

TREATISE ON RESURRECTION (EPISTLE TO RHEGINUS)

(TRs)

Contents

Almost the earliest known Christian text is a fragment of oral tradition that was quoted by St. Paul when he wrote to the Christians in Corinth about A.D. 54 (1 Co 15:3f). It is a creedal summary—a stylized formulation of beliefs, suitable for memorization—about the death and resurrection of Jesus, which Paul says he received from his even earlier predecessors.

Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures.

He was buried.

He was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures.

He appeared to Cephas (Peter), then to the twelve. . . .

Such creedal declarations, whose wording varied from church to church, must have been a central reference point in the theological teaching of many early Christians.

From the time of Valentinus, no manuscript copy of a creedal formula seems to have survived; but the typical wording of such formulas can be roughly reconstructed from passing references found in Christian literature of the second century. Typically, a creedal formula about A.D. 150 might have asserted that Jesus

. . . was in the beginning.

He became incarnate.

He was crucified (or suffered) and died.

He arose from the dead.

He ascended into heaven.

He sits at the right hand of his father.

He shall come again to judge the world.

What did these words really mean? Precisely what did they refer to? And what did Jesus' resurrection and ascension indicate about the ultimate fate of the individual Christian? The answers to such questions were a matter of keen debate from the earliest moment in the history of the church (as 1 Co 15 shows)—nor was the debate any less lively at the time of Valentinus.

To some extent, answers might depend on an ancient teacher's prior assumptions about Jesus' manner of existence while he was on earth (was it material? animate? spiritual?) and, similarly, assumptions about the makeup of the individual Christian believer. A Valentinian interpretation of Christian resurrection would not be simple for Valentinians conceived of three basic components in the human makeup: the material body ("dust"), which is destined to perish; an animate element (soul) that vivifies it, and which is ultimately destined for distinct preservation; and the intellect

(spiritual element) or true self, which is destined for reunion and repose with god the father; cf. IrPt 1.6.1, 1.7.1.

Many ordinary Christians in the second century understood that just as Jesus had truly died and in his "resurrection" come back to life on the third day, so they too would die and then ultimately "arise" or come back to life in their same body. But Valentinian teachers, or at least some of them, did not accept that the animate element and the intellect (spirit) were capable of death; nor that the material body was capable of ultimate preservation. From these assumptions they concluded that the words "arise" and "resurrection" must not refer to a process of death and revivification, but to an upward movement in a different, more abstract or metaphorical sense—in which the soul and intellect escape from material existence, and then "ascend" or change into another state of existence. It is the intellect's escape and change of condition that are the main topic of the *Treatise on Resurrection* (Epistle to Rheginus).

For the author of TRs the "resurrection" and "ascension" of the intellect result from its contemplation of the divine, presumably at higher and higher degrees of abstraction until it contemplates the realm of permanent, pure being. A similar kind of mystical contemplation is described in several classic gnostic scriptures (cf. Zs and Fr); it was also discussed in non-Christian philosophy of the time. This, says the author of TRs, is "resurrection of the spirit" which makes the question of other kinds of resurrection irrelevant (46:1f). In the light of this Valentinian teaching, Jesus' "suffering"—traditionally understood to mean his real death on the cross—would not refer to biological death but simply to the suffering sojourn of his spirit or soul on earth within the illusory realm of matter. Like Valentinus in GTr, the author of TRs (48:19f) even goes so far as to deny the reality of the material world.

Thus for the author of TRs, the believer's true self—the "superior element"—never dies; its "resurrection" begins as soon as it starts to contemplate greater and greater intellectual objects (46:19f). This process begins here and now, while the believer dwells within the illusory material world. In this sense, the believer "already has resurrection" (49:13f). TRs is thus a classic exposition of the doctrine that "the resurrection is past already," a doctrine combated in the pastoral epistles of the New Testament (cf. 2 Ti 2:18).

The *Treatise* is addressed to an ordinary Christian believer named Rheginus (otherwise unknown), who seems to have become interested in Valentinian Christianity and to have inquired about the Valentinian interpretation of the local creedal formula, specifically as it concerned the doctrine of resurrection. The answer proposed in TRs is very ambiguous, shifting constantly between the traditional language of the creedal text and the author's allegorical interpretation of it phrased in philosophical terms. A certain amount of Valentinian jargon is introduced, but without any direct explanation or definition. The *Treatise* concludes with an offer to explain these ambiguities: no doubt the next installment of Rheginus's instruction would have been more systematic and technical. Thus TRs is an exhortation ("protreptic"), inviting ordinary Christians to a "deeper," Valentinian understanding of Christian faith.

Literary background

The author of TRs and its place of composition are unknown. Because of its elementary, introductory character, the Valentinian teaching of the treatise is vague; it is therefore difficult to identify it with a particular school of Valentinianism (it does not seem to agree perfectly with IrPt). The date of composition of TRs must be before A.D. 350, the approximate date of the MS. The language of composition was Greek.

TRs has a complex mixture of genres in which certain traditional materials are subordinated to others.

I. Philosophical epistle

- A. Introductory treatise (*eisagogē*)
 1. Philosophical sermon (diatribe)

The concluding salutation has led most critics to classify TRs as a *philosophical epistle*, that is, a short formal essay couched in the framework of a letter. The genre of philosophical epistle was used by both Valentinus (VFIC, E, and H) and Ptolemy (PTF); it was much favored by academic writers of the period. TRs lack the customary epistolary greeting at the beginning; this has led some scholars to suppose that the first sentence of the work (with the author's name) is now missing.

The internal structure of TRs corresponds to the form of the Greek introductory treatise or *eisagogē*:

1. Topic; proper orientation for success
2. Exposition of the subject matter
3. Special problems

But the rhetoric of the treatise belongs not to the formal essay but rather to the *philosophical sermon* or animated classroom lecture, sometimes called "diatribe style." Several characteristic devices of this style appear in TRs: sarcastic rhetorical questions; questions spoken as though by an imaginary opponent; an example of famous men (48:6f); patronizing moral exhortation ("Instruction") introduced at the end; incomplete philosophical exposition; overall brevity. Useful comparative material from roughly the same period can be found in the philosophical *Sermons* of Epictetus (A.D. ca. 55-ca.135).

Text

The original Greek apparently does not survive. The text is known only in Coptic translation, attested by a single MS from Nag Hammadi, MC NHC I (pp. 43-50), which was copied just before A.D. 350, and is now in the Cairo Coptic Museum.

The translation below is based on my own critical edition of the Coptic: B. Layton, ed., *The Gnostic Treatise* (see "Select Bibliography"), 10-32. An earlier version of the translation appeared in that publication and is revised here with the kind permission of the series editor.

SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Epictetus. *The Discourses as Reported by Arrian, The Manual, and Fragments*. English translation by W. A. Oldfather. 2 vols. Loeb Classical Library. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1926-28. (For stylistic comparison with TRs.)
- Kelly, J. *Early Christian Creeds*. London: Longmans, Green, 1950. (Creeds in the second century A.D.)
- Layton, B., ed. *The Gnostic Treatise on Resurrection from Nag Hammadi*. Harvard Dissertations in Religion, 12. Missoula, Mont.: Scholars Press, 1979.
- _____. "Vision and Revision: A Gnostic View of Resurrection." In *Colloque international sur les textes de Nag Hammadi (Québec, 22-25 août 1978)*, edited by B. Barc, 190-217. Bibliothèque copte de Nag Hammadi, Section "Études," no. 1. Québec: Presses de l'Université Laval; Louvain: Peeters, 1981.
- Malinine, M., et al., eds. *De Resurrectione (Epistula ad Rheginum): Codex Jung f. XXIII-f. XXVr (p. 43-50)*. Zürich and Stuttgart: Rascher, 1963. (In French.)
- Ménard, J., ed. *Le Traité sur la Résurrection*. Bibliothèque copte de Nag Hammadi, Section "Textes," vol. 12. Québec: Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 1985.
- Peel, M., ed. "The Treatise on Resurrection." In *Nag Hammadi Codex I*, edited

by H. Attridge. Vol. 1, *Introductions, Texts . . .*, 123-57, and vol. 2, *Notes*, 137-215. Nag Hammadi Studies, vols. 22, 23. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1985.

Schäfer, K. "Eisagoge." In *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum*, vol. 4 (1959), cols. 862-904. (On the introductory treatise as a literary genre.)

van Unnik, W. "The Newly Discovered Gnostic 'Epistle to Rheginus' on Resurrection." *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 15 (1964): 141-67. (A useful survey of second-century Christian views on resurrection and an interpretation of TRs different from the one followed above.)

TREATISE ON RESURRECTION^a

A. PROLOGUE

Personal orientation appropriate to the subject

25 **43** There are certain persons; my child Reginus, who wish to become learned; that is their aim when they set out to solve unsolved problems, and if they succeed they regard themselves highly. But I do not think their results lie within the account of the truth; rather, it is repose^d (in the sense of recreation) that they are after. This (true repose, that is) we obtained from our savior, our lord, the kind: **44** we obtained it when we gained acquaintance with the truth and rested our confidence upon^f it.

GTr 22:11

Importance and difficulty of the topic

3 However, since it is the essential points on resurrection after which you^a so sweetly inquire, I am writing to you. For resurrection is a basic matter; and not only do many give it no credence,^b but few are they who understand^c it. So let this be the topic of our discussion.^d

Mt 7:13

B. EXPOSITION

Dual nature of the savior

12,14 How did the lord handle the circumstances of this world?^e While he was incarnate,^f and after he had revealed himself to be a son of god,^g he walked about in this region where you dwell^h speaking about the law of the natural order:ⁱ I mean, death. Moreover, O Reginus, the son of god was a human son.^j And he was master of his circumstances in two respects—having both humanity and divinity: so that he might conquer death through being son of god, and that through the human son might come to pass the return^k to the fullness:^l since from the beginning he existed as a seed^m of the truth from above, before there came into being this cosmic structure,ⁿ in which lordships and divinities^o have become so numerous.

IrPt 1.6.1 ?

IrPt 1.7.1
GPh 59

IrPt 1.5.2
IrPt 1.5.4

Title 43 a. In the manuscript, the title is found after the text (at 50:17f).
b. I.e. "my disciple."
c. The author's antiphilosophical stance is developed at 46:3f.
d. The Greek word (*anapausis*) has many meanings including "recreation" (i.e. fun) and "heavenly repose." The author plays on this ambiguity.
e. The Greek word (*klirastos*) was pronounced exactly like the word for "Christ."
f. Or simply "rested upon."
44 a. "you" is always singular in TRs, except where otherwise indicated.
b. Or "have no faith in it."
c. Lit. "find."
d. Or "our treatise."
e. Or "handle his affairs."
f. The lord preexisted before his incarnation, cf. 44:33f.

The savior's resurrection

39,2 I know that I am phrasing this explanation in difficult terms. **45** Yet consider: nothing within the account of the truth is truly difficult. At any rate, since he came forward for the sake of explanation, to leave nothing obscure, rather to reveal in simple terms everything about coming into being^a—the undoing of evil^b and the manifestation of the superior element,^c these are the offshoot of the truth and the spirit: **46** this grace is bestowed by^d the truth. The savior swallowed^e death. **46:1** You must not be unperceptive: for I mean that laying aside the corruptible world,^f he exchanged it for an incorruptible eternal realm.^g And he raised himself up,^h having "swallowed" the visible by means of the invisible, and gave us the way to our immortality.

GTr 26:32+
IrPt A.15
v.14
46:1+

Spiritual resurrection of the Christian believer

23,25 So then, as the apostleⁱ said of him, we have suffered with him, and arisen with him, and ascended with him.
28 Now, since we are manifestly present in this world, the world is what we wear (like a garment).^j From him (the savior) we radiate like rays;^k and being held fast by him until our sunset—that is, until our death in the present life—we are drawn upward by him as rays are drawn by the sun, restrained by nothing. This is resurrection of the spirit,^l which "swallows"^a resurrection of the soul^b along with resurrection of the flesh.^c

GTr 31:4
IrPt 1.7.1
IrPt 1.7.2
GPh 54
GPh 90
v.39
IrPt 1.6.1
v.1
45:14, 49:2
GTr 25:8
ICo 15:34
2Co 5:4
v.5
IrPt 1.6.2 ?
GPh 3

Philosophy versus gnōsis

3 Now, if there is anyone who is not a believer,^d that person cannot be convinced. For it is the domain of faith,^e my child, and not that of argumentation, to assert that the dead will arise.
8 And suppose that, among the scholars^f here, there is one who believes. Why, then, that person will arise. And let not the scholar here trust in one who is self-converted (to faith). And because of our faith (. . .).^g
14 For we are^h acquainted with the child of the human being,ⁱ and have come to believe that he arose from the dead.^j And he is the one of whom we say, "He became death's undoing."

45 a. The natural order, where things come into being and pass out of existence; cf. note 44j.
b. Or "the undoing of the inferior element."
c. I.e. the intellect or spirit.
d. Lit. "belongs to."
e. Overcame.
f. Especially the body of flesh.
g. Or "eternity, aeon."
h. The Coptic word can be translated also "arose."
i. Paul. The formula that follows uses sacramental metaphors known from the Pauline and Deuteropauline epistles: cf. Rm 8:17, Ep 2:4-6, Col 2:12, Col 3:1-3.
j. A Platonist cliché for the material body, but in the present context perhaps an allusion to Ro 13:12, Ep 4:22, Col 3:10, ICo 15:49.
k. Lit. "it is from him that we are rays."
46 a. Makes irrelevant.
b. Or "animate resurrection."
c. Or "fleshly resurrection."
d. The author takes pains to use ordinary Christian language. As emerges in 46:19f, "belief" (or "faith") actually means acquaintance with the truth, i.e. *gnōsis*.
e. Or "belief" (Greek *pistis*).
f. Or "philosophers."
g. One or more words are inadvertently omitted here.
h. Or "have become."
i. Or "the son of man" (a traditional Christian epithet of the human savior). Cf. note 44j.
j. In the allegorical sense explained in 45:16f.

45 a. The natural order, where things come into being and pass out of existence; cf. note 44j.
b. Or "the undoing of the inferior element."
c. I.e. the intellect or spirit.
d. Lit. "belongs to."
e. Overcame.
f. Especially the body of flesh.
g. Or "eternity, aeon."
h. The Coptic word can be translated also "arose."
i. Paul. The formula that follows uses sacramental metaphors known from the Pauline and Deuteropauline epistles: cf. Rm 8:17, Ep 2:4-6, Col 2:12, Col 3:1-3.
j. A Platonist cliché for the material body, but in the present context perhaps an allusion to Ro 13:12, Ep 4:22, Col 3:10, ICo 15:49.
k. Lit. "it is from him that we are rays."

Salvation of the intellect

19,21 Even as the object of belief^k is great, great too are the believers: •the
23 thought^l of those who are saved will not perish, •the intellect of those
25 who have acquaintance with such an object will not perish. •Thus, we
are chosen for salvation^m and ransom,ⁿ having been set apart from the
28 beginning, •so that we might not stumble in the folly of the ignorant,
but might enter into the intelligence of those who are acquainted with
the truth.
32 ~~Indeed, that truth, to which they are wakeful, cannot be brought to~~ ~~34,36~~ ~~naught; and it will not.~~ ~~The structure of the fulness is mighty.~~ ~~That~~ ~~38~~ ~~which broke loose and became the universe is trifling.~~ ~~But what is held~~ ~~fast^p is the entirety;~~^q it did not come into being; it simply was.

C. SPECIAL PROBLEMS

(1) Will the flesh be saved?

1 47 So do not be doubtful about resurrection, my child Rheginus.^a
4 Now (you might wrongly suppose), granted you^b did not preexist in
5 flesh—indeed, you took on flesh when you entered this world—why
will you not take your flesh with you when you return to the realm of
9 eternity? •It is the element superior to the flesh^c that imparts vitality to
11 it; •furthermore, you might suppose) does not whatever comes into
12 being for your sake (that is, the flesh) belong to you? •So may we not
conclude that whatever is yours will coexist with you?^d
14 Nay, rather, while you are here, what is it that you are alienated
15 from?^e •Is this what you have endeavored to learn about: the bodily
18 envelope—that is, old age?^f •And are you (the real you) mere corruption?^g
19 You can count absence^h—or (in another sense of the Greek word)
21 shortage—as your profit. •For you will not pay back the superior element

not, at least eventually, continue to coexist
with its source of vitality; but god is provi-
dential and omnipotent—therefore the flesh
must not perish forever.
e. Or "lack."
f. The text is corrupt here, obscuring the
author's rebuttal of the argument summa-
rized in the preceding paragraph. A few
words must have inadvertently been omitted.
g. I.e. the traditional argument (47:1f)
equates the real self with the realm of cor-
ruption and so is repugnant.
h. Greek and Latin funerary rhetoric spoke
of the body (the "inferior element") as money
borrowed from the bank of nature; when the
soul ("superior element") departs from it at
death, the body must be "paid back." In
keeping with this rhetoric the author here
plays on two meanings of the Greek word
apousia: (1) "absence," the state of discon-
nection from the fleshy body; (2) "short-
age," a technical word from the reminting
of old coins—the amount of physical wear
suffered by an old coin of silver or gold is
its "shortage"; thus the greater the body's
"shortage," the greater the soul's "profit,"
since the body always impedes the soul.
i. The real self is identical with the "su-
perior element"; hence the true self does not
"pay back" the superior element at death.

k. I.e. the truth (cf. 46:28f).

l. Or "thinking."

m. The word can also be translated "pres-
ervation."

n. A traditional, Pauline way of speaking.

o. Cf. 44:30f.

p. Or "encompassed."

q. Cf. IrPt note 1.1.1e, and below 47:26f.

r. Cf. note 45a.

s. Ancient Greek introductory treatises
often had an appendix that treated special
problems (called *aporai*) in a somewhat
disjointed way; cf. "Literary background"
in the introduction to TRs.

47 a. The author now begins an open attack
on the ordinary, literal understanding of the
resurrection of the Christian believer.

b. I.e. the real self, the intellect.

c. The soul or animate body, which con-
tains the intellect. It was a tenet of Platonism
that the soul is the material body's source
of vitality.

d. This paragraph refers, rather sketchily,
to a traditional Christian argument for res-
urrection of the body of flesh: since the
fleshy body has been created by god's provi-
dence with the explicit goal of being alive,
it would contradict the notion of god's provi-
dence and omnipotence to suppose that the
flesh would ever cease to exist forever and

22 when you depart.^j •The inferior element^k takes a loss;^l but what it owes
24,26 is gratitude.^m •Nothing then buys us backⁿ while we are here;^o •yet the
27 entirety, and we as members of it, are saved. •We have had salvation
29 from start to finish. •Let us think in this way. Let us accept in this way.

Salvation is immediate

30 However, certain persons desire to know—in the investigation of their
investigations—whether one who is saved will, upon taking off^p the
36 body, be immediately saved: •let no one doubt this!^q

•'Resurrection' is uncovering

38 "Surely, then," (so^r might run the argument) "the dead, visible
members' will be preserved: for the living, interior members^s are sup-
3,4 posed to arise." 48 •But what is the meaning of resurrection? •It is the
uncovering^a at any given time^b of the elements that have "arisen."

(2) Is spiritual resurrection unreal?

6 Now, if you should recall having read in the gospel that Elijah
appeared—and Moses—in his (Jesus') company, do not suppose that
12 resurrection^c is an apparition.^d •It is not an apparition; rather, it is
13 something real. •Instead, one ought to maintain that the world is an
16 apparition, rather than resurrection, •which became possible^e through
our lord, the savior, Jesus the kind.

D. INSTRUCTION

The material world is unreal

19,22 And what am I telling you? Suddenly the living are dying—surely
24 they are not alive at all in this world of apparition!^f—the rich have
26 become poor, rulers overthrown: •all changes,^g the world is an apparition.
28 But let me not deprecate the circumstances of this world at too great
30 a length. •Simply: resurrection is not of this sort, for it is real.

The nature of resurrection

33 It is what stands at rest:^h

34 And the revealingⁱ of what truly exists.

j. I.e. "when you die."

k. The body.

l. Or "is diminished."

m. It is only thanks to the soul that the
fleshy body ever lived at all.

n. Or "ransoms us."

o. I.e. "while we are incarnate in the
world."

p. Cf. note 45j.

q. Traditional arguments for a general res-
urrection of the flesh (cf. note 47d) implied
that there is a period of waiting between
death and resurrection. The author here de-
nies this.

r. Or "limbs."

s. Or "limbs," i.e. the soul and psychic
faculties, and the intellect within it.

48 a. The body is again compared to a gar-
ment, cf. note 45j.

b. Or "for all time."

c. I.e. resurrection of the spirit.

d. I.e. "do not suppose that resurrection
is existence in a ghost-like body of flesh."

e. Or "which came into being."

f. "in this world of apparition": lit. "in
an apparition."

g. Paraphrasing a famous doctrine of the
pre-Socratic Greek philosopher Heraclitus
(cf. Frag. 12 Diels, and Plato, *Cratylus* 402a).

h. To "stand at rest" is philosophical
jargon for the state of permanence, non-
change, and real being, as opposed to what
exists in instability, change, and becoming.

i. Cf. 45:9f and 48:4f.

PpI A:4

GPh 5+

Ro 8:29

Ep 1:4

VFFP

GTr 21:23

GTr 30:10

IrPt 1:4,5?

GTr 17:4

GPh 21

Mk 9:4 par.

GPh 23

48:26

GTr 24:25

48:13+

- 35 And it is what one receives in exchange for the circumstances of this world:
- 36 And a migration into newness.
- 38 For incorruptibility [is streaming] down upon corruption: 49
- 2 And light is streaming down upon darkness, swallowing it.
- 4 And the fullness is filling up its lack^a
- 6 —these are the symbols and the likenesses of resurrection:
- 8 This is what brings about goodness.

GTr 31:9
ICo 15:53
LPh 1.6.2
v.2
GTr 24:37
GTr 25:8
GPh 106

VFrH +

Resurrection has already come

- 9 Therefore do not concentrate on particulars, O Rheginus, nor live according to (the dictates of) this flesh; do not, for the sake of unity.^b
- 13,15 Rather, leave the state of dispersion and bondage,^c and then you already have resurrection. •For if the dying part (flesh) “knows itself,”^d
- 16 and knows that since it is moribund it is rushing toward this outcome (death) even if it has lived many years in the present life, •why do you (the intellect) not examine your own self and see that you have arisen?
- 22 And you are rushing toward this outcome (that is, separation from the body) since you possess resurrection.

LPh 1.6.1
GTr 24:7
GPh 8
v.15
GPh 19

Training is necessary

- 26,27 Yet you persist as though you were dying, •even though it is the former (the moribund flesh) that “knows” it has died.^e •Why then am I so lenient, except because of your inadequate training? •Everyone should practice^f in many ways to gain release from this element (the body),
- 34 so that one might not wander aimlessly^g but rather might recover one’s former state of being.

GTr 22:20
GTr 21:3

E. EPILOGUE

Offer of further instruction

- 37 What I received¹ through the generosity of my lord, Jesus the kind, I have taught to you and your siblings—who are my children²—without omitting any of the points necessary to strengthen you. 50 •But if anything in the exposition of the treatise is too profound, I shall explain it to you if you inquire.

PF 33.7.9+

Salutation

- 8 Since this is so, do not hesitate to share with any other members of your circle, for that (which I have taught you) has the power to be of benefit. •Many people are awaiting what I have written for you: •to them I address this lesson, to bring about “peace” among them “and grace.” •I greet you^a and whoever, with familial love, love you.^b

- 49 a. Cf. GTr note 24a.
b. Or “harmony, oneness.”
c. A Platonic cliché for the material body.
d. The Delphic maxim, “know thyself,” expressed a central theme of traditional Greek wisdom.
e. I.e. the real self.
f. The body in itself (apart from the soul or vivifying element) has no life, and so as such has never been alive.
g. Or “lead an ascetic life.”
h. The Greek word (*planasthai*) sometimes refers to reincarnation of the soul in another body.
i. “received” through the Valentinian school tradition.
j. The author considers all members of Rheginus’s congregation to be his potential disciples; cf. note 43b.
50 a. A salutation such as might occur at the end of an epistle.
b. In the manuscript, the title is written after the text (at 50:17f).

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO PHILIP

A VALENTINIAN ANTHOLOGY (GPh)

Contents and literary background

The work called *The Gospel According to Philip* is a Valentinian anthology containing some one hundred short excerpts taken from various other works. None of the sources of these excerpts have been identified, and apparently they do not survive. To judge from their style and contents, they were sermons, treatises, or philosophical epistles (typical Valentinian genres), as well as collected aphorisms or short dialogues with comments. Only some of the sources can definitely be identified as Valentinian. Because of their brevity and the lack of context it is difficult to assign any of them to particular schools of Valentinian theology. On the other hand, nothing indicates that all come from one and the same branch of the Valentinian church. It is possible that some of the excerpts are by Valentinus himself. Others, however, refer to etymologies in Syriac, the Semitic language (a dialect of Aramaic) used in Edessa and western Mesopotamia; these must be the work of a Valentinian theologian of the East, writing in a bilingual milieu such as Edessa (see Map 5). Probably the language of composition of all the excerpts was Greek.

GPh is not the only Valentinian anthology to survive, for among the works attributed to the late-second-century intellectual St. Clement (Titus Flavius Clemens) of Alexandria is a collection of excerpts from writings of the theologian Theodotus, one of the main representatives of the “Eastern” branch of Valentinianism. It is known as Clement’s *Excerpts from Theodotus*. Much of the information that can be gleaned about Valentinus’s successors survives only in fragmentary form, and the exact interpretation of their theologies is therefore difficult.

The compiler, place of compilation, and purpose of GPh as it now stands are completely unknown though some scholars have placed it in Syria because of references to the Syriac language in a few of the excerpts. The principle governing the order of the excerpts is obscure (see also “Text”). In some instances it appears that several excerpts come from a single source but without being quoted side by side or even in the original order.

The present title of the work may have been added after the anthology had been put into circulation in antiquity; in any case, the term “gospel” does not here refer to the Christian literary genre called gospel (e.g. the Gospel of Mark) but, rather, has its earlier meaning of “preaching” or “good news.” Philip is the only apostle mentioned by name in the excerpts (see excerpt no. 80); it may be for this reason that his name is attached to the title of the anthology as though he were its compiler and patron saint. If indeed it is the apostle Philip to whom the title refers, and not