will receive rest from the Good One." Both texts are not Gnostic.


48 See now the translation by W. C. Robinson, Jr., in The Nag Hammadi Library in English (see note 1), 180–187.

49 Cf. Drijvers, Bardoiaon of Edessa (see note 22), 155, and Idem, Bardoiaon of Edessa and the Hermetica, 205.


51 See note 49. Bardoiaon does not distinguish between the rational and the spiritual soul; his emphasis on the role of Fate and also his cosmology do not seem to be compatible with the views of the Authentikos Logos.


53 Proclus, In Tim., I, 77, 22–24 Diehl (= Frg. 37 Des Places = Test. 49 Leemans): Πορφύριος, δν καὶ διαμέςειν ἀν τις εἰ ζητεῖ λέγει τῆς Νοεμβρίου παραδόσεως. Even if this remark has to be attributed to Iamblichus, who was ill-disposed towards Porphyry, it reveals that the latter owed very much to the Apamean philosopher; cf. Witsink, Porphyrios und Nennios (see note 8), 35–36.

54 Jerome, Epist. 33,3 (CSEL 56, 246–247); cf. Chadwick, o.c., 117–137.

55 Chadwick, o.c., 138–140, 159–162, and the notes to the text, 163–181.

56 Peel and Zandee (see note 36), 351, translate 94,25–29 as follows: "When you had entered into a bodily birth, you were begotten. You have come into being inside the bridal chamber, and you have been illuminated in mind." The opposition between earthly birth and heavenly origin makes "by the Nous" as translation of ἐν πνεύμα preferable above "in mind" (moreover, if the latter was meant one would expect to read "in your mind").

57 The Sentences are dated by Chadwick, o.c., 159–160, "round about A.D. 180–210", and the Teachings by Peel and Zandee, o.c., 347, "in the late second or early third century".


59 Chad, De somniis, 1,147 (Cohn-Wendland III,236).

60 Hippolytus, Refut., 6,34,3 and 6 (Wendland 163). The views expressed in this passage represent a later stage of western Valentinianism; cf. W. Foerster, Von Valentin zu Herakleion, Belhfe zur ZNW, 7 (Giessen 1928) 57–58, 100, and F.-M.-M. Sagnard, La Gnose Valentinienne et le témoignage de Saint Irénée, Études de Philosophie Médievale, 36 (Paris 1947) 234–237.


62 Chad, o.c., 138, concerning the Sentences: "But it is a striking fact that even where the Christian inspiration is most obvious the vocabulary and form are carefully touched up so as to bring it more into line with the style of the pagan maxims, mainly of Pythagorean origin. On the one hand, in content there is a Christianisation of pagan maxims; on the other hand, in form there is also a ‘paganisation’ of Christian maxims." The same can be said of the Authentikos Logos. See also Chadwick’s remarks on the apologetic method of Origen, o.c., 160.

Beusichem, Markt 17–19

Vigilae Christianae 33, 287–290; © North-Holland Publishing Company 1979

HYSTERIA AND THE Gnostic MYTHS OF CREATION

BY

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Suffering, ignorance, evil – these are the leitmotifs of Gnostic cosmogonies, which draw on episodes in the Old Testament and on the dualism implicit in Middle Platonism. The presence of a Greek loan word in the Coptic texts from Nag Hammadi which deal with the Creation may indicate a third, if minor, source for these themes. This clue word is ὀστήρμα, "deficiency".

οστήρμα is not a classical word. It occurs in late works that would have been familiar to the Gnostics: the LXX, Luke, Paul, and the Hermetic corpus.3 The word also turns up in two Nag Hammadi tractates, and in two of the heresiologists’ reports on Gnostic beliefs. All four sources use it to conjoin the ideas of deficiency and femaleness:

1) The Letter of Eunostos (CG V.3), describing the unfolding of the Pleroma, states “... and in this way appeared the defect [ὀστήρμα] of femaleness” (85.8). According to the Gospel of the Egyptians (CG III.2), Metanoia will serve as the matrix for the seed of Seth “... so that, through her, the ὀστήρμα may be filled up” (59.19).

2) Both Irenaeus and Hippolytus use ὀστήρμα when describing the beliefs of their Gnostic opponents, and again the idea of “defect” or “deficiency” is linked to a reference to a female. For example, Irenaeus, discussing the abortive passion of Sophia, says:

οὶ τῶν ποιητῶν ὁμοιοῦ καὶ γῆς μόνον Θεόν παντοκράτορα, ἦπερ ὃν ἄλλος Θεός οὐκ ἔστιν, ἐς ὀστηρήματος, καὶ αὐτῷ ἐς ἄλλου ὀστηρήματος γεγονότος, προβεβληθήκει λέγοντες, ὡστε κατ’ αὐτοῖς αὐτὸν προβαλλόν τρίτον ὀστηρήματος.

"They say that the maker of heaven and earth, the one God Almighty above whom there is no other God, was brought forth from a defect, who had in turn been born of another defect, and so according to them he is the product [or emanation] of the third defect." (Adv. Haer. I. 16,3)
tίν δυοσκάδα δέ, περὶ ἡν καὶ τὸ μυστήριον τοῦ πάθους τοῦ οὐστερῆματος γεγονόναι, εἰς οὗ πάθους τὰ βλεπόμενα κατεσκευάσθαι θέλουσιν, ἐπισήμος καὶ φανερὸς πανταχὺ κείσθαι λέγουσιν.

“They claim that the duodekad, in connection with which the mystery of the passion of the defect occurred, and from which passion (they maintain) the visible world has been made, is clearly and manifestly to be found everywhere.” (Adv. Haer. 1.I.8.4)

3) A related word, ὀστέρα ("womb"), also appears in the heresiologists' discussions of the Gnostics. Epiphanius reports a group who believe that Darkness and Spirit came together to engender ὀστέρα, who, impregnated by the same Spirit, produced aionae. One of these aionae then had intercourse with ὀστέρα, from which union issued gods, angels, demons, and the Seven Spirits—in brief, the lower Plurima (Panarion 25.5.1–3). Irenaeus speaks of the Cainites who "advocate the abolition of the works of ὀστέρα." Moreover, they call this ὀστέρα the creator of heaven and earth (Adv. Haer. I.31.2). Hippolytus in his discussion of the Megale Apophthis (Refutatio VI.14.7f.) relates an elaborate gynecological metaphor: the Garden is the ὀστέρα; Eden is the placenta; the river coming out of Eden to water the Garden is a navel; this river splits into four sources, two of which are veins and two arteries. Elsewhere (Ref. V.19.11) he speaks of the Sethans' belief that Light and Spirit are imprisoned in the unclean and hurtful ὀστέρα of disorder.

Hurtful disorderly wombs and deficiencies of femaleness appear in another context in the Hellenistic world—in Greek medical science. The womb is called ὀστέρα, explains Galen, because it comes last (ὀστέτης) of all the parts of the female body.4 Soranus suggests that the ὀστέρα is so named because it yields up its products afterwards (ὀστέρον), or because, broadly speaking, it lies after (ὀστέρος) all the entrails.5 The ὀστέρα's place is in the lower body, and both Galen and Soranus, as well as Areteus and Hippocrates, see it as the seat and cause of a disease peculiar to women, ὀστερικὴ πνῖς, hysterical suffocation.6

This respiratory difficulty is caused by the womb’s "drying out", usually because of a lack of sexual intercourse through which moisture could be obtained either by the male sperm entering the womb or by the release of "female sperm" in orgasm.7 Areteus and the Hippocratic tradition hold that the womb, as it dries out, becomes lighter and so rises, wandering to the upper regions of the body and thereby causing suffocation, as well as gogginess, loss of sensibility, and sleep.6

This medical description of the female anatomy and the "wandering womb" has both verbal and narrative echoes in the Gnostic cosmogonic myths. The suffering of the womb deficient in moisture nicely parallels Sophia's πάθος τοῦ ὀστερήματος which results in the coming into being of ὀστέρημα the realm of deficiency, mentioned by Irenaeus in I.18.4 (cited above). The Sophia-figure of the Cainites, according to Epiphanius (Pan. 38.1) and Irenaeus (I.31.2) is called ὀστέρα, which term itself can refer to the disorderly realm of this world (Hippolytus, Ref. V.19.11). A less direct connection might also be drawn here. The Origin of the World (CG II.5) describes the matter which appears in Chaos as like "afterbirth" (99.19) — περισσόν in the text, but a synonym for ὀστέρα.

Schematically, then, we have:

- Sophia/ὀστέρα
- Womb/ὀστέρα
- Affected by the suffering of deficiency πάθος τοῦ ὀστέρα
- Suffering from a deficiency of moisture and so wandering as she wanders
- Producing matter like afterbirth ὀστέρα
- Causing ὀστερικὴ πνῖς, which results in suffocation
- Which characterizes the realm of deficiency ὀστέρημα

Thus it would appear that Jonas' description of the myth of Sophia as "wandering in the void... laboring her passion into matter" is particularly apt. Just as the womb works havoc when, dry because of lack of intercourse, it wanders to the higher parts of the body,10 so Sophia literally causes chaos when, in one version of the myth, she forsakes the male half of her syzygy and wanders from her proper place to seek the Father above. Gogginess, sleep, pain and disorder result both for the hysterical woman and for the dweller in the lower realm.

The cosmogonic ὀστέρα—Sophia myth, in other words, can be appreciated in terms of this elaborate, highly condensed gynecological pun.11 The pun was lost in the translation of the Gnostic texts from Greek to Coptic; but, as I hope I have shown, it can be reconstructed from the Greek loan words in the Coptic Gnostic documents and from the heresiologists' reports.

Notes

1 LXX, Ps. 33(34).10; Lk 21.4; II Cor. 8.4, 11.9 (ὀστερήθεις); I Thess. 4.10; Herm. 13.1
NOTICE TOUCANT H’HOMÉLIE XIV DE SÉVÈRE D’ANTIOCHE

PAR

E. LUCCHESI

Avec le fascicule 2 du tome XXXVIII de la Patrologia Orientalis,1 s’achève enfin un grand et important projet : la publication intégrale des 125 Homélies Cathédrales de Sévère d’Antioche, disparues, à de rares exceptions près, dans l’original grec, mais restituées dans leur presque totalité grâce à deux versions syriques différentes, la première et plus complète due à Jacques d’Edesse, la seconde, beaucoup plus partielle, de Paul de Callinice.

Cette édition, commencée par R. Duval et vaillamment et inlassablement poursuivie par le Chanoine M. Brière, puis, après sa mort, par F. Graffin, actuel directeur de la PO, avec la collaboration sporadique d’autres syriacistes,2 se sera donc échelonnée sur la longue période de soixante-dix ans, puisque le premier fascicule datait de 1906 déjà, et aura ainsi recensé non moins de 17 fascicules, répartis sur 14 volumes de la collection parisienne. Entreprise redoutable, s’il en est, et qui mérite l’approbation et la reconnaissance du monde scientifique.

C’est sur le dernier fascicule, consacrée aux Homélies I à XVII, que nous voudrions nous arrêter brièvement, et en particulier sur l’Homélie XIV.

Nous possédons de cette homélie, une version copte, signalée à deux reprises, et publiée entre-temps par E. Porcher,3 lequel s’était attaché tout particulièrement à définir la place de Sévère d’Antioche dans la littérature copte.4

Or, cette traduction semble avoir totalement échappée aux éditeurs du syriaque, qui, du moins, n’en parlent pas. Ces éditeurs avaient pourtant, et à très juste titre, tenu compte auparavant de la recension copte de l’Homélie I, qui remédie aux importants hiatus dont souffre ici la version de Jacques d’Edesse. Du copte, ils avaient alors reproduit le texte et la traduction mêmes, sensiblement améliorées, de Porcher.5

Celui-ci n’avait pas, et pour cause (le syriaque étant alors inédit!)

1 See H. Frisk, Griechisches Etymologisches Wörterbuch (Heidelberg 1970) Bd. II: Ὠστέρα and Ὠστέραν.
2 Cf. The Dialogue of the Saviour, CG III.5, “destroying the works of femaleness” (144.17); and Clement’s report of the Greek Gospel of the Egyptians (not identical with the gospel of the same name found at Nag Hammadi), “For they say that the Savior himself said, ‘I am come to undo the works of the Female’” Strom. III. 63.
3 Opera Omnia (Kühn 1830) XIX.362: ταύτη καὶ ἡ Ὠστέρα ἀπομακρύνεται, ὅτι ὲστάτῃ τῶν ἄνδρων μακράν ἐστιν.
7 Galen, de loc. aff. VI
8 Soranus and Galen both thought this was nonsense, but no less a figure than Plato held to the theory of the wandering womb, Timaeus 91c.
10 This view of hystera is more widely attested than in medical and philosophical writings alone. Athenaeus 13.585d puns on the several meanings of Ὠστέρα. Rejected Lenton, whose lover has just turned his attentions to a newly-arrived courtesan at the banquet, replies to a friend who asks what ails her ὲστάτη μου λυπη: “The last [female] comer gives me a pain!” or “My womb hurts me”—playing off the (apparently common) knowledge that lack of sexual intercourse (the result of the arrival of Lenton’s competitor) causes pain in the uterus.
11 See S. Freud, ‘Wit and Its Relation to the Unconscious’, Basic Writings of Sigmund Freud (Modern Library, New York 1938), 633–652, especially 640 ff., 646 ff., and 655 ff. According to Freud, such condensation and multiple-reference are integral to the structure of dreams and myths as well as puns.