Alma Mater Studiorum Università di Bologna
Archivio istituzionale della ricerca

Daniele Tripaldi

Emending the Teacher:

From Marcus the 'Magician' to Valentinus and Back.

In *From Paul to Valentinus*, Peter Lampe dwelled on the philosophical education, literary abilities and stylistic exemplarity displayed by and acknowledged to the followers of Valentinus in Rome.[1] In this essay I shall attempt to widen the focus onto scribal practices documented for other 'Valentinian' sources,[2] by picking up as a test case one of the most (in)famous pupils of the equally (in)famous master – at least believing Irenaeus' starkly biased report: Marcus the 'magician'.[3]

In order to do so, I will take as an entry point one of Marcus' self-definitions and work out the full relevance of its meaning, as far as a concrete praxis of ancient scribal culture might be hiding behind it – and not simply a more abstract innovation in theological thought.[4]

In a second step, I will focus on a few passages in Marcus' literary production possibly pointing to a relationship of some sort between Marcus' revelatory text and *Gos. Truth*. Next, the emerging relationship will have to be clarified and so the questions of which text depends on the other and which form such an alleged dependence might have assumed will be consequently addressed. The conclusions will round up all the observations made throughout the article.

So far for what will be found in the next pages. What will not be found, however, is to me equally important and must be spelled out in advance as well. The reader will not come across discussions of, or comments on, the

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[1] Lampe (2003a), 293–298; 305; 310–311. Unless otherwise indicated, all translations from Greek, Latin, and Coptic are mine.

[2] Cf. Wucherpfennig (2002). On the 'Valentinians' as a textual community and their scriptural practices see more recently Dunderberg (2017), 42–46, and Kreps (2016) respectively. I agree with Rüpke (2016) in advancing some caveats for the use of the concept of 'textual communities' and attempting to "sketch different relationships of practices of writing and reading for processes of 'grouping together'" (171).

[3] I am developing a seminal observation by Wucherpfennig (2002), 387 n. 28: reading through Irenaeus' polemics, he numbered the wealthy women 'seduced' by Marcus among the "Patroninnen …, die die christlichen Lehrer beim Verfassen literarischer Schriften finanziell unterstützten, wie dies Ambrosius später bei Origenes tat".

[4] On the theological proclivities preventing scholars from seeing compositional techniques and writing practices associated with scribal education see Rollens (2016), 122–131.

classical passage Iren. *Haer.* 3.11.9; s/he will hear of no comparisons either between *Gos. Truth* as transmitted in NHC I,*3* // XII,*2,* and the authentic fragments of Valentinus, as preserved by Clement of Alexandria and 'Hippolytus'; finally, no detailed analysis of the quality and rhetorical style of the Coptic text nor scrutiny of its linguistical peculiarities will be offered.

Any external evidence, if available, is urgently needed to avoid the impasse which recent research on the date and authorship of the *Gospel of Truth* has since long fallen into: basing upon previous reconstructions of how Valentinus wrote or what he taught and put into writing, it ended up relying on mostly circular assumptions about the inner coherence of his thought and style.[5]

Whose διορθωτής?

In *Haer.* 1.13.1, we read that Marcus "boasts" to be τοῦ διδασκάλου διορθωτής // *magistri emendator* ("corrector of his teacher"). As Foerster correctly points out, it is undeniable that the verb καυχάομαι (Latin *glorior*) has negative polemical overtones reflecting Irenaeus' preconceptions and distorting insinuations.[6] It is no less true however that Irenaeus employs it as a sort of 'quotation' or introductory formula anticipating or resuming claims, ideas, and practices that we can directly and safely ascribe to the source quoted, and in particular to his adversaries, once we free the verb and its infinitive object, the assertion itself, from Irenaeus' polemical distortions and deliberate misinterpretations.[7] We can therefore confidently assume that Marcus' 'boast' as reported by Irenaeus basically came from

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[5] Similarly Edwards (2016), 358. I offer here just a small list of recent scholarly opinions about the authorship of the *Gospel of Truth*, depending on single critical evaluations of one or all the very same factors which I am not deliberately considering. Markschies (1992), 339–356, and in his footsteps Fürst (2007), 94, categorically rule out the attribution of *Gos. Truth* to Valentinus; Orlandi (1992), 113, Layton (1995), 250–251, Quispel (1996), 331–334, Attridge/MacRae (2000), 65–67, 78–79, Thomassen (2006), 146–148, 424, Pearson (2007), 147, Thomassen/Pasquier (2007), 50–51 and Denzey-Lewis (2014), 155, all leave open instead that possibility; Schenke (2001), 27–32, argues that we are dealing with an unknown, Christian Gnostic author, not necessarily a Valentinian; later on, in Schenke (2012), 1245–1247, he proposes to assign the anonymous author to the same cultural milieu as the *Odes of Solomon*, whichever that may be (see also Nagel [2014], 29–36); both Dunderberg (2008) 4, 60, 225 n. 69, and Brix (2017), 143, qualify *Gos. Truth* as Valentinian; Lettieri (2011), 360, sees the hand of Ptolemy's disciples at work either in reshaping an original text by Valentinus or someone close to him, or in authoring *Gos, Truth* as we know it.

[6] Foerster (1999), 57.

[7] Cf. 3.1.1 with 3.2.2. See also 1.19.2 and 3.11.9 in parallel to 3.12.12 and 14.4. Further variations appear in 2 *prol.* 14.6; 3.25.6; 5.30.3.

Marcus' lips themselves. He probably intended and spoke it out more neutrally as a self-definition clarifying his relation to his teacher.[8]

Who is then this anonymous teacher whom Marcus allegedly "corrects" or "improves"? To be sure, Marcus' teacher is not the "famous teacher" that Irenaeus mentioned earlier in 1.11.3. Following a cursory remark by Irenaeus himself (1.15.1), this "famous teacher" is no other but Marcus himself.[9] Nor is he Ptolemy: Marcus cannot be counted among the latter's disciples mentioned in 1.12.1, since the latter follow further "others" than Marcus (11.5) and are introduced as a distinct class of thinkers. So far for the candidates to be rejected.

Moving on to the eligible one(s): the first time Irenaeus mentions Marcus, in 1.11.3, he is listing Valentinian teachers he knows or heard of (Secundus [1.11.2]; Marcus himself [1.11.3]; some anonymous ones [1.11.5]; Ptolemy's most talented followers [1.12.1]; others even more skilled than the aforementioned [1.12.3]). As for the second mention, the one we started from (1.13.1), he isolates Marcus as a "further" 'test case' of Valentinian leaders in his list and his agenda calling for special attention. It bears remarking that the list begins by Valentinus himself (1.11.1) and that in 2 *praef.* 1.1–8, all the names or unnamed personalities listed, including Marcus, are generally labeled by Irenaeus as *priores* among Valentinus' disciples. In other words, they are regarded as the first frontrunners of the 'school' who had probably been active by 189 CE at the latest.[10] One piece of indirect evidence should be added: in 1 *praef.* 2.34–37, Irenaeus stresses that he had access to ὑπομνήματα by "disciples of Valentinus, as they say" (see also 1.9.1).[11] Later, in 1.14–16 he can excerpt extensively a visionary text by Marcus relating his theo- and cosmogonical system (cf. 1.11.3 with 15.1). This implies that Marcus' writing must be counted among the ὑπομνήματα consulted by Irenaeus and that its author felt and said to belong to the "disciples of Valentinus".

All in all, then, the most plausible inference we can draw is that Marcus' alleged boast in 1.13.1 is to be understood as a witness to his own aware-

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[8] It is probably no coincidence that in *Haer.* 1.14.1 Irenaeus preserves two further self-definitions by Marcus, probably excerpted from a revelatory text circulating under his name.

[9] Foerster (1999), 14–15; 296–297 and Chiapparini (2012), 293, n. 35.

[10] I follow Rousseau/Doutreleau (SC 294, 200 n.4) in the interpretation of *priores* at *haer.* 2 *praef.* 1.5–8. For the chronology of the first two books of Irenaeus' *haer.* (178–189) see Behr (2013), 68–69, who proposes 178-189. Chiapparini (2012), 400, dates book 1 as we now have it (the second edition of the book, according to his hypothesis) and books 2–5 after 173, "non troppo a ridosso di fine secolo".

[11] The term ὑπόμνημα generally refers to "die endgultige Redaktion, die Reinschrift" of a book "welche meist die tatsächliche ἔκδοσις einleitet", such ἔκδοσις being "die Ausarbeitung eines Werkes, die ein Schriftsteller als abgeschlossen ansah und mit allen Risiken ausgab": Dorandi (1991) 32–33; cf. 25–27.

ness of the strong, real or ideal, link existing between him and Valentinus.[12] No matter whether he ever personally met his supposed teacher or not, and in what terms we should most appropriately interpret his concept of discipleship, Marcus appears to have appealed to the authority of Valentinus, and claimed more or less explicitly that his figure as teacher *par excellence* was the literary and ideological *Grösse* against which he wished to profile himself.

Disseminating Writings: What is a διόρθωσις?

The name of the teacher still gives us no hint as to the actual meaning of the epithet διορθωτής which Marcus appropriates for himself.

Almost twenty years ago, commenting upon *haer.* 1.13.1, N. Foerster first pointed out that the noun διορθωτής seemingly stems from Valentinian terminology, qualifying salvific action as "In-Ordnung-Bringen". He then concluded:

Wenn Markus der Magier sich aber als „Verbesserer seines Lehrers" bezeichnete, so ordnete er sich selbst in eine schon bestehende, valentinianische Schultradition ein und war sich demnach auch bewusst, dass er sein System im Blick auf die Lehrtradition seiner gnostischen Vorgänger entwickelt hatte. Er gab damit implizit zu, nichts vollkommen Neues, sondern nur eine verbesserte Variante von bestehenden Lehrinhalten vorzutragen.[13]

More recently, apparently elaborating on Foerster's latter observation, J.-D. Dubois argued that the term διορθωτής could easily correspond to the pedagogic aim of any Valentinian teacher, offering correction, conversion, and ultimately salvation.[14] For his part, giving more weight as it were to Foerster's former remark, F. Berno insisted that on a broader scale the epithet denotes Marcus' awareness of his own deeper intimacy with the divine and therefore underlines his greater ability to impact on human reality by carrying out his Christ-like task of rectifier of the whole creation.[15]

Does the 'original' meaning of the epithet encompass such grand doctrinal scenarios? To be sure, Irenaeus cites it to target the instability and ever-growing diversification 'inherent' to Valentinian tradition (cf. 1.10.2 and 11.1). A passage in one of his excerpts from the revelation authored by Marcus, however, probably helps us clarify what Marcus himself might have originally meant by διορθωτής. According to *haer.* 1.14.5 the One

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[12] So implicitly already Foerster (1999), 56–57.
[13] Ibid.
[14] Dubois (2006–2007), 210.
[15] Berno (2018), 91, n. 32.

abiding apart in the Father was sent down ἐπὶ διορθώσει of erroneous figures (cf. 2.24.2) – and not just to an ἐπανόρθωσις, as usual elsewhere in *haer.* (see 1.9.2 and 1.23.3). As a result of his descent, one of the nine consonants is added to the seven vowels and so vowels, semi-vowels and consonants all turn into *Ogdoads*.[16] For Marcus, then, διόρθωσις basically consists of subtracting and inserting letters, conceived as images of pre-existent beings. He evidently presupposes and deploys a grammatical notion to describe a salvific action taking place in the heavenly world.[17]

One further occurrence of διορθωτής/*emendator* corroborates the conclusion that διόρθωσις revolves around textual and grammatical (*i.e.* philological and exegetical) matters: in *haer.* 3.1.1 Irenaeus’ opponents allegedly extol themselves as *emendatores apostolorum*. Later in 3.2.1–2 Irenaeus offers a more elaborated paraphrase of the syntagm: in response to any appeal to the apostolic tradition as handed on by the presbyters, his adversaries reply they are “wiser not only than the presbyters, but also than the apostles” (similarly in 3.12.12). In what follows Irenaeus makes clear that the very status of apostolic writings and gospels as physically and ideologically untampered texts and the related exegetical task of rediscovering and laying bare their true meaning, hidden behind a possibly interpolated or misinterpreted wording, are at stake here. *Emendatio apostolorum* turns out to be *emendatio Scripturarum*, as Irenaeus makes ultimately clear in 4.6.1. More important for my point, such praxis appears to imply working with and on concrete texts available to the would-be emendators (cf. 3.11.9 with 3.12.12; 3.21.1–5 and 23.8).

As a result, it is evident to me that, in order to fully understand Marcus’ self-proclamation, we need to shift the focus to the question of what exactly a διόρθωσις was in ancient scribal praxis and book production.

As *termini technici*, διορθόω (Latin: *emendare*) and διόρθωσις (Latin: *emendatio*) are employed in the meanings ‘correct, emend’ / ‘correction, emendation’, referring to philological revisions on a given text (cf. Diogenes Laertius *Vit. Phil.* 3.66; Porphyry *Vit. Plot.* 7.51; 20.5–9; 24.2; 26.37– 39; Rufinus *Orig. Princ. praef.* 4).[18] More broadly, διόρθωσις affected written laws, oaths and last wills by changing their provisions (see Aristotle *[Mund.]* 400b.26–30; Diodorus of Sicily 12.17.1–3; Plutarch *Eum.* 12; Jos. *Bell.* 1.646). Better informed historians may be even invited to “correct” the ignorance of their predecessors and make new *pragmateiai* out of older

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[16] Foerster (1999), 245–246.

[17] That Marcus was acquainted with grammatical jargon is confirmed by his use of the extremely rare adjective ἐξαγράμματος (*Haer.* 1.15.2), a technical term applied to syllables occurring only three more times in Heliodorus’ commentary on the *ars grammatica* by Dionysius Thrax (see *TLG*). More on this point in Foerster (1999), 235–238 and 247–248.

[18] See Pfeiffer (1968), *passim*, and Cacciari, forthcoming.

ones, by filling the gaps former writers left – just without recurring to *diaskeue* (Diodorus Siculus 1.5.2): that is, without adding to or deleting from the hypotexts, while at the same time keeping the original wording and *hypothesis* as a whole and then publishing the outcome under a new name.[19]

Accordingly διόρθωσις/*emendatio* was a key-phase in the elaboration, refinement and continuous rewriting process that finally lead to the 'official' publication of 'new' literary works (Quintilian *Inst.* 10.4; Pliny the Younger *Ep.* 7.17,1–7 and 8.21.6).[20] As one such labor of revision by addition, subtraction and/or modification, διόρθωσις/*emendatio* could fall itself under suspicion of altering and distorting at will the wording of a text to conform its meaning to the mind and ideas of the corrector (see Origen *Fr. Os.* 12.5; *Comm. Matt.* 15.14; *Hom. Ps. 77* 1.1, and Porphyry *Philos. Orac.* quoted in Eusebius *Praep. ev.* 4.7.1).[21] In this meaning the term matches perfectly with Irenaeus' use of διορθωτής/*emendator* examined earlier – and with its polemical implications as well: in 3.12.7 Valentinus, Marcion and their followers, the self-proclaimed *perfectiores*/*peritiores* than the apostles, are charged with forcing their own ideological agenda, their *sententia*, into their editorial and exegetical work on the Scriptures.[22]

To sum up: as shown by his own *usus scribendi*, Marcus seems to have shared a basically grammatical or literary concept of διορθόω/διόρθωσις, to be occasionally extended to things divine conceived as letters, groups of letters and/or words in need of correction. A comparison with Irenaeus' mentions of alleged *emendatores apostolorum* highlighted that such emendation activity had to do primarily with books and book production, involving both editorial and exegetical techniques. A brief survey of the scribal practices presupposed by διορθόω/διόρθωσις shows that such practices ranged from strictly textual interventions to creating and disseminating new versions of older works or even new works. Therefore, prior to and consistent with his being a teacher and thinker on his own who develops his predecessor's doctrinal legacy into a full-blown mythological system, by

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[19] For a definition of *diaskeue* cf. Pleše (2006), 4 and n. 5, relying on Galen.

[20] Cf. Apuleius *Apol.* 36,6 with 38,1–2 and 40,5. See also 95,5: an absolutely perfect speech needs no *additio*, *detractio* or *commutatio*. On emendation as a text enhancing stage in the publication of an ancient book see Derrenbacker (2005), 39–44. In this sense *emendatio* dovetails with ἐξεργασία ("elaboration, perfection"): Damm (2013), 55–58. More on Pliny's practice in Pecere (2010), 230–239. For some evidence of διόρθωσις coming from papyrological findings see Dorandi (1991), 15–18, who ascribes "Eingriffe, Verbesserungen und Anmerkungen" appearing in PHerc. 1021 to the activity of a professional διορθωτής (16–17).

[21] For Origen's use of the term see Cacciari, forthcoming.

[22] See *e.g.* the textual forms of Dan 12:9–10 as quoted in *Haer.* 1.19.2 and Matt 11:25–27 as quoted in 1.20.3 and commented upon in 4.6.1, both appearing as scriptural proofs of 'Gnostic' tenets and self-definitions: the former differs substantially from the Hebrew text, the LXX and Theodotion; judging from the apparatus in Nestle–Aland[28], the latter stands out as quite unique in *Matthew*'s manuscript tradition.

defining himself as a διορθωτής/*emendator* of his teacher, Marcus might have probably understood himself both as a literate deeply enrooted in contemporary book culture *and* as a pupil re-vising, re-molding and perfecting Valentinus' written *corpus* to inform his own literary enterprise – if not as its very 'editor' and 'publisher'.

In re-adapting texts from his teacher to new literary forms Marcus does not stand alone among Valentinus' pupils: we hear of one Alexander mingling his own *syllogismi* with psalms by Valentinus (Tertull. *Carn.* 17.1).[23] Both Heracleon in his *hypomnemata* (frr. 16 and 36) and further Valentinians, maybe Ptolemy's followers (Irenaeus, *Haer.* 2.6.3), evidently made use of and expanded on some key-words and concepts of the famous lecture by Valentinus cited in Clement, *Str.* 2.8.36.2–4.[24] Even Plotinus seems to critically allude to a passage from that very lecture (*Enn.* 2.9.4.13–14), which possibly came to his attention through his 'Gnostic' friends (cf. 2.9.10.1–14 and Porphyry, *Vit. Plot.* 16). Valentinus' writings were thus apparently widely disseminated, interpreted, discussed and re-worked into new texts among the circles of his disciples[25] – and even beyond. Do we have evidence for supposing any process of the like going on in Marcus' literary production as well?

Marcus and the Gospel of Truth

As I did elsewhere, in order to possibly establish a more solid relationship between texts and thus avoid the risk of an easy but historically speaking less cogent parallelomania, I will focus on specifically formal, structural and lexical analogies.[26]

By his own admission, Foerster was not the first to point out the strong affinities – far stronger than any other parallel suggested – between *Gos. Truth* NHC I,*3* 31.35–32.17 and *Haer.* 1.16.2.63–70 (see also 2.24.6) in their exegesis of the parable of the lost sheep (Matt 18:12–14 // Luke 15:3–7):[27]

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[23] One might wonder whether the text Tertullian refers to ran like the commentary on a psalm by Valentinus that we read in 'Hippolytus' *Ref.* 6.36.6–8.

[24] On the relationship and the possibility of a direct contact between Heracleon and Valentinus cf. Wucherpfennig (2002), 132–137; 367.

[25] And so were probably Heracleon's *hypomnemata* alike: see Wucherpfennig (2002), 369–371.

[26] Tripaldi (2017). Or as Edwards (2016), 361, put it: "We cannot make an argument of every similarity".

[27] Foerster (1999), 385–387. Two points must be made here in advance: first, I consider *Gos. Truth* an originally 2nd century Greek writing, as Orlandi (1992), 44; 47; 50; 52–53; 62; 69–70; 73, convincingly proposes basing on the many lexical, syntactical, and logical inconsistencies in

– the *computus digitorum* as interpretive key of the parable of the lost sheep (Mt 18:12–14 // Lk 15:3–7),

– counting seen as "shifting" (ⲡⲱⲱⲛⲉ // μεθιστάναι) from the left to the right hand, the latter having a positive value,

– left hand and number ninety-nine explained as "deficiency" (ⲱⲧⲁ // ὑστέρημα).

From the similar application of the parable in *Gos. Truth* and Marcus, Baarda argued that we are hereby presented "with an exegesis that must have been current in Valentinian circles".[28] Similarly, for Foerster it cannot be excluded that the author of *Gos. Truth* had acquaintance with Valentinian traditions.[29]

To my knowledge, however, the lexical clusters shared by *Gos. Truth* and Marcus' revelation, along with the overall explanatory scheme of the parable, still stand unparalleled in Christian authors and writings of 2nd–3rd century CE: unknown to Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian and Origen, as well as to any other of the 'gnostic', including Valentinian, teachers and groups that the former cite,[30] it left no traces either in the Nag Hammadi corpus or in later heresiological reports.[31] Later, just Augustine's explanation of the parable shows one fundamental affinity with Marcus and *Gos. Truth*, in that the *computus digitorum* is applied as a key to the allegorical interpretation (*Serm.* 175.1, delivered in 412 CE).[32] Nonetheless, no common lexemes or expressions occur. The evidence surveyed so far suggests that, far from being current, this exegetical tradition and its distinctive phraseology are quite unique to Marcus' revelation and *Gos. Truth*. Therefore, we can hardly suppose the two texts to be unrelated or even just indirectly linked.

Once this lexical and exegetical link is established, two further passages in *Gos. Truth* invite to a stricter formal comparison with one in Marcus' revelation. All three revolve around the combination of two main themes: the knowledge of the Father as dissolving earlier ignorance and error, and

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the Coptic text to be solved as literal renderings from the Greek of the *Vorlage*. At a later stage of development, two versions of it were produced, undergoing "a journey of different turns, before they ended up in NHC I and XII", as Brix (2017), 144, correctly emphasizes. Second, *Haer.* 1.16.1–2 contains "Lehrstoff des Markus", excerpted from his writing, as demonstrated by Foerster (1999), 9–10; 13; 16; 363, and not generically 'Marcosian' material, as often assumed.

[28] Baarda (1994), 137–138.

[29] Foerster (1999), 387.

[30] For Heracleon's exegesis of the parable see *e.g.* Origen, *C.Io.* 13.20.119–121.

[31] As a cross-check in *TLG*, BiPa and Evans/Webb/Wiebe (1993) shows. For the distinct possibility that Priscillian and Priscillianists knew and quoted *Gos. Truth* see Edwards (2016). On the use of 'apocryphal' books among Priscillianists cf. also Veronese (2018), 84–122 (on *Gos. Truth*, here 103–105 and 110–113).

[32] On the diffusion of the *computus digitorum* and its symbolical interpretations among Christians see Marrou (1958); Quacquarelli (1970); Poirier (1979).

the manifestation of (the name of) Jesus as a key-feature in that process.[33] These two themes are deployed in similar language and using a common descriptive metaphor (Jesus becoming a path – not simply "being the path" as in their source, *John* 14:6, and elsewhere often in early Christian literature), as the following synopsis hopefully shows:

Gos. Truth (NHC I,*3*) | *Haer.* 1.15.2

18.1–20: The oblivion of **error (πλάνη)** was not evident … Given that oblivion did not come into being through the Father, it did then for the sake of the Father: indeed, what does come into being through the Father is **knowledge (pisaune = γνῶσις or ἐπίγνωσις?)** and knowledge **appeared (afouwnh+ abal = ἐφανερώθη? ἐφάνη?)** in order that oblivion might **dissolve (bwl abal = λύω, -ομαι and composites), and the Father be known.** As oblivion came into being, because the Father was ignored, oblivion will **not be anymore, from the very moment the Father comes to be known.** This is the gospel of the One who is searched for and who **manifested himself (afouanhf+ abal = ἐφανέρωσεν ἑαυτόν? ἐφανερώθη? ἐφάνη?)** to those who are perfect thanks to the mercies of the Father: Proclaiming this gospel, **Jesus**, the Anointed One, the hidden secret, shed light on those who lived in darkness, due to oblivion (cf. 24.28–37). He shed light on them and showed them *a path* (*maeit = ὁδός*), and the path is the truth which he taught them.

31.28–31: *He* (*scil.* the Son) *became a path* (*afywpe efoei n+oumaeit = ἐγένετο or ἐγενήθη ὁδός?*) for those who had gone astray, and knowledge for the ignorant.

πρὶν μὲν οὖν, φησί, τούτου τοῦ ὀνόματος τὸ ἐπίσημον **φανῆναι**, τουτέστιν **τὸν Ἰησοῦν**, τοῖς υἱοῖς, **ἐν ἀγνοίᾳ** πολλῇ ὑπῆρχον οἱ ἄνθρωποι καὶ **πλάνη**· **ὅτε** δὲ **ἐφανερώθη** τὸ ἐξαγράμματον ὄνομα, ὃ σάρκα περιεβάλετο, ἵνα εἰς τὴν αἴσθησιν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου κατέλθη, ἔχον ἐν ἑαυτῷ αὐτὰ τὰ ἓξ καὶ τὰ εἰκοσιτέσσαρα, **τότε γνόντες** αὐτὸ ἐπαύσαντο τῆς ἀγνοίας, ἐκ θανάτου δὲ εἰς ζωὴν ἀνῆλθον τοῦ ὀνόματος αὐτοῖς *ὁδοῦ γενηθέντος* πρὸς τὸν Πατέρα τῆς ἀληθείας. τεθεληκέναι γὰρ τὸν Πατέρα τῶν ὅλων **λῦσαι τὴν ἄγνοιαν** καὶ καθελεῖν τὸν θάνατον. **ἀγνοίας** δὲ **λύσις ἡ ἐπίγνωσις αὐτοῦ ἐγίνετο** (cf. 1.21.4).

In addition, it bears noting that, as to the *dispositio* of the two texts under focus, both in Marcus' work and in *Gos. Truth* the exegesis of the parable appears to immediately follow the reference to Jesus becoming a path.[34]

Finally, even more general linguistic and thematic clusters can be detected as possible *gemeinsames Gut*. As being of vaguer nature and possibly broader diffusion, in and for themselves they have less probative force than the passages treated so far.[35] However, when examined together with the preceding parallels, they play their own part in confirming that we are dealing with two closely related texts: probably elaborating upon Col 2:14, *Gos. Truth* 18.24; 20.25 and *Haer.* 1.14.6 share the claim that Jesus "was nailed to a/the wood/tree" (ауаftⳏ аує // προσηλώθη τῷ ξύλῳ), *Haer.* 1.14.6 being to my best knowledge its earliest attestation (see also *Dem.* 33)[36] – occurrences multiply in Greek Christian literature starting only from the 2nd half of the 4th century CE, as it seems (cf. *TLG*);[37] "Father of Truth" is employed as an epithet of God both in *Gos. Truth* (e.g. in 16.32) and in Marcus' text (cf. *Haer.* 1.15.2 and 1.20.2–3);[38] according to *Gos. Truth* 38.7–24 and *Haer.* 1.15.2, the name of God is the name given to the Son by the Father himself and then manifested by the former, whereby such visible manifestation and the invisible aspect of the Father as properly belonging to His name are explicitly contrasted;[39] finally, Marcus' revelation preserves

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[34] After indulging in polemics against his adversaries (1.15.4–6), in 16.1 Irenaeus sets off once again at the point where he had left in 15.2–3, talking about the birth of the eternal beings and illustrating it as a doctrine originating at the crossroads of numerology and Gospel exegesis. Following the remark by Irenaeus himself closing the polemical section (15.6.155–158), it is evident that he is returning to his source and replicating its arrangement.

[35] Cf. Ménard (1962), 88–89, n. 33, on the occurrences of "Father of Truth".

[36] Puech/Quispel (1954), 33 and n. 68. Hippolytus, *Ben. Is. Jac.* 8 (PO 27/1–2, 38.2) and *Treat. Seth* NHC VII,*2* 58.24–25 are probably to be dated a little later (end 2nd – early 3rd century CE). Moreover, *Gos. Truth* and Marcus agree in shifting the responsibility for Jesus' crucifixion to demonic agency, as they ascribe his death to the action of the *plane* and the 360 astral gods respectively: Foerster (1999), 44 and 51–52. On the cross in 2nd – 3rd century Christian exegesis see Piscitelli Carpino (2007).

[37] See e.g. *Apos. Con.* 5.14.82; John Chrysostom, *Hom. 1 in Ac.* 2 [PG 60, 16.13–14]; Theodoret of Cyrus, *Ep.* 131.93. These findings support Brix's case (2013) for *Gos. Truth* as drawing from contemporary speculations on the cross (cf. Justin Martyr; Irenaeus), and provide one more hint to its possible composition in the early decades of the 2nd half of the 2nd century CE.

[38] Cf. Ménard (1962), 88–89, and Nagel (2004), 43, n. 2, who ascribes the occurrence of the epithet in 1.20.2 to Marcosian sources. More skeptical Foerster (1999), 12–13. For further occurrences of the epithet in early Christian literature see *Odes Sol.* 41,2 and the note to the verse in Lattke (1995), 209.

[39] Foerster (1999), 338–340, who signals the convergences of Marcus' position with Theodotus' Christological tenets as well (see Clement of Alexandria *Exc. Thdt.* 26.1). However, Marcus and *Gos. Truth* presuppose speculations on the name "Jesus" (cf. *Gos. Truth* 16.31–17.4 and 18.10–21; see also Irenaeus, *Haer.* 2.24.2 and 4.17.6), whereas Theodotus' comments focus on *monogenēs*. A further parallel to such an interplay of invisible dimension-Father and visible

the same blending of pre-existent beings, specifically the 'aeons' and μεγέθη of the elect, and letters of the alphabet documented for the elect, the living ones, in *Gos. Truth*, and focuses alike on commenting upon the distinction between vowels and consonants (cf. *Gos. Truth* 23.1–18 and *Haer.* 1.14.1–5).[40]

All in all, then, presuming a direct link between some version of *Gos. Truth* and Marcus' revelatory writing seems no speculative guesswork outrunning the sources: the exegetical, lexical and thematical convergences detected are too striking to be accounted for as mere coincidences and often too specific and isolated to be dismissed as common reminiscences of a widespread tradition.[41] We are thus left with the question as to how we are to think of the direct link so detected: is one Greek *Gos. Truth* the source of Marcus' writing? Or does *Gos. Truth* rely instead on Marcus' vision, possibly being a work of the latter or a text authored by one of his followers?[42]

Taking as example "das problematische Verhältnis" between Valentinus and Ptolemy or other disciples, Christoph Markschies showed that the story of 2nd century Valentinianism is marked by a growing tendency to *Mythologisierung*: the earlier the text, the less mythopoietic and extensively systematic, and *viceversa*.[43] The evidence at our disposal leaves few doubts indeed: Alexander probably built upon Valentinus' psalms to argue his view on the nature of Christ's flesh (Tertull. *Carn.* 17.1); another hymn by Valentinus solicited anonymous attempts at systematizing ('Hippolytus', *Ref.* 6.36.6–8).[44] For its part, *Gos. Truth* as we now have it shows no traces of a complex and overarching mythological narrative even barely comparable to Marcus',[45] and at the same time omits proof material extant in Marcus, which could have been essential to foster its own theological interests and clarify its arguments.[46]

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aspect-Son as *Logos* of the Father, albeit with no mention of names, can be found in Irenaeus, *Haer.* 5.18.1.

[40] Ménard (1962), 123 and 159; Attridge/MacRae (2000), 68. On this blending in *Gos. Truth* see Kreps (2016), 328–332.

[41] Following Ménard (1962), 159. Foerster (1999), 340 and 387, pleads instead for the latter option.

[42] Ménard (1962), 159.

[43] Markschies (1992), 392–402. His observations can be complemented by the results of Damm's analysis (2013) in assessing Markan priority, basing on the useful practice of intensifying one's source argumentative material.

[44] See Markschies (1992), 219–220 and Thomassen (2006), 490–494. Cf. the allusion to mythopoietic accretions to the teacher's doctrine among Heracleon's disciples in Origen, *C.Io.* 13.20.120–122.

[45] For the sketchy outlines of a cosmogonical myth extant in *Gos. Truth* as a hint to its early date in the (pre)history of Valentinianism cf. Thomassen/Pasquier (2007), 51–52.

[46] For one possible example see next note.

Following Markschies' suggestions and the historical and literary evidence available, it thus seems more plausible to assume that Marcus reworked passages from a copy of *Gos. Truth*, elaborating a more sophisticated theo- and cosmogonical myth out of them and substantiating it with further proofs and *testimonia*. In so doing, Marcus re-shaped keywords and whole thematic clusters from the earlier writing into a new text expanding upon the ideological agenda of its 'source'.[47] To assume this is in turn tantamount to supposing, as we saw earlier, that Marcus did a 'redactional' διόρθωσις work in the broadest sense on his copy of *Gos. Truth.* The textual evidence collected and examined so far confirms therefore Marcus' boast to be a διορθωτής. Of his teacher – he himself added; of an earlier text, a Greek *Gos. Truth* – I have hopefully shown. The equation is now at hand: Marcus' boast may imply that the text he re-worked and emended, *Gos. Truth*, was probably known to him as a work circulating under the name of the teacher whom he allegedly corrected, Valentinus.

Conclusions

Thirteen years ago, in his monumental book on the Valentinians, Einar Thomassen wrote:

In general it is also quite likely that quotations from, and allusions to, texts by Valentinus are contained in the later Valentinian documents we possess, but we lack the means to identify them.[48]

If the hypothesis I have argued for in this paper stands further examination, by comparing relevant passages from Irenaeus' *Adversus Haereses* with the Coptic *Gos. Truth* we may have found in Marcus' revelation literary allusions to one Greek *Gos. Truth* as a work of Valentinus. As we looked at the two writings together, we found evidence of uniquely shared exegetical traditions, lexical and thematic clusters, which taken together led me to the conclusion that most probably either *Gos. Truth* was Marcus' source or *Gos. Truth* relied upon Marcus' revelation. Marcus' conscience of developing a 'school'-tradition, which more and more emerged as a "textual

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[47] So already Puech/Quispel (1954), 27–28, who assumed that *Gos. Truth* belongs to the first generation of Valentinus' disciples (see also 31 and 39); for his part, Marcus would have just limited himself to systematize such an earlier theological tendency. Similarly, Attridge/MacRae (2000), 92, maintain that *Gos. Truth* is to be closely associated with Marcosians who built their more complex numerology upon older speculative teachings. Indeed, Marcus' revelation on the "body of the Truth" as consisting of letters (*Haer.* 1.14.3) might be better explained as a visionary-mythical clarification, expansion and correction of the "letters of the Truth" metaphor he found in *Gos. Truth* 23.4–8.

[48] Thomassen (2006), 424.

community" where "books were composed, copied, exchanged, read aloud, discussed and debated",[49] lends support to the assumption that if such a literary relationship is to be established, it should be probably to the extent that Marcus re-worked a *Gos. Truth* as an integral part of his literary enterprise and mythopoeia. Given such a re-adaptation of *Gos. Truth*, and Marcus' corresponding boast of being the corrector of his teacher, my suggestion is that Marcus knew one Greek version of *Gos. Truth* as a text authored by Valentinus. This version may have therefore been circulating already by the third quarter of the 2nd century CE.

This suggestion raises as many questions as it hopefully solves. Just to number a few: how far does Marcus feel free and skilled enough to go in "recasting" his source, his "exemplar text into a new form"?[50] Will further comparison help partially reconstruct one form of the Greek text of *Gos. Truth* in the 2nd half of the 2nd century and so understand the complex and fluid formation history of the Coptic versions?[51] Are we now in a better position *both* to offer more precise *termini ante quem* for early Christian writings reworked in *Gos. Truth* (*e.g.* the *Odes of Solomon*) *and* to map the dissemination of texts and Jesus traditions in the Mediterranean basin? Furthermore, if Coptic *Gos. Truth* and the *Veritatis Evangelium* mentioned in *Haer.* 3.11.9 are basically one and the same work,[52] is it possible that the Valentinians targeted by Irenaeus as 'authors' of the latter are in the end Marcus and his followers in Lyon and the Rhone valley? They too are obviously envisaged, when Irenaeus employs the comprehensive label *hi qui sunt a Valentino* (cf. *Haer.* 2.24.6.198–204 [= 1.16.2.63–70 // *Gos. Truth* 31.35–32.17] with 2 *prol.* 1.1–13).[53] Finally, do scribal and editorial practices in ancient book production and authorship attribution shed new light on Irenaean phraseology referring to the publication of such a *Gospel of Truth* (*titulo*; *profero*) and give us some clue as to what role exactly Valentinus' disciples played in 'writing' (*conscribo*) it?[54]

On the whole, paraphrasing Derrenbacker, we "need to continue to creatively imagine the materiality of the composition", re-elaboration and circulation of early Christian texts even beyond the Synoptics.[55] By imagining

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[49] Dunderberg (2017), 43.

[50] Type 4. of literary dependence in Derrenbacker (2016), 85.

[51] On textual fluidity in ancient manuscript culture see Lied/Lundhaug (2017).

[52] The objections raised by Nagel (2014), 30–31, against this identification deserve a much more detailed discussion than I can do here.

[53] According to Behr (2013), 20, Irenaeus' two main struggles were with the followers of Ptolemy and the disciples of Marcus. See also Bellini (1981), 590, n. 1, on 2.14.6.

[54] On the four gradations of 'writing' in Greco-Roman times see Derrenbacker (2016), 83. Cf. King (2016), 31–33 and 39, n. 74, on the distribution of the author-function in the ancient Mediterranean world.

[55] Derrenbacker (2016), 94.

texts as material artifacts which were produced, multiplied and disseminated in different local contexts and physical places as well as in ever changing literary and social spaces, following specific writing, reading and copying practices, philologists can confidently hope to do their own part in obtaining that "multidimensional picture of early Christian groups in various parts of the Roman Empire", which has always featured so prominently in Peter's research and methodological reflections.[56]

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[56] Lampe (2013), 20. See already Lampe (2003b).