

The Nature of Christ in the Valentinian Sources from the Nag Hammadi Library and Its Relationship with the Fourth Gospel

Michael Makidon and Dan Lioy¹

Abstract

This article analyses the nature of Christ in the Valentinian Sources from the Nag Hammadi Library and its relationship with the fourth gospel. Both the origin of Christ and the human and spiritual components of the nature of Christ are included. While the Valentinian Sources include both a heavenly and earthly origin and spiritual and human components of the nature of Christ, the earthly seems to be continually qualified in some way. At the same time, the Valentinian myth, through which the Valentinians filter their theology, demands an incarnation at some level. This tension between the spiritual and human Christ is analysed in order to better understand the development and variation of the nature of Christ in Valentinian theology.

1. Introduction

Concerning the nature of Christ in the Nag Hammadi Library (NHL),² four options exist: (a) a heavenly form that allows for human contact,

¹ The views expressed herein are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the beliefs of the South African Theological Seminary.

² List of abbreviations on page 56.

(b) a human form that complements his heavenly form (two-natures) (Harnack 1909:286, n. 1; Rudolph 1977:162), (c) a Jesus who abandons part of his heavenly form so that he can be more of a human in some sense, or pneumatic human being (Franzmann 1996:71), and (d) Jesus appears solely as a human figure (Bock 2006b:97–98). The Valentinians would have repudiated the last three and found the first option the most congenial, but would have felt the need to qualify the statement. The Valentinians believed that Christ had a spiritual body, but the psychic Jesus was a point of contention. The Eastern concept of mutual participation—where the spirituals co-incarnate with the saviour, ultimately reuniting with the Pleroma—may have been at the heart of the debate. This Eastern doctrine demands a human body so that Christ could release the spirituals. Hence, Hippolytus insists that in the Eastern view, Jesus took ‘shape’ (διαπλασθη) in Mary’s womb and left that body at the cross (*Ref* VI:35, 5–7).

Franzmann nuances the discussion by adding that the nature of Christ in the NHL should be seen as a three-dimensional graph. The more the text necessitates an earthly connection, the greater the need to split Jesus’ nature into two. Conversely, the less human contact required, the less the author needs to split these natures. Debate exists over the degree to which the Valentinian Sources (VSS) describe Jesus as human. There seem to be passages that clearly describe his spiritual nature, while others also allow for a human nature. Yet, to what degree do VSS describe the humanity of Jesus? The following sections will analyse both the heavenly and earthly origins of Christ, as well as the spiritual and human components of Christ in the VSS from the NHL with an emphasis on their relation to the fourth gospel (FG) in order to get a clearer glimpse of the nature of Christ in the VSS.

2. The Origin of Christ

The VSS characterise Jesus as a spiritual being that descended from the Father and took on spiritual flesh. Yet, passages exist that seem to indicate that Jesus also had an earthly origin. The Valentinians employed allegorical interpretation in light of their views on the Pleroma, Kenoma, and Cosmos, which leads to the question: should the earthly origin of Christ be understood allegorically, or did the Jesus of the VSS from the NHL truly originate on earth? The following section looks at the heavenly and earthly origins of Jesus in those sources.

2.1. The heavenly origin of Christ

The Gospel of Truth (GT) describes Jesus, the *logos*, and the Son coming forth from the Father (GT 16:34–35, 20:15–23, and 26:1–27). The *logos*, who came forth from the *plērōma*, is addressed as *sōtēr* in GT 16:34–38. The missional purpose of the saviour’s descent seems to parallel the FG (Attridge and MacRae 1985:40). The purpose of the saviour’s descent was ‘to become the fruit of knowledge’ (*afšōpe nnoutah mpisaune*) in a soteriological sense through his crucifixion (18:21–31) (Ménard 1972:50–51), to reveal (20:15–23), and to ‘instruct’ (*eftamo*) them (psychics/spirituals) about the ‘Father’ (*piōt*, 30:30–37). Fecht and Ménard both suggest that the author begins describing the crucifixion in orthodox terms, but will later turn to more of a gnostic interpretation (Fecht 1961, 1962, 1963:(31), 103 (32), and 319; Ménard 1970:130). The Saviour was the ‘mouth of the Father’ (*rōf mpiōt*, 26:34–35) involved in the reception of the Holy Spirit, the revelation of the Father, and the aeons (see GT 16:34–35; 18:21–31). Like the FG, the descent of the Saviour in the GT emphasises the Saviour’s missional and soteriological purpose. Through his redemption, those who are ignorant of the Father will come to the

knowledge of the truth—the purpose of the book (16:31–17:4). This revelatory purpose is not unique to the GT. The VE (*A Valentinian Exposition with Valentinian Liturgical Readings*) describes the descent with the purpose of revealing the Father (24:25–29) and anointing the spirituals (40:11–14).

The other VSS in the NHL also attest to the descent of Jesus. The Gospel of Philip (GP) describes Christ as bringing bread in order to bring life, which implies the incarnation (55:6–14; 73:23–25). It also serves as an allusion to the FG where Christ metaphorically became ‘the bread of life’ (ὁ ἄρτος τῆς ζωῆς). Jesus is also described as coming (*ei*) into the world at a certain time (GP 52:19) to unite Adam and Eve (GP 70:9–22) and to redeem and lay down his life (GP 52:35–53:14). TR (The Treatise on the Resurrection) 44:21–35 states that the Son of God was ‘originally ... from above’ (*nšarp ... psa ntpē*). The word *nšarp* comes from ἀρχή, explaining that the Saviour and the elect were originally from the perfect pleromic state (Attridge and MacRae 1985:154). This seems, once again, to be a Johannine reference. GT 20:33 also applies this to Jesus’ descent from the Pleroma. The Saviour’s mission was to restore the elect to the Pleroma, where they both originally (*nšarp*) resided (see TR 46:27, 35ff). Also, the phrase ‘imperishable [descends]’ (*tmntatteko [shetie ahrēi]*, TR 48:38–49:9) seems to echo 1 Corinthians 15:53–54 and Heracleon’s explanation of John 4:47. Heracleon understood Judea as from above or signifying a higher level of spiritual insight. TT (The Tripartite Tractate) 116:1–5 also talks about the descent of Christ to unite with the church (Thomassen 2006:323–324). The church that unites with the Saviour is the spiritual seed of Sophia. As in the FG, the descent of the Saviour is purposeful. He descends from the Father with the purpose of returning from whence he originated, but only after his co-incarnation with the church. The ultimate purpose of the Saviour demonstrates his heavenly origin.

The heavenly origin of Jesus can also be seen in his pre-existence; his spiritual form existed prior to his psychic form. The GT 16:36–37 describes the *logos* as in the mind and thought of the Father. The *logos* is an emanation from the Father (Grobel 1960:35; Attridge and MacRae 1985:40–41; Ménard 1972:43). The creation of the son in VE 22:31–39 also comes from the mind (*nous*) and thought of the Father. The will, mind, and thought of the Father are all related to the son (Thomassen 2006:237–238). He is the ‘first born’ (*oušrp mmise*, TT 57:18), and he ‘existed from the beginning’ (*šoop jin nšorp*, 33–34). In TT 58:15–16, the son was ‘without beginning’ ([*at*]arkhē) and ‘without end’ ([*at*]haē). The Valentinians use both ‘first born’ (*oušrp mmise*) and ‘only son’ (*oušēre nouōt*). The former most likely translates the Greek πρωτότοκος (Attridge and Pagels 1985:238). Irenaeus’ account of Valentinian views describes the firstborn, or λόγος, who created humanity (*Haer* I:12,3). Theodotus uses λόγος as a name for Christ, offspring of the aeons (*Exc* 33:1). The latter is most likely the same as μονογενής. Ptolemy uses it to describe the aeon νοῦς. Jesus is also equated with the *monogenēs* in VE 40:33–34. Furthermore, VE 24:25–29 refers to Jesus as the *monogenēs*, which seems to be a Johannine idea that connotes the relationship between the Father and the Son. The Sahidic New Testament uses ‘the only son’ for μονογενής in John 1:18. The pre-existent relationship of Jesus and the Father and the revelatory nature of the μονογενής can also be seen in the context of VE 24.

Jesus’ close relationship with the Father also implies his divine origin. The relationship between the Father and the Son in the GT is characterised by oneness. In fact, the author notes that they are one—‘the name of the Father is the Son’ (*prende mpiōt pe pšēre*, GT 38:7). Jesus claims to be one with the Father in John 10:30. Thus, this passage may have been influenced by the FG. Theodotus also referred to the invisible part of Jesus as the name or the only begotten son (*Exc* 26). In

addition, Philo equated Logos, God's firstborn, and the name of God in *Conf* 146. By wearing his name in GP 53:8–10, the Son actually became the Father. Jesus was the hidden name, and Christ was the revealed name (GP 56:3–4). Because the Son shares the name and being of the Father and at the same time is in some sense distinct, he can be sent to reveal the Father. The Son's pleromic origin shows his close relationship with the Father. Another indication of their close relationship is the use of the Trinitarian formula in VE 23:35–37: the Son, the Father of all, and the mind of the Spirit. The chiasmic structure in TR 44:21–23 pairs Son of God with divinity and vanquishing death (Attridge and MacRae 1985:150; Layton 1981:198, n. 36). The relationship between the Father and the Son signifies divine status. Death could not have been vanquished by anyone less than God. The heavenly origin of Jesus is demonstrated by his close relationship with the Father and the fact that they both share the same name. This shows that they both originated from the heavenly abode.

Until this point, the VSS have much in common with how the Logos and Sophia would have been viewed in Jewish and Hellenistic literature. However, neither would have seen the Logos as a separate entity from the godhead. Rather, the Logos was the transcendent God's approach to man. Furthermore, the fact that the Logos is equated with the Saviour and Jesus demonstrates that the FG clearly influenced the VSS's view of the nature of the Logos. The Logos as Jesus, with the parallels that will be analysed in a future article, is also a strong argument for seeing an intertextual connection between the FG and the VSS.

2.2 The earthly origin of Christ

The VSS do include descriptions of Jesus' earthly origin. Yet, the references must be viewed through a Valentinian lens. While the VSS

do describe Jesus as having an earthly father and mother and inhabiting a body, Valentinian theology and its allegorical hermeneutic should not be overlooked.

In order to understand the theology of the incarnation in the TT, the wider Valentinian theology must be taken into account. The Logos produced the Saviour and its spiritual flesh (114:7–10). This flesh came from a seed (114:9–22). The spiritual flesh is shared with the church (122:12–18), but this is not the same flesh as the incarnation. For this reason, he can be described as ‘begotten’ (*najpaf*, 113:31–34) and ‘unbegotten’ (*natjpof*, 113:36–38) in the same context. In TT 115:9–11, Jesus was ‘conceived and born as an infant in body and soul’ (*mm[a]s auō aftroumestf nnouilou n-cōma psukhē*). He was conceived without ‘sin’ (*nobe*), ‘stain’ (*mntattōlm*), and ‘defilement’ (*atjōhm*, 115:15–17). Yet, in the same section, the Saviour and the spirituals are said to have ‘mingled’ with him (*moujč*, TT 116:5). In other words, even in this passage, the idea of mutual participation and co-incarnation can be seen clearly. The TT was most likely written in the third or fourth centuries and evidences some softening in Valentinian doctrine (Edwards 1995:78). Thus, the inclusion of a human body of sin in TT 115:9–11 and 15–17 could have been included to make Valentinian doctrine more acceptable to Catholic Christians. Just as those that he came to save had a body and soul, Jesus did as well. Yet, the Saviour is still the image of the unitary one and ‘the Totality in bodily form’ (*pteērf kata psōma*, TT 116:28–30). Jesus and the spirituals have co-incarnated (116:5), yet he is indivisible and impassable (116:31–33). As Theodotus explained, the body of Jesus is the same substance as the church (*Exc* 42). Jesus put on the psychic Christ, but was still invisible, so a visible body was spun out of invisible psychic material (*Exc* 59). Furthermore, the soul of Christ ascended to the Father while the body suffered on the cross (*Exc*

62). In some sense, Jesus had earthly origins, but the psychic substance that made up his flesh was worn like a garment—a temporary form.

GT 20:3–34 and 31:4–9 seem to describe a physical body in that it describes Jesus suffering (20:11), appearing (20:23), being nailed to a tree (20:25), dying (20:29), and appearing in fleshly form (31:5–6), but without being seen by ‘the material ones’ (31:1). Thomassen and Segelberg both suggest that the latter passage might contain an allusion to baptism (Thomassen 2006:154–155; Segelberg 1959:7). Thomassen believes that there is a connection with 1 Corinthians 15:53–54. Ménard, along with others (i.e. Attridge and MacRae 1985:88) believes that the phrase *nousarks n-smat* (31:5–6) should be translated ‘fleshly appearance’. Yet, it would be a mistake to label this passage merely docetic. In some sense, Jesus had to have a physical body. As noted above, Theodotus describes the body as suffering apart from Christ (*Exc* 62) and fashioned out of invisible psychic substance (*Exc* 59). Jesus received the spiritual form from Achamoth, the psychic Christ from the Demiurge, and through a special dispensation (*oikonomia*), he received a psychic body that was visible, tangible, and capable of suffering (*Haer* I:6,1). Hippolytus complicates it further. He explains that the Western view was that Jesus was born with a psychic body and then joined with a spiritual component at his baptism. In the Eastern view, he explains, Jesus was given shape (*διαπλασθη*) in Mary’s womb. In other words, Hippolytus was attributing a psychic element to both Eastern and Western views. Thus, Hippolytus, assuming there was a clear-cut distinction between Western (Jesus had both psychic and spiritual forms) and Eastern theory (spiritual form only), would only be describing the Western school (*Haer* I:6,1) (Thomassen 2006:43–45). GT 31:4–9 (‘For he [Jesus] came by means of fleshly form...’) should be viewed through the lens of the Eastern idea of mutual participation. This translation is consistent with *Ref* VI:35 and 7, where Hippolytus asserts that Axionicus and Ardesianes both belong to the east and ‘say

that the body (σῶμα) of the Saviour was spiritual (πνευματικόν). For the Holy Spirit, that is Sophia and the power of the Most High—the art of creation—came upon Mary in order that shape (διαπλασθη) might be given to Mary by the Spirit (πνεύματος).’ While the VSS repeatedly refer to the body as a garment (IK 11:26-39; GP 51:20–58:10; 68:26–29), in some sense, Jesus was born into a physical form.

The GP states that Jesus had two fathers. The Father in heaven appears in GP 55:23–36, and Jesus’ earthly father appears in 73:8–19:

Philip the apostle said, ‘Joseph the carpenter planted a garden because he needed wood for his trade. It was he who made the cross from the trees which he planted. His own offspring hung on that which he planted. His offspring was Jesus and the planting was the cross.’ But the tree of life is in the middle of the garden. However, it is from the olive tree that we get the chrism, and from the chrism, the resurrection.

The author of the GP most likely intended a deeper understanding than Joseph planting the tree that would ultimately be used to kill his son. Joseph, in 73:8–19, most likely stands for the Demiurge and the wood then becomes Jesus’ physical body (Thomassen 1997:268–269). Just as Adam had two mothers in GP 71:16, Jesus seems to have two mothers as well. GP 55:23–36 states: ‘Some have said that Mary conceived by the Holy Spirit. They are mistaken.’ This verse alludes to Luke 1:35, which was explained by Theodotus in *Excerpta ex Theodotus* 60 as referring to the formation of Jesus’ body. From GP 55:23–36, it can be presupposed that Mary was Jesus’ earthly mother. In GP 70:34–71:21, the ‘virgin who came down’ would most likely correspond to Sophia in Valentinian thought. Mary provided the virgin, uncorrupted womb for his psychic body, and Sophia provided his spiritual body (GP 71:8). Thus, Jesus has two sets of parents—spiritual and physical. The Father

and Sophia are his spiritual parents, and Joseph (Demiurge) and Mary are his physical parents. The purpose of his birth was to ‘rectify’ (*efna[s]ehōf*) the fall (71:18–22) through bringing the spiritual seed and sharing it with the spirituals. Thus, the Saviour did have both a spiritual and physical (psychic) body.

One important point to consider before this analysis moves forward is whether the Logos is equated with Jesus in the VSS. Theodotus explained that the spiritual flesh of the Logos is the Saviour’s flesh (*Exc* 1:1). He gave flesh to the Logos (Thomassen 2006:167). Ptolemy also saw unity between the Logos and the Son (*Haer* I:8,5). If they are clearly connected through the incarnation, the nature of Christ in the FG evidently influenced the VSS. Are the Logos and the saviour seen as separate beings in the VSS? Thomassen argues that the VSS do not distinguish between Christ, or the son of Sophia, and Jesus, the Saviour (1989:233). Franzmann too does not see any differentiation between the Logos and the Saviour in IK 3:26–28 nor in the GT (1996:29). This is consistent with GT 30:27–32 and 31:4–8; Jesus is linked with the Logos/Son who came in fleshly form. Furthermore, they both have many similar activities. For example, they both reveal the Father (18:24–29; 24:14–16). Also, they are both connected with truth and have imperishable existence. Rewolinski believes that the issue is complex and imprecise. He writes: ‘While the stance of the GP with regard to God and God as Father is relatively clear, the posture of the Son, the Logos, Jesus (and) Christ is as complex as the several designations used to describe the nature and function of the Son’ (1978:76). Theodotus may hold the key to this issue. He explained that there were two forms of the Logos. The Logos of John 1:14 was the lower form (*Exc* 19:1), and the Logos in John 1:1–4 would correspond to the higher, spiritual form. The GT clearly equates the Logos with the saviour in GT 16:31–38 and explains that he ‘became a body’ (GT 26:4–8). Since the Valentinians viewed the Saviour’s body as a shell,

they were forced to distinguish between these two forms of the Logos in order to harmonise their myth with the FG. Thus, the differences can be explained through the Valentinians' desire to fit the FG into their myth, but the fact that the Logos, who became a body, is associated with a fleshly Jesus can only be explained through the prior influence of the FG on the VSS.

3 The Human and Spiritual Components of Christ

The understanding of Jesus' body should be seen as bifurcated: (a) Jesus' body was spiritual and originated outside this world, and (b) Jesus' body was in some sense psychic and originated both within the earthly realm and the heavenly realm. Much of the evidence for a bodily incarnation seems to contain language consistent with mutual participation—the co-incarnation of the Saviour with the spirituals in order to reunite with the Pleroma.

3.1. Christ as principally spirit

Mutual participation is a key Valentinian doctrine that sheds light on the spiritual nature of Christ. Therefore, any discussion of Christ as principally spirit must include this concept. The co-mingling of bodies is found in *Excerpta ex Theodotus* 17. Jesus and the church co-incarnated with Sophia. Jesus' body is made up of spiritual seeds, planted by Sophia (*Exc* 26) and carried on Jesus' shoulders back to the Pleroma (*Exc* 42). Thus, Jesus' spiritual body is made up of the church (*Exc* 12, cf. TT 116:5–117:8). The spiritual body of the Saviour consists of the Saviour and the elect.

In the The Tripartite Tractate 113:31–37, Jesus is portrayed as one who was begotten and will suffer (vv. 33–34) and who was previously

eternal, unbegotten, and impassable from the Logos. He ‘came into the flesh’ (*en<en>taḥšōpe hn sarks*). Attridge and Pagels clarify this apparent contradiction by explaining that the author is distinguishing between the psychic Christ who suffered and the spiritual Christ who did not (1985:433). Yet, they explain, ‘The *Tri. Tac.* approaches closer to orthodoxy than did Ptolemy by maintaining the unity of the Saviour and by insisting on the reality of his suffering’ (1985:433). The Tripartite Tractate was most likely written late, and evidences some softening of doctrine. The author of the The Tripartite Tractate established the order between the psychics and hylics (98:12–23). They are associated with right and left respectively (see GT 32:4–15). Concerning the relationship of the soul and the body, TR 48:38–49:9 describes ‘imperishability’ (*tmntatteko*) descending upon ‘the perishable’ (*pteko*), echoing 1 Corinthians 15:53–54. Given 47:5–8 and 47:22–24, Peel believes that this is a reference to a spiritual, resurrected flesh replacing the corruptible, earthly flesh (1985:200). TR 47:5–8 states: ‘You received flesh when you entered this world. Why will you not receive flesh when you ascend into the Aeon?’ This is consistent with Heracleon’s commentary on John 4:47. When talking about the soul, he writes of ‘the perishable which puts on imperishability’ (τὸ ἐνδύμενον ἀφθαρσίαν φθαρτόν). The spiritual, imperishable flesh was placed on top of the corrupted, earthly flesh.

The GT notes that the Father ‘begot him as a son’ (*afmestf nnoušēre*, 38:10). This is reminiscent of Ptolemy’s commentary on the FG, as recorded by Irenaeus (*Haer* I:8, 5). Irenaeus quotes Ptolemy:

John, the disciple of the Lord, wishing to set forth the origin of all things, so as to explain how the Father produced the whole, lays down a certain principle,—that, namely, which was first-begotten by God, which Being he has termed both the only-begotten Son and God, in whom the Father, after a seminal manner, brought forth all things.

Van Unnik believes that there are allusions to Psalms 2:7 (1955:121), and Giversen sees allusions to Acts 13:33 and Hebrews 1:5 (1959:88–91). All of these are possible. One thing remains clear; Jesus was the Father’s son and had a spiritual and divine nature.

The author of the GT also explains that the material ones ‘did not see him’ (*neuneu apefeine en*, 31:1–3). If the phrase in 31:5–6 is translated ‘fleshly form’, this could be seen as a reference to his psychic reality. In GP 57:28–58:10, Jesus appeared in different manners so that he could be seen, which may be an allusion to the transfiguration (Smith 2005:28). However, some even thought they were seeing themselves. Also, while Jesus was on the cross, Christ had departed (68:26–29). This is consistent with the bifurcated Jesus Christ that Mahé attributes to Valentinianism (Mahé 1975:51). It is also consistent with Theodotus’s account of Jesus suffering while Christ departed to the Father’s hand (*Exc* 62). In TT 105:29–106:12, in the creation of man, the Logos provided the spiritual part (Attridge and Pagels 1985:410–411). Theodotus believed that Jesus placed upon himself the psychic Christ like a garment. He is also the image, a spiritual copy (*hikōn*) (Attridge and Pagels 1985:441), of the unitary one (116:28–29) and the Totalities in bodily form (116:30). He forms a garment (91:35) wrapped around the Totalities (87:34). Jesus’ spiritual reality, juxtaposed with his physical reality remains quite clear in the VSS.

Jesus did have a spiritual nature in the VSS, but it would be a mistake to differentiate between the spiritual and human components of Jesus in the VSS as simply spiritual versus corporeal. Jesus had two bodies, one spiritual and one psychic. Theodotus believed that the Saviour had a spiritual body: the church (*Exc* 26). He was a mixture of spiritual bodies, namely the church, Jesus, and Sophia (*Exc* 17). The Western view attributed a psychic body to Christ as well (*Exc* 59 and 61). Thus,

Irenaeus's assessment that there were two forms to the saviour proves accurate (*Haer* I:6, 1). The spiritual came from Sophia/Achamoth, like Theodotus's spiritual seed, and the psychic consisted of the psychic Christ, born of the Demiurge, and the psychic body that came through a special dispensation (*oikonomia*), which was visible, tangible, and capable of suffering.

3.2. Christ as primarily human

GP 57:20–22 and 82:6–7 speak pejoratively of the nature of the flesh. The former describes the worthlessness of the body apart from representing Christ. (Smith 2005:26) The latter contrasts the 'fleshly' (*sarkikon*) with being 'pure' (*tbbēu*). This clearly has implications for their view of the nature of Christ. This following section analysed the humanity of Christ in the VSS from the NHL. One important distinction should be made between various descriptions of the body of Christ. As was discussed earlier, Jesus' body is described as human and at the same time as the church, the spiritual seed of Sophia, and a group of angels (Thomassen 2007:793). At the same time, the incarnation was essential in order to release the spirituals from their bodies.

TR 45:13–19 explains that Jesus 'swallowed up death' (*ōmnk m-mou*). The verb *ōmnk* may translate the Greek word καταπίνω—the same verb that Paul uses in 1 Corinthians 15:54 and 2 Corinthians 5:4. Peel explains that the author of the TR uses this phrase four times in order to 'denote divine conquest over/destruction of death, corruptibility, and ignorance. In this passage it especially underscores his role in transforming death into nothing more than a transition stage to the spiritual resurrection (cf. 44.27–29; 46.7–8)' (Peel 1985:159). Nonetheless, one should not understand this passage as describing a literal, bodily death. The passage goes on to explain that the Saviour transformed himself into an imperishable aeon, raised himself, and

swallowed the visible. This passage contains clear indications that mutual participation is in view. The swallowing of the visible or the spirituals leads to being drawn to heaven. It is a spiritual resurrection (TR 45:40). This doctrine is also contained in Valentinus's writings (*Strom* IV:13.89,1–3) (Haardt 1970:254).

The TT states that he 'came into being in the flesh' (*tahšōpe hn sarks*, TT 113:38), 'became a man' (*prešōpe n-pōme*, 125:1–2), was 'incarnated in flesh' (*entahšōpe hn sarks*, 125:15), and 'appeared in the flesh' (*netahouōnh hn sarks*, 133:16–18). Nonetheless, the flesh in TT 114:4–10 comes from the Logos and his spiritual children: 'They say that it is a production from all of them, but that before all things it is from the spiritual Logos who is the cause of the things which have come into being, from whom the Saviour received his flesh.' Theodotus's account in *Exc* 1 and 26 agrees with the author of the TT. The flesh, or spiritual seed, is distinct from the Saviour in TT 114:9–22. Furthermore, TT 114:30–115:23 seems to indicate a psychic incarnation—the Saviour accepted their death and the smallness that they received when they were born in body and soul. Thomassen believes the Valentinians saw the Saviour as superhuman but as in some sense experiencing a real incarnation (2006:49). Accepting the smallness of those he came to save was soteriologically necessary. The VSS seem to at least nominally include the idea of a human body.

GT 23:30–24:2 describes the Logos as having a body. Both Schenke and Haardt believe that this should be taken as figurative (Schenke 1959:40; Haardt 1962:35). While the previous passages use the word *sarks*, GT 26:8 uses the word *sōma*. The way in which the VSS use these two terms could shed light on how they viewed the body. GT 26:8 states that 'he became a body' (*af̄r ousōma*). It is possible that the author had John 1:14 in his mind. Nonetheless, the translators very well

could have used *sarks* instead of *sōma* (Attridge and MacRae 1985:77). *Sarks* is used 43 times in VSS (GT 31:5; TR 44:15; 47:5 [x2], GP 56:29, 30, 33; VE 32:35; 38:20, 36, etc.). *Sōma* is used 35 times (GT 23:31; 26:8; TR 47:17, 35; TT 54:18; 66:14 [x2], GP 56:26; 71:8; IK 6:30; 17:15; VE 33:33; 38:19, etc.). Three passages exist where the usages are juxtaposed: (1) TR 47, (2) GP 56–57, and (3) IK 6. In TR 47, *sōma* is used in the context of corruption (47:19) and what has been left behind (47:34–35) while *sarks* is used to explain that the spirituals received flesh when they entered the world, and they will receive flesh when they ascend to the aeons as well. In GP 56, the author describes the shell that holds the soul as the contemptible *sōma*. The author then contrasts that with the *sarks*, which Jesus instructed his disciples to eat, which brings life, and will rise in the end (57:10, 18). In IK 6, *sarks* is described as ‘bound’ (*mour*) in a ‘net’ (*abē*) and the *sōma* is described as ‘a temporary dwelling’ (*m[a] nšōp[e]*). Concerning the GT’s use of *sōma*, Williams suggests that the difference could lie in the fact that ‘Valentinus focuses on the body as the centre of human life and emotion’ (1988:95). Attridge and MacRae, as well as Ménard (1972:126), believe that the use of *sōma* could have been influenced by Plato (*Tim* 32D) (Attridge and MacRae 1985:77). TR 47:18 juxtaposes *sōma* with old age. Also, in GP 56, the soul is hidden in the *sōma*. The *sōma* in *The Interpretation of Knowledge* (IK) is described as the place where the rulers live. Thus, the *sōma* does seem to connote the concept of life (TT 135:10–17) and corruption, whereas *sarks* is more of the inner being that will eventually rise. Likewise, GP 75:22–24 also seems to equate the living man with the *sōma*. Ménard sees the reference to $\sigma\acute{\alpha}\rho\chi$ in John 1:14 and pneumatic Christology of other writings were too primitive for the author of the FG. Because of this, he preferred to use the Platonic term $\sigma\omega\mu\alpha$, which includes the idea of unity (1972:125–126).

Thus, *sōma* denotes unity and the totality of the living, material man. *Sarks* seems to have more of a pneumatic or psychic connotation. If the *sōma* has more to do with material man, GT 26:8 may indicate that the Logos truly inhabited a body. There is no parallel in Hellenism or Judaism. A hypostatized Logos is absent from both. Thus, the influence of the FG can clearly be seen in the Logos concept in the GT. Although the Valentinian myth calls for the Logos to repent and return to the Pleroma, creating the flesh of the Saviour, Heracleon in *In Jo* 6:108, Theodotus *Exc* 1:1, and GT 16:31–38 all equate the Logos with the Saviour, clearly influenced by the FG. In fact, the Logos is incarnated in GT 26:4–8: ‘When the Word (*šēje*) appeared the one that is within the heart of those who utter it—it is not a sound alone, but it became a body (*sōma*).’

GT 31:5–6 states that the Son had fleshly form. Yet, consistent with Eastern Valentinian theology, the GT states that he ‘stripped himself of perishable rags’ (*eaḡbōš mmaḡ nniplče ettekait*) and ‘put on imperishability’ (*aḡti hiōḡ ntmntat teko*, 20:15–39). Segelberg understands this as a reference to baptism (1959:7). Ménard sees allusions to 2 Corinthians 5:4 (1972:101). In this passage, Paul describes the release from this ‘tent’ (σκῆνῆ), a temporary dwelling, as being ‘clothed’ (ἐπενδύσασθαι). In fact, the ‘mortal’ (θνητόν) will be ‘swallowed’ (κατεπόθη) by life. The concept of swallowing the mortal finds an echo in TR 45:14–33, a passage that describes the Saviour’s mutual participation. IK 5:30–6:34 describes the Saviour as inhabiting a temporal or fabricated body, being crucified, suffering, and dying. Nonetheless, IK 12:22–38 (Bock 2006:180–181) reads: ‘the flesh is an Aeon that Sophia has emitted’ (*[tc]arks ouaiōn pe ntahatsophia*, IK 12:32–33). This corresponds to the spiritual body and finds a parallel in TR 45:13–19 where the context of swallowing death includes the idea of mutual participation. However, Jesus also has to be disguised by a

‘carcass’ (*šel*, 12:37). Because of the doctrine of mutual participation, the Saviour has a spiritual body but also must be a model to those that will be saved. Thus, he must take on a carcass, an animal nature (psychic) like those he has come for (*Val* 27). GP 57:2–7 states that Jesus was flesh and blood. Yet, he came in ‘stealth’ (*njioue*, 57:28). The Saviour’s psychic body was temporary and perishable but in some sense real. As Bock notes, ‘He is not human, but much more. The heavenly and spiritual takes precedence over the human. The human is an accommodation to humanity’ (2006:102).

Jesus’ humanity also becomes evident in the VSS when looking at the physical activities of Jesus. Jesus was ‘born as an infant in body and soul’ (*aftroumestf nnouuilou n-soma psukhē*, TT 115:10–11). While the verb is hard to make out, Attridge and Pagels believe that it is probably *mise* (Crum 1939:184b). The TT seems to be quite orthodox at this point (Attridge and Pagels 1985:437). However, once again, the TT includes evidence that it was penned late and, thus, its Valentinian theology could have been softened due to outside pressures. Jesus was also ‘persecuted’ (*pōt nsōf*, GT 18:21–31) and ‘nailed to a tree’ (*auaftf auše*, cf. GT 20:25). The author of IK 10:27–34 describes Christ as becoming small. Thomassen believes that this is a reference to the incarnation and the idea of substitution (2006:86–87). Christ accepts both the death and smallness of those that he came to save, just as they received them when they were born in body and soul. Yet, IK 10:23–26 contrasts *skhēma* or ‘shape’ with *katadikē* which comes from the Greek *καταδίκη* or a ‘sentence of condemnation’. This would most likely correspond to the hylics who are destined for destruction. Thus, the shape could be psychic or spiritual.

GP 63:31–64:5 also describes Jesus’ love for his companion Mary and the fact that he kissed her. Rather than a reference to the humanity of Christ, this should probably be viewed in light of TT 58:21–29 (Smith

2005:36). The word ‘kiss’ (*aspaze*) comes from the Greek verb ἀσπάζομαι. It was used by Ptolemy (*Apotel* 1.3.17) and Philo (*In Flacc* 38) (Danker and Bauer 2000:144). Its use should be viewed as a customary behaviour in the context of a greeting. In VSS, it often refers to the creative acts of the Father and Son (Attridge and Pagels 1985:242). In TT 58:21–29, it occurs in the context of the creation of the church. The union of the emanations of the Father is referred to through an embrace or ‘kisses’ (*aspasmos*) in GT 41:23–34. Attridge and Pagels explain that the kiss in GP 59:2–4 refers to ‘a spiritual procreation’ (1985:242). The spirituals ‘receive conception from the grace’ (*enji mpō ebol hn tkharis*) through the kiss (Smith 2005:34). In addition, in the Gospel of Thomas 108, when someone drinks from the mouth of Jesus they will become like him and what is in Jesus will be revealed. Thus, the kiss between Jesus and Mary ‘Magdalene’ (*magdalēnē*) in the GP most likely is a reference to the fact that she was elect or a spiritual and received teaching from the mouth of Jesus. Additionally, using ‘kiss’ as a metonym for ‘teach’ makes sense within an oral culture and between a disciple and her teacher in the first century.

As this section demonstrates, the human component of Christ in the VSS involves many complexities. This may be due to the debates between Eastern and Western schools as well as the apparent debate within the Western school (*Ref* VI). Thus, the VSS in the NHL seem to side with the Eastern school while at times displaying Western tendencies. Due to the soteriological necessity of the incarnation, the authors of the VSS had to include the incarnation in some sense. One thing is certain; the body of Christ in the FG and the body of Christ in the VSS are two completely different concepts.

At the same time, echoes of the nature of Christ in the FG can be seen in the VSS in the fact that the Logos became flesh (TT 113:38) and the saviour/son was Jesus (TT 87:1–17). No better parallel to the VSS exists than the FG. Although the Valentinians allowed for the incarnation, influenced by John 1:14, they continually qualified the humanity of Christ as a carcass or garment, a notion originating with Middle Platonism and Stoicism, and viewed the primary Logos as that of John 1:1 and his lesser form as the one who became a body in John 1:14 (*Exc* 19:1).

4. Conclusion

The heavenly origin of Christ can be seen in the Logos's descent from the Pleroma as revelation of the Father and in order to redeem those who came to save, in his pre-existence and his close relationship with the Father. All three of these concepts give a glimpse of the close intertextual relationship between the VSS and the FG. The earthly origin of Christ shares clear parallels with the FG as well. Although the VSS picture Jesus as appearing in bodily form, they always qualify or explain that Jesus' flesh should not be seen as hylic or material. Although Jesus had a mother and father, the earthly Mary only provided an uncorrupted womb for his psychic flesh.

Although the VSS contain passages that seem to indicate that Jesus had a human nature, Jesus, according to the Eastern view, in fact had two bodies, a spiritual body and a psychic body. The spiritual body was a combination of the Logos and the seeds of his spiritual offspring. Thus, the purpose of the incarnation was to carry the seeds on his shoulders back to the Pleroma. The psychic form consisted of the psychic Christ, born of the Demiurge, and the psychic body that came through a special dispensation (*oikonomia*), which was visible, tangible, and capable of suffering. The incarnation, in some sense, is essential to Valentinian

doctrine. Even the passages that seem to indicate that the VSS attribute human flesh to Jesus qualify the flesh of Christ in some sense. Because accepting the smallness of those he came to save was soteriologically necessary, the VSS seem to at least nominally include the idea of a human body. More consistently, the flesh of Christ in the VSS is described as a carcass, perishable rags, clothing, or a fleshly form.

How can one reconcile these seeming contradictions? Both the FG and Platonic thought influenced the Valentinians. In an attempt to reconcile their myth with the FG, amidst competing factions which viewed the nature of Christ differently, the VSS seem to describe the body of Christ as a psychic reality, avoiding the material or hylic essence, which Valentinians viewed pejoratively. Because of these competing groups, eastern and western Valentinians, as well as outside orthodox pressures, Valentinian doctrine was a work in process.

Abbreviations

Exc	<i>Excerpta ex Theodotus</i> (Clement of Alexandria)
FG	The Fourth Gospel
GP	The Gospel of Philip
GT	The Gospel of Truth
Haer	<i>Against Heresies</i> (Irenaeus)
IK	<i>The Interpretation of Knowledge</i>
NHL	Nag Hammadi Library
Ref	<i>Refutations of all Heresies</i> (Hippolytus)
Strom	<i>Stromata</i> (Clement of Alexandria)
Tim	Timaeus (Plato)
TR	The Treatise on the Resurrection
TT	The Tripartite Tractate

- Val *Against the Valentinians* (Tertullian)
VE *A Valentinian Exposition with Valentinian Liturgical Readings*
VSS The Valentinian Sources

Reference List

- Attridge HW and MacRae GW 1985. The Gospel of Truth. In HW Attridge (ed.), *Nag Hammadi Codex I (The Jung Codex)* (vol. 1, ed.). Leiden: Brill.
- Attridge HW and Pagels EH 1985. The Tripartite Tractate. In HW Attridge (ed.), *Nag Hammadi Codex I (The Jung Codex)*. Leiden: Brill.
- Bock DL 2006. *The missing gospels: unearthing the truth behind alternative Christianities*. Nashville: Nelson Books.
- Crum WE 1939. *A Coptic dictionary*. Oxford: Clarendon.
- Danker FW and Bauer W 2000. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (3rd ed.). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Edwards MJ 1995. The Epistle to Rheginus: Valentinianism in the Fourth Century. *Novum Testamentum* 37(1):76–91.
- Fecht G 1961; 1962; 1963. Der erste ‘Teil’ des sogenannten Evangelium Veritatis (S. 16, 31–22, 20). *Or*, 1961 (vol. 30):371–90, 1962 (vol. 31):85–119; 1963 (vol. 32):298–335.
- Franzmann M 1996. *Jesus in the Nag Hammadi writings*. Edinburgh: T&T Clark.
- Giversen S 1959. Evangelium Veritatis and the Epistle to the Hebrews. *Studia Theologica* 13:87–96.
- Grobel K 1960. *The Gospel of Truth: a Valentinian meditation on the Gospel*. New York: Abingdon.

- Haardt R 1962. Zur Struktur des Plane-Mythos im Evangelium Veritatis des Codex Jung. *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes* 58:24–38.
- Haardt R 1970. ‘Die Abhandlung über die Auferstehung’ des Codex Jung aus der Bibliothek gnostischer koptischer Schriften von Nag Hammadi. Bemerkungen zu ausgewählten Motiven. *Kairos* 12:241–269.
- Layton B 1981. Vision and revision: a gnostic view of resurrection. In B Barc (ed.), *Colloque international sur les textes de Nag Hammadi*, 190–217. Québec: Les presses de l’Université Laval.
- Mahé J-P 1975. *Tertullien: la chair du Christ*. Paris: Éditions du Cerf.
- Ménard JE 1970. La structure et la langue originale de l’Évangile de Vérité. *Revue des Sciences Religieuses* 44:128–137.
- Ménard JE 1972. *L’Évangile de Vérité*. Leiden: Brill.
- Peel ML 1985. The treatise on the resurrection. In HW Attridge (ed.), *Nag Hammadi Codex I (The Jung Codex)*. Leiden: Brill.
- Plotinus 2006. *Enneads of Plotinus: the ethical treatises and psychic and physical treatises*. Boston: Kessinger.
- Rewolinski ET 1978. The use of sacramental language in the Gospel of Philip. Phd Thesis, Harvard University. Cambridge, United States.
- Rudolph K 1977. *Gnosis: the nature and history of Gnosticism*. San Fransico: Harper & Row.
- Schenke H-M 1959. *Die Herkunft des sogenannten Evangelium veritatis*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.
- Segelberg E 1959. Evangelium veritatis: a confirmation homily and its relation to the Odes of Solomon. *Orientalia Suecana* 8:1–40.
- Smith AP 2005. *The Gospel of Philip: annotated and explained*. Woodstock: SkyLight Paths.
- Thomassen E 1989. The Valentinianism of the Valentinian Exposition. *Muséon* 102:225–236.

- Thomassen E 1997. How Valentinian is The Gospel of Philip? In JD Turner and A McGuire (eds.), *The Nag Hammadi Library after Fifty Years: Proceedings of the 1995 Society of Biblical Literature Commemoration*, 251–279. Leiden: Brill.
- Thomassen E 2006. *The spiritual seed: the Church of the 'Valentinians'*. Leiden: Brill.
- Thomassen E 2007. The Valentinian school of Gnostic thought. In M Meyer (ed.), *The Nag Hammadi scriptures*, 790–794. New York: HarperCollins.
- Unnik WCV 1955. The Gospel of Truth and the New Testament. In FL Cross (ed.), *The Jung Codex: a newly recovered Gnostic papyrus; three studies*. New York: Morehouse-Gorham Co.
- Von Harnack A 1909. *Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte, 4., neu durchgearbeitete und verm. Aufl. edn* (3 vols.). Tübingen: JCB Mohr.
- Williams JA 1988. *Biblical interpretation in the Gnostic Gospel of Truth from Nag Hammadi*. Atlanta: Scholars Press.