

Valentinian Gnosticism and the Hypostatic Union

I am featuring some quotes on this page in order to show the similarities between Valentinian Gnosticism and the hypostatic union dogma of a multi component messiah. Valentinus is regarded to be the most successful gnostic and almost became bishop of Rome. Many consider him to have influenced the roman church and its dogmas to a very large degree. It was also the Valentinians that used the term "homoousion" first, "of the same substance", that found its way into the nicean creed through the pagan emperor Constantine's advise in the arian controversy and thus into the trinitarian dogma of Constantinople. The same goes for the "taking on flesh" terminology, which is not to be found in the bible, but in valentinian writings. Since a Spirit entity "taking on flesh" is clearly not a "flesh becoming", and since this would deny that the Word of God became flesh, 1. John 4:2-3 would be violated and the hypostatic union further proven to be gnostic and thus antichrist since it claims that The Word came in Spirit and always remained Spirit. Research into this topic begs to devote thought into the possibility of a valentinian gnostic inner core of the catholic faith.

Quotes:

"Origen was influenced at certain points by the strange "vertical" exegesis of men like Heracleon, a pupil of Valentinus."

"There has been a way from Valentinus to Heracleon, and from Heracleon to Origen. The transition is much more gradual than a phenomenological comparison can discern."

"In this perspective Origen is a consummation of gnostic developments. Just as Valentinus christianised a non-christian gnostic system, so "Heracleon" catholicised Valentinus and Origen in his turn "Heracleon".

(Gilles Quispel - ORIGEN AND THE VALENTINIAN GNOSIS)

Eternal Sonship is from Valentinian Gnosticism of the italic branch:

"Just as the Father exists in the proper sense, the one before whom there was no one else, and the one apart from whom there is no other unbegotten one, so too the Son exists in the proper sense, the one before whom there was no other, and after whom no other son exists. Therefore, he is a firstborn and an only Son, "firstborn" because no one exists before him and "only Son" because no one is after him...

Not only did the Son exist from the beginning, but...he is unbegotten and without beginning..in accordance with the dispositions: "without beginning" and "without end." Thus is the matter something which is fixed."

(The Tripartite Tractate, Chapter 3)

What our Savior became, out of willing compassion, is the same as that which the ones for whose sake he appeared had become because of an involuntary passion: they had become flesh and soul, and this holds them perpetually in its grip, and they perish and die. ... For not only did he assume their death for the ones he had in mind to save, but in addition he also assumed their smallness, to which they had descended when they were <born> with body and soul; for he let himself be conceived and he let himself be born as a child with body and soul.

(The Tripartite Tractate 114:30–115:11)

--

Now with the heresy of the Ariomaniacs, which has corrupted the Church of God... These then teach three hypostases, just as Valentinus the heresiarch first invented in the book entitled by him 'On the Three Natures'. For he was the first to invent three hypostases and three persons of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and he is discovered to have filched this from Hermes and Plato.

(Marcellus of Ancrya)

--

The soul held aloft by the air. The air suspended from the ether.

Fruits manifest themselves out of the Depth. A child emerges from the womb

Explanation By a Later Teacher

He means this: "flesh" is matter which is "hanging" from the "soul" of the Craftsman.

(Summer Harvest: A Psalm By Valentinus

This hymn was written by Valentinus during his time in Rome (139-160AD). In it Valentinus offers a brief summary of his vision of the universe, beginning from below and ending with the Aeons being produced by Depth and Silence in the Fullness. The title of the hymn uses the type of agricultural metaphor typical of Valentinian thought. A commentary by a later Roman Valentinian is appended to the hymn.)

--

If it is true that once thou [Rheginus] wert not in the flesh, but only took flesh at the moment when thou didst come into this world, wherefore should thou not also take on flesh when thou goest up to the spiritual world?

(Epistle to Rheginus 47,2-8)

--

Now the Son of God, [dear] Rheginos, was Son of Man. He embraced them both, possessing the humanity and the divinity, so that on the one hand he might vanquish death through his being Son of God, and that on the other through the Son of Man the restoration to the Pleroma might occur; because he was originally from above, a seed of Truth, before this structure had come into being.

(Epistle to Rheginus 44,21-31)

--

And if the perfect God is good by nature, in fact he is, for our Savior declared that there is only a single good God, his Father whom he manifested; and if the one who is the opposite nature is evil and wicked, characterized by injustice; then the one situated between the two is neither good nor evil or unjust, but can properly be called just, since he is the arbitrator of the justice which is his.

On the one hand, this god will be inferior to the perfect God and the lower than his justice, since he is generated and not ungenerated -- there is only one ungenerated Father, from whom are all things [1 Cor 8:6], since all things depend on him in their own ways. On the other hand, he will be greater and more powerful than the adversary, by nature, since he has a SUBSTANCE of either of them. The SUBSTANCE of the adversary is corruption and darkness, for he is material and complex, while the SUBSTANCE of the ungenerated Father of all is incorruption and self-existent light, simple and homogeneous. The SUBSTANCE of the latter produced a double power, while the Savior is an image of the greater one.

And now, do not let this trouble you for the present in your desire to learn how from one first principle of all, simple, and acknowledged by us and believed by us, ungenerated and incorruptible and good,

were constituted these natures of corruption and the Middle, which are different SUBSTANCES, although it is characteristic of the good to generate and produce things which are like itself and have the same SUBSTANCE.

(Letter from Ptolemy to Flora)

--

There existed, he says, in the Seed itself, a Sonship, threefold, in every respect of the same Substance (homooousion) with the non-existent God.

(Basilides, Valentinian Gnostic)

--

My first task as an editor of the Tractatus Tripartitus was to show that this document was a consistent whole and must have originated in the Western or Italic branch of Valentinianism, which was directed by Ptolemaeus and Heracleon. As a matter of fact, there were many parallels between this Tripartite Treatise and the preserved fragments of Heracleon's Commentary on the Gospel of John. But there were also differences. The thought of its author is characterised by a high level of abstraction which is not to be found in other writings from the Valentinian school: 1) The dyad Depth and Silence, still preserved by Ptolemaeus, has become a monas; 2) The quaternio Depth-Silence, Nots-Aletheia, of Valentinus and Ptolemaeus has become a trinity of God, the Son and the Church/Holy Ghost; 3) Sophia has lost all feminine features and is turned into an asexual Logos. Moreover the exotic character of the myth has been removed: the aeons are no longer androgyne. We are miles away from the imaginative mysticism of the bridal chamber in the Gospel of Philip or the prurient style of the Valentinian so-called Lehrbrief transmitted by Epiphanius, Panarion 31,5-6

(The Original Doctrine of Valentinus the Gnostic by Gilles Quispel)

--

The kenosis of Christ was a reflexion of the Valentinian myth of the Fall of Sophia.

(A dictionary of the bible Vol. II - Pleiades by James Hastings)

Sidenote:

"Thus, the explanations that the Logos has taken the role of Sophia because it is somehow unfitting for Sophia to become incarnated in a male human beg the question entirely. Pace, e.g. Haenchen, John, 1:126: "Of course, Wisdom (σοφία) as a feminine form could not then be identified with the figure that subsequently becomes man," to which I ask: why on earth not? I00Contrast Bultmann, "History of Religions," 37."

(Footnote from a paper of Daniel Boyarin 'The gospel of the Memra' page 27 in Harvard Theological Review 94:3 (2001) p. 269 shows that 'Binitarianism' (which in essence is the result of the Council of Nicea) equates female Sophia in the 'incarnation' with 'God the Son')

--

Origen describes how Heracleon taught a dual natured messiah, a person who dwelled in a body.

"If any man sin, we read, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for our sins only, but for the sins of the whole world? Paul's dictum appears to me to be to the same effect, when he says, 1 Timothy 4:10 Who is the Saviour of all men, especially of the faithful. Again, Heracleon, dealing with our passage, declares, without any proof or

any citation of witnesses to that effect, that the words, Lamb of God, are spoken by John as a prophet, but the words, who takes away the sin of the world, by John as more than a prophet. The former expression he considers to be used of His body, but the latter of Him who was in that body, because the lamb is an imperfect member of the genus sheep; the same being true of the body as compared with the dweller in it."

(Origen, Commentary on John, Book VI, chapter 38)

--

In like manner they assign to each of them a separate end. To the material, that is to say the carnal (nature), which they also call the left-handed, they assign undoubted destruction; to the animal (nature), which they also call the right-handed, a doubtful issue, inasmuch as it oscillates between the material and the spiritual, and is sure to fall at last on the side to which it has mainly gravitated. As regards the spiritual, however, (they say) that it enters into the formation of the animal, in order that it may be educated in company with it and be disciplined by repeated intercourse with it. For the animal (nature) was in want of training even by the senses: for this purpose, accordingly, was the whole structure of the world provided; for this purpose also did Soter (the Saviour) present Himself in the world — even for the salvation of the animal (nature). By yet another arrangement they will have it that He, in some prodigious way, clothed Himself with the primary portions of those substances, the whole of which He was going to restore to salvation; in such wise that He assumed the spiritual nature from Achamoth, while He derived the animal (being), Christ, afterwards from the Demiurge; His corporal substance, however, which was constructed of an animal nature (only with wonderful and indescribable skill)

(Tertullian - Against the Vaelntinians 1:26)

--

They hold, accordingly, that our Lord, while preserving the type of the first-begotten and primary tetrad, was compounded of these four substances, — of that which is spiritual, in so far as He was from Achamoth; of that which is animal, as being from the Demiurge by a special dispensation, inasmuch as He was formed [corporeally] with unspeakable skill.

(Irenaeus - Against heresies - 1:7:2)

--

Flesh, according to these (heretics), is matter which is suspended from the soul of the Demiurge.

(Hippolytus - Refutation of all heresies 6:32)

--

Wisdom, he says, put forth a receptacle of flesh for the Logos, the spiritual seed; clad in it the Saviour descended.

(Clement - Excerpts of Theodotus 1:1)

--

Wherefore it is also said that he "received the form of a servant," which refers not only to his flesh at the advent, but also to his substance, which he derived from its underlying reality, for substance is a slave, inasmuch as it is passive and subordinate to the active and dominating, cause.

(Clement - Excerpts of Theodotus 1:19)

--

Therefore man is in man, “psychic” in “earthly,” not consisting as part to part but united as whole to whole by God's unspeakable power. Therefore he was created in Paradise in the fourth heaven. For there earthly flesh does not ascend but it was to the divine soul as material flesh. This is the meaning of “This is now bone of my bones,” – he hints at the divine soul which is hidden in the flesh, firm and hard to suffer and very potent, – and “flesh of my flesh” – the material soul which is the body of the divine soul. Concerning these two also, the Saviour says, “That is to be feared which can destroy this soul and this body, the psychic one, in hell.”

(Clement - Excerpts of Theodotus 1:51 about the flesh of mankind in general)

--

Now the psychic Christ sits on the right hand of the Creator, as David says, “Sit thou on my right hand” and so on. And he sits there until the end “that they may see him whom they pierced.” But they pierced the appearance, which is the flesh of the psychic one, “for,” it says, “a bone of him shall not be broken,” just as in the case of Adam the prophecy used bone as an allegory for the soul. For the actual soul of Christ deposited itself in the Father's hands, while the body was suffering. But the spiritual nature referred to as “bone” is not yet deposited but he keeps it.

(Clement - Excerpts of Theodotus 1:62 about the flesh of mankind in general)

--

The term ὁμοούσιος had been used before its adoption by the First Council of Nicaea. The Gnostics were the first to use the word ὁμοούσιος, while before the Gnostics there is no trace at all of its existence.[1][2][3][4][5][6][7][8][9][10] The early church theologians were probably made aware of this concept, and thus of the doctrine of emanation, taught by the Gnostics.[11] In Gnostic texts the word ὁμοούσιος is used with the following meanings:

Identity of substance between generator and generated.

Identity of substance between things generated of the same substance.

Identity of substance between the partners of a syzygy.

For example, Basilides, the first known Gnostic thinker to use ὁμοούσιος in the first half of the 2nd century AD, speaks of a threefold sonship consubstantial with the god who is not.[12][13] The Valentinian Gnostic Ptolemy claims in his letter to Flora that it is the nature of the good God to beget and bring forth only beings similar to, and consubstantial with, himself.[14] The term ὁμοούσιος was already in current use by the 2nd-century Gnostics, and through their works it became known to the orthodox heresiologists, though this Gnostic use of the term had no reference to the specific relationship between Father and Son, as is the case in the Nicene Creed.

(Wikipedia Homoousion)

[1] von Harnack, Adolf, Dogmengeschichte (in German), 1:284–85, n. 3; 2:232–34, n. 4.

[2] Ortiz de Urbina, Ignacio (1942), "L'homoousios preniceno" [The prenicene homoousios], *Orientalia Christiana Periodica*, 8: 194–209.

[3] Ortiz de Urbina, Ignacio (1947), *El Símbolo Niceno* [The Nicene symbol] (in Spanish), Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, pp. 183–202.

[4] Mendizabal, Luis M (1956), "El Homoousios Preniceno Extraeclesiastico" [Ecclesiastical studies], *Estudios Eclesiasticos* (in Spanish), 30: 147–96.

[5] Prestige, George Leonard (1952) [1936], *God in Patristic Thought* (2d ed.), London: SPCK, pp. 197–218.

[6] Gerlitz, Peter (1963), *Aufierchristliche Einflüsse auf die Entwicklung des christlichen Trinitatsdogmas*, zugleich ein religions- und dogmengeschichtlicher Versuch zur Erklärung der Herkunft der Homousie, Leiden: Brill, pp. 193–221.

[7] Boularand, Ephrem (1972), *L'heresie d'Arius et la 'foi' de Nicke* [The Arius' heresy and the 'faith' of Nicke] (in French), 2, *La "foi" de Nicee*, Paris: Letouzey & Ane, pp. 331–53.

[8] Kelly, John Norman D (1972), *Early Christian Creeds* (3d ed.), London: Longman, p. 245.

[9] Dinsen, Frauke (1976), *Homoousios. Die Geschichte des Begriffs bis zum Konzil von Konstantinopel (381)* (Diss) (in German), Kiel, pp. 4–11.

[10] Stead, Christopher, *Divine Substance*, pp. 190–202.

[11] Grillmeier, Aloys (1975), *Christ in Christian Tradition*, 1, *From the Apostolic Age to Chalcedon (451)*, London: Mowbrays, p. 109.

[12] of Rome, Hippolytus, *Refutatio omnium haeresium* [Refutation of all heresies] (in Latin), 7:22, *Υιότης τριμερής, κατὰ πάντα τῷ οὐκ ὄντι θεῷ ὁμοούσιος*.

[13] For the Gnostic use of the term, Marcovich, Miroslav (1986), *Patristische Texte und Studien* [Patristic texts & studies] (in German), 25, Berlin: W de Gruyter, pp. 290f. V, 8, 10 (156), V, 17, 6.10 (186 f.).

[14] of Salamis, Epiphanius, *Panarion* (in Greek), 33:7,8, *Τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ φύσιν ἔχοντος τὰ ὅμοια ἑαυτῷ καὶ ὁμοούσια γεννᾶν τε καὶ προφέρειν*.

(Wikipedia on Homoousion)

--

Like many third-century Christian scholars, Arius was influenced by the writings of Origen, widely regarded as the first great theologian of Christianity.[17] However, while he drew support from Origen's theories on the Logos, the two did not agree on everything. Arius clearly argued that the Logos had a beginning and that the Son, therefore, was not eternal, and that the Son is clearly subordinate to the Father, the Logos being the highest of the Created Order. This idea is summarized in the statement "there was a time when the Son was not." By way of contrast, Origen taught that the Son was subject to the Father, and some of Origen's writings seem to imply that the Son is subordinate and less than the Father in some ways. However, Origen believed the relation of the Son to the Father had no beginning, and that the Son was "eternally generated".[18]

Arius objected to Origen's doctrine, complaining about it in his letter to the Nicomedian Eusebius, who had also studied under Lucian. Nevertheless, despite disagreeing with Origen on this point, Arius found solace in his writings, which used expressions that favored Arius's contention that the Logos was of a different substance than the Father, and owed his existence to his Father's will. However, because Origen's theological speculations were often proffered to stimulate further inquiry rather than to put an end to any given dispute, both Arius and his opponents were able to invoke the authority of this revered (at the time) theologian during their debate.[19]

Arius emphasized the supremacy and uniqueness of God the Father, meaning that the Father alone is infinite and eternal and almighty, and that therefore the Father's divinity must be greater than the Son's. Arius taught that the Son had a beginning, contrary to Origen, who taught that the Son was less than the Father only in power, but not in time. Arius maintained that the Son possessed neither the eternity nor the true divinity of the Father, but was rather made "God" only by the Father's permission and power, and that the Logos was rather the very first and the most perfect of God's productions, before ages.[20][21]

[17] Moore, Edward (2 May 2005). "Origen of Alexandria". Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy. The University of Tennessee at Martin. Retrieved 2 May 2012.

[18] Origen. "On Christ". De Principiis. Retrieved 2 May 2012. Wherefore we have always held that God is the Father of His only-begotten Son, who was born indeed of Him, and derives from Him what He is, but without any beginning

[19] "Arius of Alexandria, Priest and Martyr". Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church (Arian Catholic). Archived from the original on 25 April 2012. Retrieved 2 May 2012.

[20] Kelly 1978, Chapter 9

[21] Davis 1983, pp. 52–54

(Origen and Arius - Wikipedia on Arius)