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"Therefore I said to the Samaritan Woman . . . "

Remarks on the Reception of the Gospel of John in the Pistis Sophia

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Abstract

This article provides some data and remarks on the reception of the Gospel of John in the Pistis Sophia (Codex Askew), with the twofold aim to shed new light on Pistis Sophia's use of canonized Scriptures, and to contribute to the research on the Gnostic reception of the Gospel of John. Selected Johannine references in Pistis Sophia are listed and commented on, especially those in Pistis Sophia 4.141, a dense section which is key to understanding the distinctive soteriology and Christology of this text. The analysis shows that certain passages from John play an important role for Pistis Sophia. Pistis Sophia may have elaborated its soteriology in response to criticisms from "mainstream" Christianity and in parallel with certain developments that occurred in Sethianism and Valentinianism.

Keywords

Pistis Sophia – Gospel of John – soteriology – Christology – Gnostic historical trajectories – canonical gospels and Gnosticism

1 Assessing the Johannine Influence on the Pistis Sophia

In his seminal study of 1891, Adolf von Harnack devoted ambivalent comments to the Pistis Sophia, a Gnostic composite work probably composed during the third century C.E. and transmitted in a manuscript of the fourth or fifth century (Codex Askew). On the one hand, Pistis Sophia would be an "abstruse book" containing a "wild syncretism," a "*superstitio* of a dozen religions"; on the other hand,

the reader who is able to penetrate its meaning will learn much in the history of Christian sacramentalism, where Pistis Sophia is a "first-rank document."[1]

Recent research has opened the way for a more nuanced consideration of Pistis Sophia, which provides insights not only for the study of sacramental doctrines; it is a text that shows "a quite coherent thought" and "a complex and sophisticated soteriological doctrine."[2] Harnack, however, made a point when speaking of Pistis Sophia's "syncretism," though the meaning of this term should be clarified. Actually, Pistis Sophia's author(s) tried to create a complex synthesis of several Gnostic and non-Gnostic religious and intellectual traditions, which could stand as the true and ultimate Gnostic "encyclopaedia" (I will come back to this point at the end of the present paper). One may wonder whether the best adjective to describe Pistis Sophia's ambition would not be "syncretic," but "encyclopaedic."[3] In any case, in Pistis Sophia this project is developed through an accurate use and interpretation of sources, among which are the canonized gospels and the Psalms. Harnack's study, notwithstanding its biases, was a pioneering work on Pistis Sophia's use of Scriptures.

In the present article, I will try to provide some remarks on the reception of the Gospel of John in Pistis Sophia, with the twofold aim to shed new light on Pistis Sophia's use of canonized Scriptures, and to contribute to the research on the Gnostic reception of the Gospel of John (hereafter John). This second issue, as is well known, is a popular topic in the field of Gnostic studies, but the main efforts have concentrated on studying the second century; above all, very little research work has been dedicated to John and Pistis Sophia.[4]

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[1] Harnack 1891, 114, my trans. Cf. the more recent judgment by Markschies 2003, 100: Pist. Soph. is "a good example of the way in which originally coherent systems 'ran wild.'"

[2] Gianotto 2019, 339, my trans. As for recent research on Pist. Soph., see esp. the comprehensive book by Evans 2015; for a codicological point of view with some new insights, see Johnston 2015; Crégheur and Johnston 2016; Crégheur 2020. On the modern reception of Pist. Soph., see Linjamaa 2022, which also includes a survey of previous research on this writing.

[3] Cf. van der Vliet 2005, 519–520, who defines Pist. Soph. as an "encyclopaedic work," a "compendious volume of Christian Gnostic teaching."

[4] See, e.g., Pagels 1973; Kaestli 1990; Perkins 1993, 109–142; Nagel 2000; Hill 2004, 205–293; Turner 2005; Keefer 2006, 21–43; Rasimus 2010; Logan 2018; Tuckett 2019 (although not focused on John, and also considering texts which may come from the third century); Attridge 2020. On a different level, Lundhaug 2019 thoroughly examines the influence of John on the Gospel of Philip but dates the latter not before the fourth century and does not consider it as "Valentinian." For even another approach to the Johannine influence on second- and third-century Gnostic texts see, lastly, Tripaldi 2017.

I then start with a brief bibliographical review. To my knowledge, there are no specific contributions extensively dedicated to the use of John in Pistis Sophia. This issue is addressed, basically, in three works with a broader subject: the abovementioned study by Harnack, which is a general analysis of Pistis Sophia, but with a key section on Pistis Sophia's use of Scriptures; a subchapter (of about four pages) in a book by Giuliana Iacopino, which investigates the use of John in the Gnostic Coptic texts; and an article by Claudio Gianotto on the use of the four canonized gospels in Pistis Sophia.[5]

It should be noted that Harnack, who provides a pivotal list of Pistis Sophia's quotations of and allusion to John, is nonetheless more interested in enumerating the occurrences than in providing a close exegesis of them. Iacopino concludes that Pistis Sophia knew of the Fourth Gospel, but this one did not play a decisive influence on that Gnostic work. On the contrary, Gianotto—though in a concise way—highlights passages of Pistis Sophia (such as 4.141) where quotations from John have a relevant soteriological and sacramental significance.

Additional (brief) references to our issue are scattered in studies dealing with Pistis Sophia; to mention just some recent examples, Erin Evans suggests that the description of Jesus's incarnation in Pistis Sophia 4.141 (on which see below) relies on a combination of motifs from the gospels of Matthew and John, while April DeConick points out that the "Jeuians" (the Gnostic group responsible for the composition of the Books of Jeu and Pistis Sophia, following Evans's terminology) were familiar with John, which provided some elements of their interpretation of Jesus (e.g., Jesus as a divine messenger sent from the Father to reveal the higher mysteries).[6]

Apparently, there is room for further examination of the intertextual relationship of Pistis Sophia with John. I will first provide some quantitative information, also basing on previous studies; then I will move to the exegetical perspective, focusing on one dense passage of Pistis Sophia which can trigger some remarks on Pistis Sophia's use of John.

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[5] Harnack 1891, 2–49 (on John see 4, 7, 12–16, 19, 21–22, 25–27); Iacopino 1995, 181–185; Gianotto 2018, esp. 206–207 and 213–214.

[6] Evans 2015, 127n74 and 129; DeConick 2016, 325–326.

The essential starting point is represented by the scriptural index in the editions/translations by Schmidt and MacDermot, and by Harnack's survey, which is a little more complete.[7] Considering both "quotations" and "allusions" (or "echoes"), Harnack lists twenty-two Johannine passages that may be referred to in Pistis Sophia. Since some of them are echoed in more than one passage of Pistis Sophia, the total amount of Pistis Sophia's (possible) references to John is about thirty (Schmidt and MacDermot count about a half of these references).

Harnack's criterion is quite loose and, basing upon such a standard, one may even expand the list of Johannine references in Pistis Sophia; on the other hand, if one applied stricter criteria, the list would shrink. For example, Harnack sees a possible allusion to John 6:20 in Pistis Sophia 1.5 (Schmidt 8, l. 7), where Jesus says to his disciples, "It is I, do not fear"—but this may rather be an allusion to Matt 14:27 (mentioned by Harnack himself, misprinted as "Matt 14:28") or Mark 6:50, the parallel texts of the pericope with Jesus walking on waters (the Greek text of that expression is identical in all of the three).[8]

Nevertheless, some of the references in Harnack's, Schmidt's and MacDermot's lists are indeed helpful to locate possible instances of Johannine influence upon Pistis Sophia. Reserving to a next section of this article the concentration of Johannine references in Pistis Sophia 4.141, at this stage I report a list of selected passages, as follows.

1) The paraphrase of John 17:14, 16 (see also 15:19) in Pistis Sophia 1.7 (Schmidt 11, ll. 17–20), "I have indeed said to you from the beginning that you are not from the world [ⲕⲟⲥⲙⲟⲥ]; I also am not from it."[9]

2) The conflation of allusions to John (16:16, 28; 17:5) in Pistis Sophia 1.10 (Schmidt 20, ll. 7–11), "For yet a little time . . . and thou wilt . . . leave the world. . . . Thou shalt receive the whole glory which is the glory of the First Mystery."

3) The paraphrase of John 12:26 in Pistis Sophia 2.96 (Schmidt 232, ll. 25–26), "In the place where

[7] See Harnack 1891, 27; Schmidt 1925a, 390–391; 1925b, 290; Schmidt and MacDermot 1978, 804.

[8] References to Pist. Soph. are according to the usual form "book.chapter"; when quoting a specific passage, I add the reference to Schmidt's edition of the Coptic text (pages and lines) reproduced in Schmidt and MacDermot 1978.

[9] See also Pist. Soph. 2.96 (Schmidt 231, ll. 12–13).

I will be, there will also be with me my twelve servers [ⲛ̄ⲇⲓⲁⲕⲱⲛ].” Not by chance, this passage is introduced by a sort of quotation formula (“I said to you once”) and followed by an explicit statement by Jesus on the superiority of Mary Magdalene and John “the Virgin” to all other disciples (Schmidt 233, ll. 1–2): the former ones will receive a higher rank in the future Kingdom of the Light.[10] Moreover, in 2.63 (Schmidt 129, l. 9), Jesus calls John “beloved brother”: Harnack saw here an echo of John 19:26, where the crucified Jesus says to his mother “Here is your son,” alluding to the “beloved disciple.”[11]

4) The quotation of John the Baptist’s statement of John 1:20 in Pistis Sophia 1.7 (Schmidt 13, l. 4), “because John said: ‘I am not the Christ’.”

5) The possible allusion to John 16:25 (see also 16:29) in Pistis Sophia 1.6 (Schmidt 8, l. 23–9, l. 2), “From today onwards now I will speak with you openly [ϩⲛ̄ ⲟⲩⲡⲁⲣⲣⲏⲥⲓⲁ] . . . And I will speak to you face to face, without parable [ⲁ̅ⲭ̅ⲛ̄ ⲡⲁⲣⲁⲃⲟⲗⲏ].” In the Johannine passage we find the term παροιμία and not παραβολή (which is to be found in Mark 4:34, in a similar context), but we do find the dative παρρησίᾳ (rendered in the Sahidic version of John 16:25 exactly with ϩⲛ̄ ⲟⲩⲡⲁⲣⲣⲏⲥⲓⲁ). It is plausible that here Pistis Sophia conflates some NT passages, such as the Johannine one, but also the Markan one and even 1 Cor 13:12 (“face to face”). In any case, it should be noted that this section of Pistis Sophia is full of Johannine expressions and motifs, including—few lines above—Jesus’s statement “I have been to the places to whence I came forth.”[12] The first chapters of Pistis Sophia (book 1) feature two prominent Johannine-shaped motifs, both present in the “Farewell Discourse” of Jesus in John, that is, the abovementioned revelation of a deeper knowledge to the disciples, and the way in which the particular status of “election” of these ones is described. In Pistis Sophia 1.7, in addition to the reference to their “not being from the world” (see above), there is also a Jesus saying claiming that he has “chosen” (verb ⲥⲱⲧⲡ) them “from the beginning” (Schmidt 10, l. 21). One can compare John 15:16, 19, where the Greek

[10] On John the disciple in that context, see also Harnack 1891, 16.

[11] Harnack 1891, 21, where he writes that in Pist. Soph. “the other disciples are generally called only ‘brothers’”; but see Dunderberg 2006, 180, for the epithet “beloved” as used in Pist. Soph. of other disciples of Jesus.

[12] Pist. Soph. 1.6 (Schmidt 8, ll. 22–23); cf. John 16:28.

verb ἐκλέγω is rendered in Sahidic with ϲⲱⲧⲡ, and John 15:27, where ἀπ' ἀρχῆς is rendered with ϫⲁⲓ ⲛ̄ϣⲟⲣⲡ (the same formula which appears here in Pistis Sophia).[13]

6) The possible allusion to John 17:11 in Pistis Sophia 4.142 (Schmidt 371, ll. 18–19), where Jesus, in the context of a ritual action, performs a prayer to the Father for the sake of his disciples's salvation (note also the affinity with the Johannine context) and addresses God with the expression "(my) holy Father."[14]

Even from this selection (and without having yet analyzed Pistis Sophia 4.141, which contains what are probably the most important Johannine references in Pistis Sophia), it should be difficult to deny that the author(s) of Pistis Sophia knew of John and used it as a source. This gospel appears to have been used especially by the source documents behind what we know as the first and the fourth "books" of Pistis Sophia. As for the extent of the Johannine influence on Pistis Sophia, these data—if taken together—may contribute to building a cumulative argument for a considerable role played by John in Pistis Sophia.

Iacopino's conclusion that John's presence in Pistis Sophia is basically limited to *topoi* which were current at the time of the composition of this Gnostic writing appears not to do justice to the text.[15] Apart from the relationships between specific passages, it is possible to recognize a Johannine influence in various key points of Pistis Sophia, such as at the beginning of the first book, where we have seen the presence of several typical Johannine motifs. Moreover, such an influence may be identified also in some aspects which are more general but, at the same time, also more profound. One may think of the christological concept pointed out by April DeConick, which I have mentioned above, or of the special status of John and Mary Magdalene.

I also point out another motif that is both christological, cosmological, and soteriological. Here I am referring to the view regarding the pre-existent Jesus's descent which appears, for example, in Pistis

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[13] On those who Jesus has chosen, see also John 6:70 and 13:18.

[14] See also John 17:11 Sah.

[15] Cf. Iacopino 1995, 185; Evans 2015, 176 (cf. 129) even maintains that Mark and John (unlike Matthew) are scarcely used in Pist. Soph. On the contrary, Harnack 1891, esp. 27–28, shows that the author(s) of Pist. Soph. took all the four canonized gospels in great consideration (cf. also Gianotto 2018).

Sophia 1.7–8 (but see also the ensuing chapters), and which is akin to the christological notion at the core of what Adriana Destro and Mauro Pesce have called "the Johannist constellation," as in a group of texts (including, for example, the Ascension of Isaiah and the Dialogue of the Savior [NHC III,5]) that share some "systemic" questions and answers which find their textual and conceptual matrix in the Gospel of John.[16] According to this Christology, the Savior (Jesus) is a pre-existent being who descends from the divine sphere into the cosmic realm, and this descent is possible only by means of a transformation which is necessary to deceive the intermediate heavenly and demonic powers (and, in certain cases, even humans). According to Destro and Pesce, "This change is a systemic necessity requested by the cosmological structure and by the pre-existence of the Beloved/Logos," and the descent is what allows for the overcoming of the "cosmic fracture" between the divine and the human world, as well as what allows for the salvation of the believers.[17]

The main features of this Christology can be easily recognized in the first chapters of Pistis Sophia, where Jesus tells his disciples about his descent into the world, by assuming the shape of Gabriel the angel to deceive the archons (who did not recognize him); this serves first to "cast" into Elisabeth and Mary the "powers" which will develop in the bodies of John the Baptist and Jesus, but also has a revelatory function.[18] This kind of Christology can be traced back to a Johannine matrix and may be taken as evidence of a Johannine influence on the Pistis Sophia on a deep level, even deeper than that of the specific textual correspondences, since it involves the very cultural, cosmological, and theological worldview on which Pistis Sophia revolves around.[19]

2 Pistis Sophia 4.141, the "Elements" of Salvation, and the Remission of Sins

In the second part of this article, I focus on Pistis Sophia 4.141, where we find a cluster of references (even explicit ones) to John. It is a pivotal section not only for the number of Johannine echoes, but also

[16] See Destro and Pesce 2016; Annese 2021.
[17] See Destro and Pesce 2016, 214.
[18] See esp. Pist. Soph. 1.7–8, 1.61–62, 2.63.
[19] It should be noted that Destro and Pesce 2021, 28, recently ascribed also Pist. Soph. to the "Johannist constellation" of texts.

for their meaning. It appears that the use of John made here by Pistis Sophia has some interesting features.

First, the narrative context should be pointed out. Generally speaking, Pistis Sophia's fourth book (which, originally, was probably an independent composition, earlier than the other three books) is full of *ritual performances* of Jesus with his disciples, from its very beginning.[20] Jesus's teachings on the "mysteries of the archons," the eschatological fate of the souls, and so on, are here strictly intertwined with ritual actions or experiences by Jesus, such as public prayers, heavenly journeys, and visions. These are fundamental devices commonly used to build and represent the relationship between Jesus and his followers.[21]

In the textual representation of 4 Pistis Sophia, it seems that such religious performances function (also) as rituals of formation/initiation of the group of Jesus's disciples, just like chapters 13–17 in John.[22] The rituals that Jesus performs in Pistis Sophia 4.141–142, in particular, have the crucial function to forgive the sins of the disciples (the question of "sin" is pivotal throughout the entire Pistis Sophia), to purify them, and to make them worthy of the kingdom of the Father; moreover, Jesus's actions aim to transmit to the disciples "the mystery of forgiveness of sins," so that they can perform it for other people ("not to any men," but only for people "who will do everything which I have said to you in my injunctions").[23] Lastly, Pistis Sophia 4.141 is a passage where Jesus, by sharing a vision with his disciples, summarizes for them the sense of his descent in the *kosmos*.[24]

Let us report the Johannine references in Pistis Sophia 4.141 and the way in which they are used. This chapter features at least five recognizable Johannine references. First, an allusion to John 20:22 in the passage where Jesus "breathes" into the disciples's eyes and enables them to have a vision (Schmidt 367, ll. 15–16). In John, this ritual action is related to the transmission of the Spirit and of the ability to

[20] See Pist. Soph. 4.136.

[21] See Destro and Pesce 2017; Pesce 2011, 62 (my trans.): "There is no more fundamental doctrine than that which a teacher conveys through the institution of the most intimate and fundamental act of religious life which is prayer and ritual."

[22] Cf. Destro and Pesce 2000, esp. 41–84.

[23] Pist. Soph. 4.142.

[24] As rightly noted by Gianotto 2018, 213, in Pist. Soph. 141: "il Risorto riassume il senso della sua venuta nel mondo in una sorta di rito di congedo dai suoi discepoli." We may add that chapters 13–17 of John represent a "farewell ritual" as well.

forgive sins (20:23); this issue is also implied in Pistis Sophia 4.141, a little later in the text, where we find the second reference, that is, an allusion to John 20:23 itself. At this point of the text of Pist. Soph. (Schmidt 369, ll. 15–18), Jesus promises the disciples that he will give them "the mystery of forgiveness upon earth, so that he whom you will forgive upon earth will be forgiven in heaven, and he whom you will bind upon earth will be bound in heaven." This is also reminiscent of Matt 16:19 and 18:18, but it should be noted that the "remission" or "forgiveness" of sins is not mentioned in the Matthaean passages.

Third, there is a looser (possible) link with John 1:32 in Pist. Soph. 4.141 (Schmidt 368, ll. 4–5), where Jesus, probably alluding to the episode of his baptism, tells the disciples that his Father sent him "the Holy Spirit in the type [ϩⲡⲧⲩⲡⲟⲥ] of a dove" —but this can be related to the synoptic parallels as well, maybe to Luke 3:22 in particular. The Lukan text has τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον and σωματικῷ εἴδει ὡς περιστεράν. However, the closer parallel to Pist. Soph. seems to be the version in the Gospel of the Ebionites quoted by Epiphanius, *Pan.* 30.13.7: τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον ἐν εἴδει περιστερᾶς (ἐν εἴδει is a semitism).[25] The syntagm ἐν εἴδει περιστερᾶς also appears in Irenaeus's rendering of Valentinian Christology (*Haer.* 1.7.2), where what descends on Jesus in the form of a dove is the pleromatic Savior (see also *Exc.* 16, 22, and 61). It is unclear whether a similar notion may be found in some passages of Pist. Soph., e.g., 2.63 and 4.141 itself; in my opinion, for the most part Pist. Soph. seems to show a non-divisive Christology.[26]

The other two clear Johannine references in this section of Pistis Sophia are the following ones. Fourth, the quotation from John 4:10, 14, introduced by "Therefore I said to the Samaritan woman . . . " (Schmidt 368, ll. 14–19). Fifth, the reference to John 19:34 , when Jesus refers to the "spear" which was thrust into his side "and there came forth water and blood" (Schmidt 369, ll. 1–3).

In addition, other implicit allusions might be identified in this Pistis Sophia chapter, for example, as for the notion of the Spirit that guides/leads the souls (Schmidt 368, ll. 10–11, verb ϣⲱⲕ

[25] See also *Pan.* 30.14.4, which would deserve further analysis, also in comparison with Pist. Soph.
[26] On this point, and for possible intertextual or transtextual links with Valentinianism, see Annese, forthcoming.

ϩнтⲟ), cf. John 16:13, or—more generally—as for the concept of the Savior's arrival into the world (cf. John 1:9, 11, 14); or some echoes from 1 John, on Jesus's role for the purification from sin (e.g. 1:7; 3:5) or on the three elements of "water," "blood," and "Spirit" (5:6–8), mentioned in Pistis Sophia 4.141 together with "fire" and "wine."

I now turn to the quotation from John 4:10, 14, which in some sense is paradigmatic for Pistis Sophia's theology and very indicative of Pistis Sophia's use of John. It is preceded by a textual section where the resurrected Jesus explains to his disciples the punishments which the souls of the sinners will experience after death.[27] The disciples invoke the mercy of Jesus (here called "Lord" and "Savior") so that they, but also "the whole race of mankind," may be preserved from this fate.[28] Jesus reassures them, then a sequence of ritual actions starts: blessings, prayers, a vision, and the "mystery" for the forgiveness of sins.[29] Jesus will give this mystery to his disciples, so that they can perform it for other humans and forgive their sins. During the vision of 4.141, the disciples see a great light, then "fire and water and wine and blood." At this point, Jesus explains for them that vision:

> "Truly, I say to you, when I came I brought nothing to the world except this fire and this water and this wine and this blood. I have brought the water and the fire from the place of the lights of the Treasury of the Light. I have brought the wine and the blood from the place of the Barbelo. And after a little time my Father sent to me the Holy Spirit in the type of a dove. But the fire, the water and the wine have come into existence to purify [ⲕⲁⲑⲁⲣⲓⲍⲉ] all the sins of the world. On the other hand, the blood was for me a sign concerning the human body which I received in the place of the Barbelo, the great power of the Invisible God. Furthermore the Spirit draws all souls together and takes them to the place of the light."[30]

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[27] Pist. Soph. 4.139–140.
[28] Pist. Soph. 4.141.
[29] Pist. Soph. 4.141–142.
[30] Pist. Soph. 4.141 (Schmidt 367, l. 23–368, l. 11), trans. in Schmidt and MacDermot 1978, here slightly modified.

In this dense and complex passage, Jesus mentions four elements (plus "the Spirit") which are to be interpreted on diverse (although connected) meaning levels: they have both a sacramental significance and a christological one, i.e., a meaning related to the Savior's incarnation or descent into the world.[31] This text is also fundamental to understanding the soteriology of 4 Pistis Sophia. To fully appreciate its meaning, it will be necessary to analyze its use of some passages from the canonical gospels, especially John 4:10, 14, Matt 26:27–28, and John 19:34, which are quoted in sequence exactly to explain some elements of the "vision," as we will see in a moment.

The passage that I have just quoted should be interpreted as referring to the "components" of the Savior's *persona*, i.e., the soul/power, the body, and the Spirit—which, as I have mentioned, might be a name for the pleromatic Christ, but this is not certain. There are some ambiguities in Pistis Sophia's Christology, perhaps related to the compositional stratification of the four "books"; they can also be explained by referring to a certain "variation allowed and indeed encouraged in interpreting scriptures" within the Jeuian group, as shown by the different christological readings of Psalm 85(84):11–12 in chapters 61–63 of Pistis Sophia.[32]

However, some concepts seem to be quite intelligible. "Water" and "fire" are related to the "power" (ϭⲟⲙ) or "soul" that Jesus receives from Sabaoth the Good (not from the archons, as it is the case with the souls of the ordinary men).[33] "Wine" and "blood" symbolize the material body that Jesus receives from the place of Barbelo and which was born from Mary.[34] The Spirit apparently descended upon him at the Jordan.[35] For the present investigation, the main issue is the connection between Christology and soteriology, or—to put it another way—the soteriological significance of the Savior's "incarnation" according to the Pistis Sophia texts. It is here that the Gospel quotations assume a pivotal

[31] See also Pist. Soph. 1.8, 1.61–62, 2.63.

[32] Quotation is from Evans 2015, 226.

[33] In the cosmology of 4 Pist. Soph. (and 3 Pist. Soph.), the "place of the right" (where Sabaoth the Good is located) corresponds with the "Treasury of the light." The first two books have a different cosmology; see Evans 2015.

[34] More specifically, Pist. Soph. seems to propose a complex and distinctive concept of Jesus's body: the "power" that the heavenly Savior himself took from Barbelo has transformed—once it took up its dwelling place in Mary—into the material, earthly body of Jesus, born from Mary (see esp. Pist. Soph. 1.8 [Schmidt 13, l. 15–14, l. 2]; 1.61 [122, ll. 7–10 and 20–22]; also 1.62 [125, ll. 5–13]; 2.63 [127, l. 20–128, l. 7]).

[35] On Jesus's compound nature, see Pist. Soph. 1.8, 59, 61–62; 2.63; 4.141; cf. Evans 2015, 201–202, 223–229.

role.

Pistis Sophia 4.141 explicitly presents this series of quotations as explaining the preceding vision ("Therefore," ⲉⲧⲃⲉ ⲡⲁⲓ, is repeated four times when introducing them). It is worth quoting the entire passage, which immediately follows the above-mentioned one, where Jesus had provided the first explanation of the four elements plus "the Spirit":

> "Therefore I have said to you: 'I have come to cast fire upon the earth' [cf. Luke 12:49]. That is, I have come to purify the sins of the whole world with fire. Therefore I said to the Samaritan woman: 'If thou hadst known the gift of God, and who it is who says to thee: give me to drink, thou wouldst have asked him and he would have given thee living water and it would have been a source <of water> in thee springing up to eternal life' [cf. John 4:10, 14]. And therefore I took a cup of wine, I blessed it, I gave it to you, saying: 'This is the blood of the covenant which will be shed for you for the forgiveness [ⲕⲱ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ] of your sins' [cf. Matt 26:27-28].[36] And therefore the spear was thrust into my side and there came forth water and blood [cf. John 19:34]. These moreover are the mysteries of the light which forgive sins, which are the invocations and the names of the light."[37]

Such Gospels quotations are also to be linked to the statement by Jesus, "The fire, the water and the wine have come into existence to purify all the sins of the world." Actually, the blood as well receives a function related to the forgiveness of sins. It is unclear whether "to purify" (Graeco-Coptic ⲕⲁⲑⲁⲣⲓⲍⲉ) and "to forgive" (Coptic ⲕⲱ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ) sins have or not, in this text, different meanings; it seems that they are used as basically equivalent.[38]

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[36] Actually, the version in Pist. Soph. has some differences compared to the Sahidic "standard" text of Matt 26:28 ("shed for many . . . of [their] sins") and, in these respects, comes closer to Luke 22:20. It could be that Pist. Soph. features here a "hybrid" quotation from Matt plus Luke, or that it quotes from a variant version of Matt.

[37] Pist. Soph. 4.141 (Schmidt 368, l. 12–369, l. 5), trans. in Schmidt and MacDermot 1978, here slightly modified.

[38] See, e.g., Pist. Soph. 4.141 (Schmidt 369, ll. 9–15): "The disciples continued again, they entreated him: 'For how long now hast thou not caused the sins which we have committed and our iniquities to be forgiven [ⲕⲱ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ], and made us worthy

Then, the question is how the sin(s) of the world are removed by the Savior, or how the forgiveness of sins may be achieved. Pistis Sophia's answer, here, is multifaceted. First, to explain "fire," the resurrected Jesus quotes Luke 12:49 ("Therefore I have said to you: 'I have come to cast fire upon the earth'"), elucidated as follows: "That is, I have come to purify the sins of the whole world with fire." The baptismal interpretation, here, remains implicit (see, however, the subsequent lines and chapters 142–143), but is explicitly developed in Pistis Sophia 3.116, where Luke 12:49–53 is quoted. More broadly, Pistis Sophia 3.115–117 explains how "the mysteries of the baptisms" remit sins, and a sort of purifying fire is envisaged.

But though there is some connection between these two interpretations of Luke 12:49, there are also important differences, which show the different concepts of the remission of sins in 1-3 Pistis Sophia and 4 Pistis Sophia, and lead us to the core of Pistis Sophia 4.141 (and its use of John). While in 3.116 (Schmidt 300, ll. 12–13) the Lukan saying is interpreted only as the fact that Jesus brought "the mysteries of baptisms," which purify the sins of the souls, in 4.141 that verse is also linked to a christological reflection that takes advantage of the significance of the Savior's incarnational body. Pistis Sophia 4.141 attributes a sacrificial role to the death (and blood) of Jesus, whereas Pistis Sophia 3.115 connects the remission of sins only to the "mystery of the baptism," which appears to act in a kind of "thaumaturgical" way: that mystery becomes a fire that penetrates a human soul and purifies it, by consuming all the sins that the "counterfeit spirit" (ἀντίμιμον πνεῦμα) had tied to that soul.[39]

The way in which Jesus's salvific mission is conceived of in Pistis Sophia books 1–3 is recapitulated in the last chapters of book 3.[40] As Mary (probably Magdalene) says to Jesus at the end of the book, "We have known openly . . . that thou hast brought the keys of the mysteries of the Kingdom of the Light, which forgive sins to the souls and purify them, and make them to be pure light and take

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of the Kingdom of thy Father?' But Jesus said to them: 'Truly I say to you, not only will I purify [ⲕⲁⲑⲁⲣⲓⲍⲉ] your sins, but I will also make you worthy of the Kingdom of my Father. And I will give to you the mystery of forgiveness of sins [ⲕⲁ-ⲛⲟⲃⲉ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ] upon earth'."

[39]Pist. Soph. 3.115 (Schmidt 299, ll. 2–5); see also Pist. Soph. 3.115 (Schmidt 299, ll. 5–17) and 3.116.

[40] Pist. Soph. 3.133–135. One may also note that in 3.133, John the Baptist's words on "he who comes after him" and "will purify his threshing floor" with fire (Matt 3:11–12 // Luke 3:16–17) are quoted and interpreted as referred to the Savior's mission to bring the mysteries which purify sins through the baptisms (cf. Gianotto 2018, 212–213).

them to the light."[41] It is "the mysteries" that cleanse from sins, and Jesus is the one who brings/unveils those mysteries. Pistis Sophia 4.141 maintains such role of Jesus as a revealer but parallels it with the saving function of his blood.

To appreciate this last point, we have to recall the ensuing Gospel quotations in Pistis Sophia 4.141, which serve to explain, respectively, "water," "wine," and "blood." The first one is from John 4:10, 14, on the "gift of God" as the "living water" which brings "eternal life." Jesus's words to the Samaritan woman are clearly interpreted by Pistis Sophia's author(s) from a baptismal point of view and such "water of baptism," as rightly noted by Gianotto, is "a sign of salvation and entry into eternal life."[42] This quotation is then coherent with the previous one, as well as with the baptismal ritual (which also includes eucharistic elements) performed by Jesus in 4.142.[43]

It is not necessary to insist on the fact that the Johannine pericope itself, especially in 4:10–14, included (also) a baptismal allusion, and that the baptismal interpretation is well attested both in literary sources and in early Christian iconography.[44] The scene of the Samaritan woman at the well is depicted in the catacombs of Callixtus in Rome, in the baptistery at Dura-Europos, and in many other sites, where its main meaning is the baptismal one—and not only as a simple reference to such ritual, but as an allusion to the *salvific* significance of it, from the remission of sins to the hope in the resurrection.[45]

Due to the limits of this article, we cannot delve deeper into the history of reception of John 4:10, 14, but it is interesting to mention at least some examples. Among the first texts that read such

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[41] Pist. Soph. 3.135 (Schmidt 352, ll. 12–17).

[42] Gianotto 2018, 213, my trans. On the contrary, Iacopino 1995, 182–183 appears to notice only the superficial meaning of this quotation for Pist. Soph. Iacopino hypothesizes that Pist. Soph. quotes John 4 to underline the difficulty of understanding the deep meaning of the Savior's words and deeds; Pist. Soph., then, would grasp only a marginal element of John 4 and would juxtapose this quotation to the other ones in a "rather casual" and "arbitrary" way.

[43] See Pist. Soph. 4.142 (Schmidt 372, ll. 11–13), where the baptismal connotation is explicitly expressed: this ritual is "the baptism for those whose sins will be forgiven . . . the baptism of the first offering."

[44] See Brown 1966, 179–180, who also highlights the connection of this pericope with the dialogue between Jesus and Nicodemus (John 3:1–21), the "baptizing incident" of 3:22–30, and the allusion to a baptismal activity by Jesus in 4:1–3, a transitional passage to the episode in Samaria.

[45] This is aptly pointed out by Bucolo 2009, 119–120; see this article for an analysis of the iconographic sources and for further bibliography.

verses from a baptismal point of view, also including a reference to the purification (sometimes explicitly *from sin*), we find Justin Martyr's *Dialogue with Trypho* (14.1) and some Gnostic writings, such as the *Book of Baruch* by the Gnostic Justin.[46] Among the rare Gnostic texts that explicitly quote John 4:10 or 4:14 (and do not simply feature a common reference to "living water[s]"), there are the Naassene source quoted by Pseudo-Hippolytus, *Haer.* 5.9.18, and Heracleon's fragments, especially frag. 17.[47] Interestingly, their respective exegeses of the Johannine passage are very different from Pistis Sophia's one, for they focus neither on the issue of baptism nor on that of sin.[48]

Lastly, one may mention the Gospel of Philip (NHC II,3), for—according to the synopsis and index by Evans, Webb, and Wiebe—the Gospel of Philip 75,21 ("the living water is a body") might contain a reference to John 4:10–11, 14, as well as to other biblical passages.[49] In itself, this reference is vague and general, but the context in which this passage appears deserves further consideration. In fact, it is not only embedded in a section which speaks of a baptismal rite performed in running waters (Gos. Phil. 75,21–24), but it immediately follows a section on the "cup of prayer" that "contains wine and water, since it is appointed as the type of the blood for which thanks is given," and "it is full of the holy spirit."[50]

This section of text has four of the five elements of the vision of Pistis Sophia 4.141 (the "fire" is lacking, but see 57,22–24, on the purifying function of "water and fire," alluding to baptism and anointing) and juxtaposes a reference to the eucharistic rite with that to baptism; it also includes an interesting mention of the "cup," *typos* of the (sacrificial) Jesus's blood "for which thanks is given." The complex weaving of scriptural references behind this passage clearly includes 1 Cor 10:16 (and 11:24–25), but also Matt 26:27–28, John 19:34, and 1 John 5:6–8, which—as we have seen—are explicitly quoted (the first two ones) or possibly alluded to (the third one) in Pistis Sophia 4.141.[51] I will now concentrate

[46]Cited in Pseudo-Hippolytus, *Haer.* 5.27.2; see also the doctrine of the "Sethians" in 5.19.21, where the baptism of Jesus is interpreted as the purification of the Logos.

[47]*Apud* Origen, *Comm. Jo.* 13.10.

[48] On Heracleon's exegesis, in particular, the bibliography is extensive. I just mention Pagels 1973 (see esp. 86–97 on John 4) and Simonetti 1993, *ad loc.*; Wucherpfennig 2002; Thomassen 2010.

[49] Evans, Webb, and Wiebe 1993, 165. For the criteria used in that work, see Evans, Webb, and Wiebe 1993, xvii–xxii: "citations of biblical text(s)" are distinguished from "citations of biblical references only," which basically are *possible* allusions.

[50] Gos. Phil. 75,14–18, but see until line 21; translation is from Layton and Isenberg 1989.

[51] Cf. Evans, Webb, and Wiebe 1993, 164–165. 1 Cor 10, John 19, and 1 John 5 are also mentioned by Lundhaug 2019, 267 and

on these other quotations in Pistis Sophia 4.141, moving to the last part of this investigation.

Even from a brief comparison between Pistis Sophia and the other Gnostic texts which have been just mentioned, it emerges Pistis Sophia's distinctiveness. Pistis Sophia explicitly insists on the issue of the remission of sins (which is not expressly addressed in the Gospel of Philip 75,14–24) and takes advantage of specific scriptural passages to substantiate a soteriology which, especially in book 4, centres not only on "the mysteries," but also on the sacrificial role of Jesus, whose "blood" that is shed can remit sins. I have already expressed this point (see above), but it can now be appreciated better in the light of Pistis Sophia's quotations from John 4, Matt 26, and John 19, which play a pivotal role in this sense (and whose juxtaposition is in itself significant). In Pistis Sophia 4.141, *all* these ones, as well as the quotation from Luke 12, are interpreted as related to the remission of sins. The passage from John 4, in particular, receives a quite sophisticated baptismal interpretation.

It should be noted that Pistis Sophia, unlike other Gnostic texts/traditions, does not demean the baptism for the remission of sins—quite the opposite.[52] Above all, Pistis Sophia's distinctiveness (or rather, 4 Pistis Sophia's) within the wide range of Gnostic doctrinal trends is represented by the radical connection of Jesus's salvific role as a revealer with the salvific and sacrificial role of his death (and especially of his blood), also related to the remission of sins. It is because Jesus (the Savior descended into the world) has shed his blood for the remission of sins (quotation from Matt 26 in Pistis Sophia 4.141), and because "water and blood" came forth from his side (quotation from John 19), that the "living water" of John 4 can be interpreted, in Pistis Sophia 4.141, as the baptismal water that purifies from sin and enables "the Gnostic" to reach the "eternal life."

Pistis Sophia wants the reader to contemplate those scriptural quotations together. For Pistis Sophia, the mysteries alone are not sufficient to salvation: individual repentance is also necessary. It is for this reason that Pistis Sophia insists on the remission of sins and consequently on the appropriate

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Berno 2021, 210–211; see Berno's volume for a recent and accurate commentary on Gos. Phil., including an up-to-date discussion of bibliography and themes related to this gospel's sacramental doctrine.

[52] E.g., see the "Marcosians" according to Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.21.2: the "first baptism" is psychic. A different picture, however, may emerge from On Bap. A-B (NHC XI,2 40,30–43,19); see Thomassen 2006, 359. Compare also Tri. Trac. 127,25–129,34, which explicitly denies that baptism is distinguished from redemption.

rites, as the multiple baptisms.[53] But this is possible since, in Pistis Sophia's view (and especially in 4 Pistis Sophia), the salvific agent (Jesus) really took a human body, really suffered, really died, and his blood had salvific significance. Pistis Sophia's peculiarity, in this respect, has been noted by Claudio Gianotto, who—briefly but clearly—comments, "Its mention [i.e. of Jesus' blood in Pistis Sophia 4.141] through the reference to the Last Supper (quoted in the version from Matt 26:27–28) and to the piercing of Jesus' side by means of the soldier's spear as reported by John 19:34 makes us think that, differently from the overwhelming majority of Gnostic writings, Pistis Sophia acknowledges some salvific significance to Jesus' death."[54]

Carl Schmidt already noted that Pistis Sophia's quotation from John 19 attests a non-docetic Christology, and that the fourth book of Pistis Sophia differs from the other three in Christology and soteriology; the author of 4 Pistis Sophia, he wrote, "seems to have attributed a redemptive effect [*eine erlösende Wirkung*] to the death of Jesus on the cross."[55] But Schmidt, somewhat inconsistently, concluded that in Pistis Sophia the death and resurrection of Jesus have no *real* soteriological significance. The historical and worldly mission of the *Soter* is not based on his suffering and death, but on his teaching of the gnosis of the invisible God through the hidden mysteries.[56]

Antonio Orbe, in his exegesis of Pistis Sophia 4.141, noted that Pistis Sophia assigns Jesus a real body (a hylic one) and a real death, and that Pistis Sophia shows "a theology of the Savior's blood and its sacrificial effusion based on the New Testament."[57] But, for Orbe, the "blood" mentioned in Pistis Sophia 4.141 is just a sign of the *heavenly* blood (i.e. body) of Jesus, the only one which would have a true salvific value. His conclusions on soteriology are then basically in line with those of Schmidt.

But this interpretation appears not to properly notice Pistis Sophia's distinctiveness (noted, on the contrary, by Gianotto) and is perhaps based on a monolithic and flattening view of "Gnostic" soteriology. The soteriology expressed in 4 Pistis Sophia seems to come close to certain positions of

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[53] See Filoramo 1990, 136–137, 183; Gianotto 2018, 207.

[54] Gianotto 2018, 214n27, my trans. Cf. 213–214: "The wine and the blood [mentioned in Pist. Soph. 4.141] also have a salvific value and prelude to the remission of sins."

[55] Schmidt 1892, 436, my trans.

[56] Schmidt 1892, 436–437, 471–472.

[57] Orbe 1976, 2:349, my trans.

"mainstream Christianity" (the "Great Church").[58] But it also resonates with some Valentinian texts, such as the Gospel of Truth (NHC I,3) and, even more, the Interpretation of Knowledge (NHC XI,1), which features a Christology and soteriology that can be interpreted as affirming the "vicarious death" of the Savior, who incarnates, suffers, and dies to redeem the sins of humans.[59]

Einar Thomassen has ascribed this kind of soteriology to the so-called "eastern" Valentinianism. Though the actual existence of two (clearly identifiable) Valentinian "schools" is debated, this soteriology—attested in some Valentinian texts—can be summarized as follows.[60] The Savior assumed a real, material human body (in addition to the spiritual one), suffered and died. His incarnation has a soteriological importance, and his death is attributed a sacrificial significance. Salvation is effected through a process of "mutual participation" and exchange between the Savior and those who are saved: he has to share their human condition in order to save them from it and to enable them to become members of his spiritual body (the spiritual church).

For the comparison with Pistis Sophia, we can add a further element to consider, that of the "components" of the Savior. As I argued above, Pistis Sophia's Christology should be interpreted as a non-separationist Christology. Again, some ("eastern"?) Valentinian writings provide us with notable suggestions. I refer, in particular, to the Tripartite Tractate (NHC I,5). Harold Attridge and Elaine Pagels, in commenting on The Tripartite Tractate 113,35, write that this Gnostic work "approaches even closer to orthodoxy than did Ptolemy by maintaining the unity of the Savior and by insisting on the reality of his suffering."[61] A similar view is advocated by Alberto Camplani, who points out that the Gospel of Truth, the Treatise on Resurrection and the Tripartite Tractate, differently from the heresiological accounts of Valentinianism, present a non-docetic (or less docetic) and "unitive" Christology where one

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[58] In this respect, in addition to the salvific significance of Jesus's death, on which I am focusing here, one should also consider the potentially universalistic soteriological view of Pist. Soph., see Gianotto 2019, 345–346, 353–354; Filoramo 1990, 136–137.
[59] See Gos. Truth NHC I,3 19.34–20.34; see also Interp. Know. NHC XI,1 5.30–38, 10.27–31, 12.13–38, 14.27–38; cf. Thomassen 2006, 86–89; van den Broek 2013, 201. I analyze in more detail these and other Valentinian texts, in comparison with Pist. Soph. and delving deeper into Christology, in Annese, forthcoming.
[60] See Thomassen 2006, esp. 7–129. On the debate on the "two schools," see Berno 2017; Bermejo and Berno 2018, 162–165.
[61] Attridge and Pagels 1985b, 433; see also Attridge and Pagels 1985a, 186, on the "reality of the incarnation."

figure incarnates and operates salvation.[62] Lastly, Michael Svigel concludes that the Tripartite Tractate "clearly asserts a fleshly incarnation with language reminiscent of catholic writers."[63]

Pistis Sophia and Tripartite Tractate were probably composed more or less in the same period, that is, not before the third century C.E. (and their redaction was complex and stratified). It could be the case that Pistis Sophia's Christology, as that of Tripartite Tractate, tried to react to criticisms from the "Great Church," such as that of dividing Christ and of not conceiving in a sufficiently "strong" way the union of the divine and human components of the Savior.

This does not mean that Pistis Sophia's Christology and soteriology should be understood as *identical* with those of the "Great Church," Tripartite Tractate, or the Interpretation of Knowledge. But it may be hypothesized that certain theological developments and debates, both in Valentinianism (and other Gnostic trends) and in "mainstream/catholic Christianity," had some impact on Pistis Sophia as well. The christological debates concerning the composite nature of the Savior and his function, the related soteriological debates, and some reflections on the problem of sin, could all have influenced Pistis Sophia. At the same time, one should recognize also Pistis Sophia's distinctiveness, especially for what concerns its views on the death and the blood of Jesus.[64]

3 Pistis Sophia and the Proposal of a New Religious Synthesis

These concise comparative considerations lead us to the last part of this article, where I will briefly address the following question: Can we tell *why* Pistis Sophia (or, at least, 4 Pistis Sophia) has this soteriology? This reconnects us with the introduction of the present paper. Pistis Sophia was not only influenced by several sources: its author(s) deliberately aimed at realizing a *synthesis* of different

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[62] See Camplani 1997, 151–154. This "unitive" Christology, Camplani explains, is a key feature of the orthodox "mainstream" theology that was taking shape between the second and the third century.

[63] Svigel 2016, 349; he quotes Tri. Trac. 113.37–38; 115.4–6.9–11.

[64] To mention but one example, one could compare Pist. Soph.'s interpretation of John 19:34 in 4.141 with that in *Exc.* 61.3, where the water and blood flowing out from Jesus' side symbolize "the passions"; here, the meaning of the Savior's mission, death, and resurrection, is not the remission of sins, but the destruction of "the passions" (see also 61.7; 67.4). Moreover, what was pierced was just the flesh of the *oikonomia* (62.2).

religious traditions which could be capable of standing as the "definitive" religious handbook (both of doctrine and rituals) for its actual and possible adherents, as well as in front of the adversaries.[65]

If we find some "catholic," or "Valentinian," or "Sethian" elements in Pistis Sophia, it could be the case that their presence in that work is the symptom of something more profound than a simple attempt to conform to them (e.g., for propaganda). Louis Painchaud and Alberto Camplani have demonstrated that certain doctrinal diachronic developments occurred within Sethianism and Valentinianism, where one can recognize the inclusion of some "catholic"/"orthodox" elements (I use these terms in a conventional way), may be related to the controversies with mainstream Christianity and may represent innovations developed to answer criticisms from the Catholic party.[66] With Painchaud, Camplani notes that many of the "orthodox" elements introduced in Sethian texts serve "to provide a defence from the attacks by the Great Church and to establish more firmly the cohesion of the religious group that empathizes with those texts."[67]

Camplani adds that it is plausible that in the third century, when the Church gradually imposed doctrinal and liturgical orthodoxy and assumed a more solid hierarchical structure, some Gnostic groups decided to radicalize their doctrines while maintaining, rather than eliminating, certain "catholic" elements, which were used to become part of a precise project: the foundation of a new doctrine, a new "creed" that "presented itself not as a totally new religious system, but as the true fulfilment of the previous systems, i.e. Judaism and Christianity."[68] A similar perspective can be found in Mani's religious project (though this was more coherent and systematic).

I argue that Pistis Sophia represents something akin to these developments of Sethianism and Valentinianism. It is evident from the nature and contents of the Books of Jeu and Pistis Sophia that the

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[65] Markschies 2003 repeatedly invokes the concept of competitiveness in the "religious market" of antiquity to explain some doctrinal trends and developments of "Gnosis" in general or of some Gnostic texts in particular (e.g., Eugnostos NHC III,3, see 2003, 47). One might apply this concept to Pist. Soph. as well; is it possible that its author(s) aimed to make the form of Christianity in Pist. Soph. more competitive, by means of this "encyclopaedic" attempt? On the competition among Jeuians and Sethians in the "religious marketplace" see DeConick 2016, 324.

[66] See Painchaud 1995; Camplani 1997, esp. 151–154, 165–167. For example, in Valentinianism, think of the non-docetic and unitive Christology or of the attenuation of the role of the demiurge.

[67] Camplani 1997, 166, my trans.; cf. Painchaud 1995, 83–84.

[68] Camplani 1997, 167, my trans.

group that produced these texts aimed at proposing a new religious synthesis which would have been the fulfilment of different traditions (Judaism, Christianity, Graeco-Egyptian texts of ritual power, Egyptian lore, even Manichaeism), and included elements from different Gnostic trends and sources (on this last point, one could also think of the "syncretic" Gnostic tractate The Second Discourse of the Great Seth [NHC VII,2]).

Thus, just as in the late Sethian texts, the inclusion of "catholic" elements in the Pistis Sophia should not be interpreted as a way to "conform" the Jeuian doctrines to those of the so-called "Great Church," but as an attempt to demonstrate the group's capacity to include those elements in a new religious synthesis, elaborated also in response to criticisms from the Catholic party and thus in dialogue with "orthodox" doctrines but also with other Gnostic ones. And it is noteworthy that the doctrines akin to mainstream Christianity that Pistis Sophia incorporates in its system are not a camouflage, but become integral parts of this new system itself.

Such complex textual and doctrinal operation carried on by the author(s) of Pistis Sophia shows the significance of this work within the Gnostic historical trajectories and the vitality and creativity of what was considered for a long time "late," "senile," "decadent" Gnosticism. As we have seen, the Gospel of John plays no small part in Pistis Sophia's religious architecture. In Pistis Sophia 4.141, at the heart of 4 Pistis Sophia's soteriological doctrine, the quotations from John 4 and 19 (together with the other scriptural passages mentioned) have a pivotal and distinctive meaning. Paraphrasing what has been said for the Gospel of Philip, we can conclude that the Gospel of John is a "prominent intertext" of the Pistis Sophia.[69]

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[69] See Lundhaug 2019, 253 (and *passim*) on John as "the Gospel of Philip's most prominent intertext."

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