especially important in light of the growing appreciation that modern scholarship still has a long way to go in grasping the real complexity of the spiritual landscape of Christian Egypt.

Bumazhnov seems to me convincing in tracing the opposition between, on the one hand, Antony’s Letters (except the first one) and ps.-Ammonas’ De patientia (= ep. 17 in the Arabic version of Antony’s corpus), and, on the other hand, the authentic tradition of Antony and Ammonas. The latter is the mainstream of Egyptian monasticism, together with the Pachomian tradition. This is a tradition in which the human body has an immediate and physical involvement in the depths of spiritual life. Its formulations are often polemical concerning attempts at disregarding or even humiliating the body. Thus, Bumazhnov puts forward an attractive hypothesis suggesting that, in the corpus of Antony’s Letters, only the first could be authentic while the others are almost certainly not. My own confidence in Bumazhnov’s approach is based on — but also limited by — the possibility of tracing the succession between the early monastic and the late Jewish ascetical concepts. Indeed, unlike the “mainstream” monastic tradition, which is, more or less, traceable to the “Jewish matrix of Christianity,” the bulk of Antony’s letters is not. Let us recall, however, that our knowledge of the corresponding spiritual traditions is still far from being representative.

_Basil Lourié_


In our post-Qumranic epoch, Christian pseudepigrapha are far less studied than the Jewish writings of the Second Temple period to which the so-called apocrypha and pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament belong. In comparison, studies of the pseudepigrapha of the New Testament lag considerably behind. Against this background, the present study of the *Narratio Aphroditiani* (CANT 55; cf. BHG 806–806c for independent Greek recensions) is especially important.

I will begin with a brief description of the field Heyden explores. The *Narratio Aphroditiani*, apart from its isolated recensions, is known within two larger treatises: the anonymous hagiographical novel *De
gestis in Perside (CPG 6968 = BHG 802–805g), from the fifth or sixth century (critical edition by Eduard Bratke 1899, a new critical edition in preparation for the Sources chrétiennes by Pauline Bringel, the author of the 2007 unpublished thesis “Une polémique religieuse à la cour perse: Le ‘De gestis in Perside’. Histoire du texte, édition critique et traduction”), and John of Damascus’ Sermo in nativitatem domini (CPG 8066 = BHG 1912; critical edition by B. Kotter 1988). The author of De gestis in Perside used the lost Historia christiana (CPG 6026) for his recension of the Narratio; the Historia, by Philippus of Sede, appeared between 425 and 439. These dates are the terminus ante quem for the Narratio. The Narratio was translated into Slavonic several times. The Slavonic recensions that circulated in Rus’ were published in a critical edition by Alexander Bobrov in 1994. The South Slavic recensions have been published in part but have never been studied critically. The reference books (including CPG and CANT) mention an unpublished Armenian recension of De gestis in Perside with reference to Bratke 1899, p. 128, but, in fact, Bratke only guesses that the Narratio might be indicated by the title “Discussion historique sur la religion chrétienne devant le Chah de Perse” given by Brosset in his description (1840) of a manuscript in the library of Etchmiadzin. Whether an Armenian version of De gestis in Perside exists is still an open question (even after Bringel’s edition, judging from her “position de thèse”).

Heyden’s aim seems to be twofold. First, to make available to a Western audience the main data related to the Narratio. Thus, in a large appendix to her book (“Materialen,” p. 303–361, including 50 illustrations, mostly in colour), Heyden lays out the two earliest Slavonic recensions and the two earliest Greek recensions (those of De gestis and John of Damascus), all of them with parallel German translations, as well as beautiful miniatures from the Greek manuscripts and images of Aphroditian among the icons on the ironwork gates of cathedrals of the Moscow Kremlin.

Heyden’s second aim is to trace the long history of the interpretation of the Narratio in different milieus. This is why she specifies the title of her book as “Thema und Variationen.” Here “Thema” is a brief review of the content of the Narratio (p. 13–18). The main focus of the book, however, is in the “variation” sections, that is, in the several instances in which various cultures and ideologies focused special interest on the Narratio.

Heyden’s first “variation” (p. 20–56) is, naturally, medieval Rus’, where, in the sixteenth century, “Aphroditian” was popular to such