
The present book is based on the author's doctoral dissertation (Ludwig-Maximilians University Munich, 2004). It investigates the intriguing relationship between the ‘anti-materialist’ view of Valentinians and their appreciation of baptism, anointing and the eucharist. According to the author, the Gospel of Philip contains fragments from a late second century treatise that can be considered as ‘the first developed theory and justification of these sacraments in Early Christianity’ (backcover).

The author has organized his monograph in three lengthy chapters about (1) the discussion of the sacraments in the Gospel of Philip, (2) the ‘sacramental theory’ behind this discussion, and (3) the participants in these sacraments. He concludes the book with a three page summary.

In his first chapter Schmid introduces the ancient text that follows the Gospel of Thomas in what is now called the second Nag Hammadi codex. He refers to Martha Lee Turner (*The Gospel according to Philip*, 1995) for its Forschungsgeschichte, while summarizing the main findings of previous scholars who identified the text as a Valentinian collection of excerpts or notes, arguably from late second century Syria. For convenience sake, Schmid accepts the numbering of these excerpts proposed by Hans-Martin Schenke (*Leipoldt/Schenke, Koptisch-gnostische Schriften*, 1960). In the text itself, Schmid sees the hand of an author or compiler who has specific interests and points to make. After clarifying the meaning of a number of key words in the Gospel of Philip, Schmid concludes that the author employs a Fachsprache when it comes to words like Mysterion, Typos/Eikoon, which he uses to discuss the meaning of various sacramental concepts like

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1) For an argument against Syrian provenance, see Bas van Os, “Was the Gospel of Philip written in Syria?”, *Apocrypha* 17 (2006) 87-94.
baptism, anointing, the eucharist, salvation and the bridal chamber. But this does not make the Gospel of Philip a collection of rearranged fragments from a baptism catechesis as Wesley Isenberg proposed in his 1968 dissertation. Schmid cannot agree with Isenberg’s complex redaction theory. He points out that Isenberg can only bring forth parallels from the baptism catecheses of fourth century church fathers. He also points out that the Gospel of Philip is too inaccessible to function as instruction of ‘beginners’. Neither does Schmid accept the consequence from Isenberg’s thesis, that the Gospel of Philip speaks about a specific Gnostic-Christian ritual outside the context of the mainstream church. From Klaus Koschorke (Die Polemik der Gnostiker gegen das kirchliche Christentum, 1978), he adopts the notion of a Gnostic-Christian elite of ‘pneumatics’ within a larger church of ‘psychic’ believers. In the Gospel of Philip a similar distinction is made between (true) ‘Christians’ and ‘Hebrews’, and between ‘sons’ and ‘slaves’. According to Schmid, the sacramental system in the Gospel of Philip is the same as that in the larger church; in fact, it is about the church’s sacraments that the author speaks. After a thorough discussion, Schmid concludes that ‘salvation’ and the ‘bridal chamber’ stand for anointing and the eucharist. The complexity of the argument about the sacraments in the Gospel of Philip leads Schmid to the conclusion that the original context of this argument may have been the discussion between Gnostic ‘specialists’ which is also reflected in the works of Irenaeus, Tertullian and Origen. Some of these Gnostics denounced the sacraments, because physical elements cannot convey salvation. If their reasoning would be followed, the Gnostic ‘elite’ would no longer participate in the church’s sacraments, and thus become separated. Against their opinion, the author of the Gospel of Philip sets out a defence of the value of the sacraments.

Although the second chapter covers nearly half of the entire monograph, it is concerned only with §20-§27 of the Gospel of Philip (which consists of 127 passages). In a detailed discussion of these eight short paragraphs, Schmid reconstructs the author’s ‘theory of the sacraments’. Schmid first discusses §21-§24, where the author articulates his own views in opposition to what others say or believe (in §21, §23a and §23c) with regard to the resurrection and the sacraments. These others include both the ‘psychic’ members of the church (in §21 and §23a) as well the opposing group of Gnostic Christians (in §23c). The author teaches that one should rise in this world and dispose of one’s fleshly ‘clothes’, in order to receive a heavenly garment. This takes place in baptism. But how can the immaterial salvation be dependent of a material ritual? The author explains this in