of the addressees. Teachers primarily needed help with the Mystagogy, the most secret part, and in the second place with the explication of the creed, which in the fourth century seems to have become more important as the basis for instruction.

When in pp 50-57 Doval compares the style of Cyril's *Catechetical Instructions* (C) with his *Mystagogical Instructions* (M), he first observes a difference in length and suggests:

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<sup>93</sup> Translation: Dillon and Hershbell (1991), *Iamblichus* ch. 23, pp 127-129.

<sup>94</sup> Here we see the distinction between 'speaker notes' and notes taken by the audience.

<sup>95</sup> Enigmatic sayings like 'walk on paths, avoiding roads travelled by public'.

<sup>96</sup> A remark by Augustine echoes this motif. He noted that some canonical books could contain obscure passages, '... with a view to also throw a veil over the minds of the godless either that they may be converted to piety or shut out from a knowledge of the mysteries', *On Christian Doctrine* 4.8(22); NPNF I vol 2, p 581.

<sup>97</sup> Doval (2001), *Cyril of Jerusalem*, pp 49-52.

One factor that would affect the length of *M* concerns the form of the received text as compared to its original oratorical form.... *M* is more probably in the form of ‘preacher’s notes’ than a transcription of the delivered sermons ... in light of the influence of the *disciplina arcani*, which would have prevented *M* from being recorded when it was delivered or even published in any form for some time....The mystagogue no doubt had some form of written text for his preparation. The text of *M* is too developed to be mere *memoranda*; it seems to fit best the description of notes or a notebook that was studied closely and served as an outline for an expanded and elaborated final delivery....We must realize that the bishop is not, strictly speaking, delivering an oration but conducting a course of instruction during which a certain amount of improvisation could be expected, depending on how receptive the audience is or whether they have questions.... *M* is a basic text of prepared points to deliver, whereas the actual preaching involved handling and improvising as needed (in this sense, the text would be better described as teacher’s, rather than preacher’s notes).

Doval’s second observation concerns the different contents of *C* and *M*, which also have their effect on style:

The rites themselves, then, are the basic content of the sermon in contrast to what could be called the Christian doctrines found in *C*. The interest of the mystagogue is now to draw attention to the rites in a more contemplative than discursive way....The mystagogue stays very close to the actions and images of the rites and enhances the experiential dimension by the regular use of typology and imaginative examples. The apologetic approach found in *C*, which seeks to strengthen the faith of the candidates against Jewish and heretical adversaries, is noticeably missing. Further, the hortatory approach, where Cyril seeks to deepen and reinforce the conviction of listeners by the sheer repetition of examples ... is sharply minimized in *M* so as not to detract from the force of unparalleled experience of the rites themselves.

There are both differences and similarities between *C* and *M*. Doval acknowledges that ‘similarities in content, style or pedagogy may result from the fact that the content of the sermons represents an established annual catechetical syllabus and not just the individual catechist.’ But, on the basis of various additional analyses, Doval concludes that Cyril authored both *C* and *M*; although they were delivered several decades apart and were preserved in different forms. Their common authorship explains their similarities, whereas the variations in time and form explain their differences.

### 3.3.3 *Comparison with the Gospel of Philip*

The suggestion that the *GPhil* consists of notes may explain the enigmatic character and style of the paragraphs, especially if the notes – as with Iamblichus’ Pythagoraeans - were left unedited in order to shield them from the uninitiated.

The stylistic differences observed between Cyril’s instructions and mystagogical lectures can similarly be applied to *GPhil*, where the third part has longer paragraphs and fewer textual markers. Its final part is not tightly structured in terms of repetitive, concentric or progressive patterns. Apart from some inclusions and a recurring agricultural metaphor, its style is looser, possibly homiletic. At the same time, its continuity with the previous parts in terms of imagery and some of the subject matter is undeniable. There is not as much evidence for oral delivery, but that can be explained if the final part is indeed a homily for the entire community rather than an interactive instruction for the candidates for baptism. The first two parts of *GPhil* are

structurally more developed but less developed textually. This suggests that both parts are based on preparatory notes, whereas the third part may consist of notes taken by a listener. It is also possible that a different teacher delivered the third part, or that it was delivered at a different time.

### 3.4 Analysis and conclusions

As I discussed in my review of Turner's study, a collection as such is not a genre. We have to move beyond this designation if we are to discover what the author and the early audiences understood *GPhil* to be. In view of the scholarly discussion to date, I will confine my comparative analysis to the collection hypothesis and the baptismal instruction hypothesis. The question is which genre best explains the origins of *GPhil* and its inclusion in the Nag Hammadi Codex II.

#### 3.4.1 *The original genre of the Gospel of Philip*

Can the collection hypothesis explain how *GPhil* was composed? Turner proposes that we should assume a collector who, over time, jotted down excerpts from various authors and lightly rearranged them. In reading them he (or she) and others were stimulated to speculate about creation, cosmology and salvation. I believe this idea should be abandoned. The existence of such a genre is entirely speculative as we have no other example of it. Secondly, if the collection was drawn from many sources, it is highly problematic that not one of these sources has happened to survive. That the collector decided not to excerpt any of the gnostic Christian works that have survived is equally problematic. Thirdly with this option it makes no sense that the sacramental language is concentrated in the middle part. And finally, Turner believes that the third part was a different collection entirely, but she does not explain why the two collections were linked, or why they resemble each other far more than any other gnostic Christian document.

It is possible to regard the compiler not merely as a collator but as a composer who purposely brought together and rearranged a number of statements for gnostic Christian meditation. This is how most commentators, explicitly or implicitly, have approached the document to date, including those who assume that most of the paragraphs were taken from a baptismal instruction. The composer knows a truth that he wants his audience to discover through (self-)search rather than by spoon-feeding. In that case the composer would have had the same intentions as the one who composed the *Gospel of Thomas*, which opens with the words:

These are the secret sayings which the living Jesus has spoken and which Didymos Judas Thomas has written down. And he said, 'He who finds the interpretation of these sayings will not taste death. (NHC II 32.10-14)

This option is not as beset by problems as the first. The excerpts and statements may come from a limited number of sources as Isenberg and later Schenke also believed. Some may be from composer's own hand. The collection can have been structured into the units observed in chapter 2.2 above. Its enigmatic composition heightens the mysterious effects of the paragraphs as Isenberg suggested. As in the case of the *Gospel of Thomas*, this may have been the composer's objective. But the following questions remain: why does our document have no introduction like the *Gospel of Thomas*, why is the sacramental language concentrated in its middle part, and why

does the last part have such a different style. The collection hypothesis explains none of these features.

In the alternative hypothesis, the document consists of notes for baptismal instruction. Schenke has demonstrated in his commentary that all the paragraphs can be understood as coming from a single baptismal instruction. The structure of *GPhil* fits in generally with the order of baptismal instructions from the fourth century. The textual markers reveal tightly structured sub-compositions that, even if their actual delivery was more flexible, greatly assisted new teachers in committing the material to memory. The sacramental language of a three-part baptismal instruction is concentrated in the middle part, as is typical of the genre. The mystagogical language, even if less mysterious than in the actual oral delivery, is in line with the development of baptism as an initiation into the mysteries. The style of the paragraphs is explainable as the style of preparatory notes. The different style of the third part might be because it was delivered as a homily to the entire community; it may also have been recorded differently.

I conclude that the hypothesis of baptismal instruction explains better and in more detail the present form of *GPhil*.

### 3.4.2 *The genre of the Gospel of Philip in the context of Codex II*

If *GPhil* is a baptismal instruction, we can understand why it was not made ready for publication. In the second and third century baptismal instructions were secret. But when baptismal instructions were published in the fourth century, the notes were written out to the extent that the text became more readily understandable. No other baptismal instruction has come down to us in the form of unedited preparatory notes. So how would readers of the second codex of Nag Hammadi have perceived this work?

Unlike today, the publication, or more precisely the duplication of a document, was not driven by publisher or bookshop but by the interested reader who arranged for a personal copy to be made from a previous copy of the work.<sup>98</sup> In the case of *GPhil*, the person(s) who collected the writings for this specific codex chose to retain the form of preparatory notes. No indicators of genre were added. What can be the explanation?

In order to understand the perspective of this person or group, we need to look at the entire codex, as Michael Allen Williams observes:<sup>99</sup>

Tractates seem chosen and placed not simply for their esoteric quality, but for specific functions that they serve within codices. Rather than coming to us as a jumbled hodgepodge of traditions, the tractates come to us ordered. If we stand any chance at all of understanding the motivations for the collection(s) in the Nag Hammadi library, we will have to take these arrangements into account, for they offer us the most direct clues about how the writings in these volumes were understood by their fourth-century owners.

The first question, then, is who was responsible for the selection. The dedication at the end of the codex reads, 'Remember me also, my brethren, in your prayers: Peace be to the saints and those who are spiritual (pneumatikos).' As the scribe had to correct the dedication several times in the manuscript, this does not seem a routine

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<sup>98</sup> Gamble (1995), *Books and Readers*.

<sup>99</sup> Williams (1996), *Rethinking 'Gnosticism'*, p 260.

dedication of a religious copyist, but rather one that was composed on the spot, at the time of writing, for someone without too much experience, quite possibly the donor of the codex. It was not uncommon for Christians to take upon themselves the preparation of a copy as a gift to a church or monastery in exchange for blessings and prayers.<sup>100</sup> In this case a donor may have selected a number of works and had them translated for the benefit of a group of people he considered ‘pneumatikoi’.

The donor had the following documents copied for his gift: the *Apocryphon of John*, the *Gospel of Thomas*, the *Gospel of Philip*, the *Hypostasis of the Archons*, *On the Origin of the World*, the *Exegesis on the Soul* and the *Book of Thomas the Contender*. The books contain the same mix that we find in *GPhil*: cosmology, salvation history, redemption of the soul and polemics with other Christians. The subjects are dealt with in treatises, dialogues and sayings. All the writings stimulate the reader to meditate on the Divine, the evil in the created world and the redemption of the soul. Layton (1989) is of the opinion that all the works in Codex II fit the Valentinian outlook. Valentinians used Sethian myths to produce their own and could be quite comfortable with the Sethian documents in the collection, and also with the *Gospel of Thomas*. But given the divergent nature of the writings, which we also find in other codices,<sup>101</sup> and the late date of collection, it is probably not useful to think of one particular branch of Valentinians. In the past, it has been suggested on the basis of the cartonnage in some of the codices, that the users of the codices were Pachomian monks. A detailed review of the cartonnage by Barns, Browne and Shelton, however, pointed out that this conclusion cannot be drawn from them. Shelton suggests that other religious communities may also have existed in the area.<sup>102</sup> Williams concludes in 1996:<sup>103</sup>

Considering the evidence available at this time – the cartonnage, the scribal notes, and colophons, the selection and arrangement of tractates – everything, it seems to me, points to fourth-century Egyptian Christian monks. The only issue is whether we also want to add a label such as “gnostic”, or “heterodox,” or “syncretistic,” or “preorthodox.”

...

In a fourth-century context, one way to think of the texts that were still being gathered together in collections like the Nag Hammadi books is as shards from what were, in relative terms, failed religious movements of earlier generations, debris from religious experiments that never really created truly successful new religions. Nevertheless, the shards were still being reused, assembled in new combinations and designs, the debris scavenged for precious enduring truths.

The fact that some person(s) carefully hid this literary treasure, indicates that at that time the person(s) who appreciated these writings did not form a separate sect or community, but were part of a larger mainstream Christian community whose leadership was defining and enforcing its boundaries to the point of excluding of these writings from the community’s library.<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> Cf. the donor dedication following the Coptic version of Cyril of Jerusalem’s *Maria Theotokos*. A. van Lantschoot, *Recueil des colophons des manuscrits chrétiens d’Égypte*, 2 vols (Leuven, 1929), No lxxv.

<sup>101</sup> In Codex IX, p56 we even find Polemics against the followers of Valentinus.

<sup>102</sup> See the introduction to NHS vol xvi (1981) by Shelton.

<sup>103</sup> Williams (1996), *Rethinking ‘Gnosticism’*, p 261 and 262.

<sup>104</sup> Perhaps in response to Athanasius’ paschal letter of 367 CE (as some have suggested) or on a later occasion, In the letter Athanasius does not order any books to be burned or removed. He only warns against ‘apocryphal writings ... an invention of heretics ... to lead astray the simple.’ *Letter 39.7*; NPNF II vol 4, p 552.

In any case, it seems that the collector and readers of Codex II did not need *GPhil* as a Valentinian baptismal instruction. More probably, they appreciated the various writings in Codex II in a spiritual sense without the need to adapt them to their own sacramental practices.

*What kind of manuscript was used to produce this copy of the GPhil?*

According to Layton's introduction in the *Coptic Gnostic Library*, Codex II is largely written in one hand. A similar hand, probably originating from the same scriptorium, copied the documents in what is left of Codex XIII. Both codices are beautiful specimens; Codex II is actually the most carefully made of all the codices found at Nag Hammadi. This suggests that the people who had these documents copied, had the funds and the will to present them as valuable documents. The dimensions of both codices are comparable as is their number of lines. The handwriting seems typical of the fourth century, probably its first half. Both codices contain the work *On the Origin of the World*, which suggests that the two codices were not produced at the same time for the same readers. The language of the two versions of this text is slightly different, in line with the overall characteristics of the texts in these codices; Codex XIII is standard Sahidic, whereas the language of Codex II shows, according to Layton, 'the characteristics of a text written or translated by a native speaker of 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 ...' (page 7). Some Sahidic texts may be transpositions from texts previously translated from the Greek into other Coptic dialects. This is seen throughout the documents of Codex II. Perhaps we should assume that Codex II is older than Codex XIII, and that the workshop had been able to improve the Coptic of its master copies. By the time that Codex XIII was produced, the Sahidic text of the master copy of *On the Origin of the World* was improved. Wolfgang-Peter Funk (1995) analyzed the influence of dialect in Codex II, showing that it is stronger in *GPhil* than in all other documents.<sup>105</sup> This implies that the master copy of *GPhil* was not yet available in standard Sahidic but only in a non-standard version or in another Coptic dialect.<sup>106</sup>

Another observation regards the title, which, according to Isenberg (1989) seems to have been added only after the scribe had started on the next document in the codex:

The title of this work is not based on its incipit; rather, it appears as the last line of the text (86:18-19). Since the title is not set off as a true subscript title in the manner of other works in this codex, it is possible that the title was not originally copied in the manuscript, and was only added by the copyist as an afterthought or correction. (page 131)

Schenke (1997) sees the same discrepancy, but considers the idea that the copyist himself had named the document to be the least likely explanation. I agree with Schenke that our document may well have received its name before it entered the codex; it is a very good name for a baptismal instruction. But what is then the explanation for the 'scribal oddity'? I suggest that, given the unpolished state of

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<sup>105</sup> Discussed in Schenke (1997), *Philippus*, pp 3-4. Funk discerns two groups. The purest Sahidic is found in the *Apocryphon of John* and the *Book of Thomas the Contender*. The Sahidic of the other group of works is non-standard, with *GPhil* as the 'worst' specimen.

<sup>106</sup> It was not in Greek, as some of the scribal errors are the result of copying-mistakes from a text that was already in Coptic.

*GPhil*, it is possible that the document did not have a title written in the text itself.<sup>107</sup> But it may have had one on the outside. If a notebook or scroll of our work was first preserved and archived in a private or church library, any competent house slave or church lector would have stored it by title, often written on a tag attached to the outside to enable easy retrieval from the cupboard.<sup>108</sup> The copyist of *GPhil* might have started writing the next document before he realized that he still had to add the title, which was not in his text, in the little space he had left between the two.

I conclude that it is likely that the scribe of Codex II was given a rough translation of a Greek document into non-standard Sahidic Coptic or another dialect comprising condensed notes for a baptismal instruction, no longer in use and no longer secret, but previously never published.

As several Greek fragments of the *Gospel of Thomas* have been preserved, we may assume that this was the more familiar document. It is quite likely, therefore, that it served as a model for *GPhil*. Since the *Gospel of Thomas* consists of a series of enigmatic sayings, there was no need to edit *GPhil*. In its existing form, it could serve the same purpose as the *Gospel of Thomas*. Thus, in the context of Codex II, the genre of *GPhil* is the same as that of the *Gospel of Thomas*: as a collection of sayings for meditation.

### 3.5 Excursus: Philip, evangelist and baptist

The word gospel can apply to a multitude of genres, and also to a baptismal instruction. Another baptismal instruction in the Nag Hammadi Library, the '*hiera biblos* of the Egyptians', was renamed the *Gospel of the Egyptians* in its colophon. Most commentators believe that the attribution to Philip is related to the fact that Philip and Mary Magdalene are the only followers of Jesus mentioned by name in the document, and of these Philip is the only one who acts as transmitter of a Jesus story. That does not mean that Philip was believed to have written the document, otherwise the text of §91 would not read: 'The apostle Philip said...'.<sup>109</sup>

But there may be more that can explain the attribution: Philip was known especially as an evangelist and a baptiser. In his person, gospel and baptismal instruction come together. The story of Philip instructing and baptizing the Ethiopian seems to have connected him forever with baptismal discourse. In the year 381, Gregory Nazianzen calls people to baptism with the words 'I am Philip; do you be Candace's Eunuch'.<sup>110</sup>

With his Greek name and (according to John) coming from the largely Greek capital of Gaulanitis, Bethsaida Julias, the historical Philip may very well have been fluent in Greek. And indeed, the *Gospel of John* mentions Philip as the one addressed by 'Greeks' in Jerusalem who are interested in Jesus.<sup>111</sup> In the mid-30s CE, the Jerusalem church attracted Greek-speaking Jews and proselytes in Jerusalem. Acts 2:5 states that these men from many nations were living in Jerusalem. It is not unlikely that many of them belonged to a synagogue in Jerusalem where they could pray,

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<sup>107</sup> W.A. Strange (1992), *Acts*, p 171, observes, 'While a work was still restricted to a small circle of readers around the author, it apparently did not need a title. Galen remarked that he did not give titles to the notes of his teaching which he gave to friends and pupils when they asked, because they were not for publication.'

<sup>108</sup> In Greek a *syllabos* or *sittubos*, in Latin a *titulus* or *index*, see Gamble (1995), *Books and Readers*, p 48.

<sup>109</sup> In the *Book of Thomas the Contender*, also in Codex II, not Thomas himself but Matthaïas is credited with the act of writing (NHC II 138.1-4).

<sup>110</sup> Gregory Nazianzen, *Baptism* 26. NPNF II, vol 7, p 369.

<sup>111</sup> John 12:21.

worship and socialize in their own language.<sup>112</sup> Acts 6:9 mentions an argument in the ‘Synagogue of the Freedmen’, possibly a congregation of Jews whose ancestors had been enslaved by Pompey in 63 BCE and who had since been emancipated. The Theodotus inscription confirms that such Greek synagogues did function in Jerusalem.<sup>113</sup> In the Synagogue of the Freedmen we find people from Cyrene, Alexandria, Cilicia and Asia. Once the church in Jerusalem grew to a certain size a Greek-language house group was also created. Elsewhere in the New Testament we encounter Christians who conceivably may have been part of this synagogue and part of the Greek-language house group.<sup>114</sup>

Acts 6:5 gives the names of seven prominent people in that group. The second one mentioned is a certain Philip. Acts seemingly speaks of two Philips: one an apostle and the other an evangelist. But Christopher Matthews persuasively argues that the stories about Philip are best read as deriving from traditions about one and the same historical person.<sup>115</sup> If we assume that Stephen is mentioned first on the grounds of his martyrdom, then Philip may have been their apostolic leader, as evidenced by his prominent role in Acts 6-8.

Paul, who came from Tarsus in Cilicia, may also have been part of the Synagogue of the Freedmen. The young Paul seems to have been a witness against the Greek-speaking Christians, many of whom may have been members of that same synagogue. I suggest that an argument in this particular synagogue could have led to a formal charge against Greek-speaking Christians only.<sup>116</sup> As a result, many of them fled to their families and friends in the Diaspora. This scenario would explain how the new cult spread so quickly into neighbouring countries and perhaps even to Rome. According to Acts, Philip travelled through Judaea and Samaria and took up residence in Caesarea (Acts 8:40 and 21:8). But some of the refugees went to Damascus. Paul was part of an arrest team sent to that city – in light of his tender age more likely as an informer than as a leader of the temple police. Near his destination he breaks down and experiences a conversion. Acts 9:26-30 and Galatians 1:18 state that some time

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<sup>112</sup> Note that the word ‘synagogue’ does not have to denote a formal building, but can also describe the coming together of a group.

<sup>113</sup> See Fitzmyer (1998), *Acts*, pp 356-358; see also Barret (1994), *Acts*, pp 323-324. The Theodotus inscription is catalogued as *Corpus Inscriptionum Judaicarum* 2.332-35 §1404. A minority of scholars, however, dates the inscription after 70 CE.

<sup>114</sup> The group may have included people like Simon of Cyrene, the father of Alexander and Rufus (Mark 15:21 and perhaps Romans 16:13); Stephen, Philip, Procurus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, Nicholas – a proselyte from Antioch (Acts 6:5); plausibly also Simeon Niger, Lucius of Cyrene and Manaen – connected to the Herodians (Acts 13:1), Mnason from Cyprus (Acts 21:16), Andronicus and Junias (Romans 16:7), and – less likely – Apollos from Alexandria (Acts 18:24 and I Corinthians 1:12). Josef Barnabas from Cyprus (Acts 4:36), the family of John Mark (Acts 12:12), Judas Barsabbas and Silas (Acts 15:22) seem to have functioned as links between the Aramaic and the Greek believers.

<sup>115</sup> Matthews (2002), *Philip*, pp 64-70. See also the *Acts of Philip* III, 2 (31), where his work is that of an apostle and a deacon.

<sup>116</sup> An important factor to consider is that the Aramaic church of Jerusalem was somewhat separate from Greek-speaking believers. The account in Acts 8 implicitly says that the city authorities, which seem well aware of the Aramaic-speaking group, did not charge them as they did the Greek-speaking group. I suggest that there was something that Acts does not tell us, namely that the Aramaics had distanced themselves from certain conclusions and activities of the Greek-speaking group. As we have to imagine something punishable by Jewish law, this might be a threat against the temple (Acts 6:14) and the idea that the law no longer applied to distinguish between Christian Jews and Christian proselytes or uncircumcised God-fearers (cf. Acts 6:13-14). The possibility that they celebrated their love meals together with non-Jews may be the historical kernel behind Acts 6:1. And if the suspicion in Acts 21:28,29 is based on a precedent, it might be that they even invited uncircumcised worshippers in the synagogue to join them on a visit to the Temple, something to which the death penalty applied. The Aramaic speakers may well have disagreed with the Greek-speaking believers, and regarding the communion at table, Galatians 2 tells us that they did.

thereafter Paul returns to Jerusalem. He is not admitted to the house groups.<sup>117</sup> In his Greek synagogue he disputes unsuccessfully with his former non-Christian friends, who turn against him (Acts 9:29). Barnabas, who came from Cyprus and may also have had relationships among the Greek-speaking Jews, knows about Paul's conflict in that synagogue. Barnabas introduces him to some of the apostles and shortly thereafter they send him to Caesarea, where Philip had taken up residence. From there Paul goes home to Tarsus.

Acts also pictures Philip as the first evangelist to non-Jews: the finance minister from Ethiopia and the Samaritans.<sup>118</sup> The Jerusalem church sends representatives to Samaria and, it seems, to other Judaeen towns that Philip had visited. Most of the converts seem to accept the authority of Jerusalem. Simultaneously, however, it is interesting to note how the baptism of Samaritans was judged to be inadequate.<sup>119</sup>

There are several traditions that indicate that Philip and his family moved to Hierapolis in Asia, near Laodicea and Colosse. Quite possibly they did so around the start of the Jewish War in 66 CE. It is estimated that in those years up to one third of the Jews from Palestine may have fled the country. Philip's daughters, or at least some of them, are said to have lived in celibacy and to have prophesied (Acts 21:9). In the second century the local 'bishop' Papias names Philip and occasionally his daughters as authorities in the transmission of knowledge about Jesus.<sup>120</sup>

Whereas mainstream Christians claimed Peter as their authority, various dissenting groups claimed the authority of other followers of Jesus, like Philip, Thomas and Mary Magdalene, as the sources of their teaching about Jesus. And indeed, these people play prominent roles in the farewell discourses of Jesus in both the *Gospel of John* and gnostic Christian resurrection dialogues. It seems that the fourth century *Acts of Philip* were collected and edited in Asia by encratic Christians. In 35-36, 63 and 85-86, Philip consistently catechizes and then baptizes the new converts. Christopher Matthews believes that a certain passage may even come from a Valentinian source.<sup>121</sup> I suggest that such groups could sympathize with Philip because of his association with the 'Hellenists', the Hellenists' critical attitude towards the Jewish Law, the prophetic role of Philip's daughters and their celibacy.

Two patristic sources tell us that Manichaeans used a *Gospel of Philip*. Epiphanius says that libertine gnostic Christians also used a gospel by that name.<sup>122</sup> He quotes a passage wherein Jesus is said to have revealed how the soul can ascend unto heaven. But this passage is not part of our Coptic *GPhil*, which is not libertine at all.

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<sup>117</sup> This role as informer against the Greek Christians in his synagogue can explain his statements in Galatians 1:22-23, that he on the one hand persecuted the Christians in Judaea, but that on the other hand most of the Christians left in Judaea, namely the Aramaic speakers, did not know him personally.

<sup>118</sup> Scott Spencer (1992), *Philip in Acts*, pp 186-187, believes the author uses Philip as a forerunner for Peter's mission to the Gentiles.

<sup>119</sup> Could it be that the Hellenists baptised Samaritans and god-fearers as if they were Jews, whereas others were still debating whether believers should not first become Jews? See chapter 3.2.1 above, and also the discussion about Peter's baptism of the Gentile Cornelius in Acts 10. Or is there a discussion about the form of baptism? Some 15 years later in Ephesus, the baptismal practice of another Greek-speaking Jew, Apollos - according to the version of Acts in codex Beza instructed in the faith in Alexandria - has to be corrected as well. Apollos' knowledge of baptism is judged inadequate because 'he knew only the baptism of John' (Acts 18:25). This suggests that the Aramaic believers reached certain conclusions about the correct form of baptism (perhaps regarding the use of the names of Jesus and the Holy Spirit) that the Greek-speaking Jewish followers had not yet adopted while still in Jerusalem. A tradition of disagreement between Philip and the other apostles also surfaces in the *Letter of Peter to Philip* (NHC VIII,2).

<sup>120</sup> Eusebius, *The Ecclesiastical History* III.39.

<sup>121</sup> p 160, quoting Bovon's translation of *Aph.Mart.* 29: 'Here, the wedding chamber is ready, blessed is the guest of the spouse, for rich is the harvest of the fields, and blessed is the worker who is able.'

<sup>122</sup> Epiphanius, *Panarion* 26.13.2-3, NHMS vols 35 and 36.

Nonetheless, there still may be a connection: secret information about the ascent of the soul to the Father can easily be imagined in the context of initiatory discourse. Philip's discussion with Jesus in John 14 about going to and seeing the Father made him particularly suited for esoteric initiatory discourse.<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> Schenke (1997), *Philippus*, suggests that the fragment of Epiphanius, which clearly does not belong to our text, is part of a different version of our text. 'Unser EvPhil hat einen so ausgeprägten eigenen Charakter und ist von solcher Faszination, daß man sich schwer vorstellen kann, wie sich daneben eine andere Schrift mit dem gleichen Titel hätte behaupten sollen' (p 2). If, however, we see the title as one that is very fitting for a gnostic Christian baptismal instruction, we can see both texts as standing in the same tradition and genre, but without having to assume a direct relationship between the two texts.



Please leave the review about "Baptism in the Bridal Chamber Elektronische Ressource the Gospel of Philip as a Valentinian Baptismal instruction" book below: (C) 2016-2018 All rights are reserved by their owners. This site does'nt contains any content protected by copyrights. Though many traditional activities can no longer be seen at a Chinese wedding, the spree in the bridal chamber is still common both in the country and in town. The spree happens after the feast when the bride and groom go back into their chamber. Relatives and friends and neighbors, any one at the wedding in fact, can come in to play all kinds of tricks on the new couple, especially the bride. They make a lot of noise so that there is an extremely lively atmosphere in the room, which is believed to be an inseparable part of a jolly wedding. Some say that this custom goes back to Han Dynasty ((