

University of Groningen
Faculty of Theology and Religious Studies
MA in Theology & Religious Studies (research)



Master thesis:

Simon Magus in Patristic Literature of the Ante-Nicene Period

Thesis Supervisor: dr. dr. F.L.R. Lanzillotta

Second Reader: prof. dr. G.H. van Kooten

Presented by: Maryia Amelchanka

Matriculation Number: s2311526

E-mail: maryia.amelchanka@gmail.com

Groningen, 2015

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Introduction

Among all early Christian heretics Simon Magus is one of the few whose name continued to reappear in Christian literature long after the sect of his followers perished. It is plausible to think that this could be due to both Simon's special position as the father of all heresies attributed to him by Irenaeus and to the frequent usage of the term *simony* in the Middle Ages which perpetuated his name. Despite this special position of Simon in Christian literature, the ancient sources describing him show no consensus about many aspects of his life and teaching. Even the ones written in the time of actual existence of Simonians vary strongly on their origin and the status of their founder.

From the middle of the 19th century, when Ferdinand Christian Baur first applied historical critical approach to the literary sources on Simon, scholars for one and a half centuries have been trying to find a way to explain the controversial information about Simon. Most of the approaches usually fit within one of the two following categories: whether the scholar argues that all Early Christian sources describe the same historical Simon although some authors whether intentionally or accidentally provide inaccurate information on him; or the scholar treats some primary sources independently from the other and claims they refer to different historical phenomena. Whereas the former approach was generally put to rest by Meeks in 1977 who wrote that 'the quest for historical Simon (and Helena) is even less promising than the quest for historical Jesus',¹ the latter one has been classicised by R. Mc. L. Wilson in his often quoted statement 'All attempts so far made have failed to bridge the gap between the Simon of Acts and the Simon of heresiologists. It cannot be shown that the historical Simon already held the developed gnostic doctrines later attributed to him'.²

Trying to distance myself from the historical critical approach which would inevitably make me search for the historical Simon behind the texts and for the hidden agenda of the authors writing about him, I would like to look at the sources mostly from the tradition history point of view. By studying the preserved sources on Simon in a chronological order I will try to trace the appearance, continuity and discontinuity of the traditions on him and his teaching in every textual reference. I believe that this method will allow me to portray Simon as a character whose role changed together with the agenda of the Early Christian apologists: from an obscure figure in the Acts Simon turned into the father of all heresies in the 2nd century and remained in this role until the 2nd half of the 3rd century when Gnosticism started to lose ground. In this period Simon's role as a gnostic was again substituted by that of a magician from Acts as is portrayed in the works of Origen.

Being limited in the volume of my work I will focus only on the *Book of Acts* and the Ante-Nicene patristic sources. To be more precise, the time frame chosen includes only the sources written before the beginning of the 4th century. This choice was made because of the Origen's reference to the followers of Simon as group close to extinction in the middle of the 3rd century.

¹ Meeks, W. A. "Simon Magus in Recent Research". *Religious Studies Review* 3, (1977): 137-142. P.141

² Wilson, R. McL. "Simon and Gnostic Origins." Pages 485-491 in *Les Actes des Apôtres: traditions, rédaction, théologie*. Edited by Jacob Kremer. Leuven, Leuven University Press, 1979. P.490

In addition to that, all later sources mentioning Simon, on the one hand, either repeat the former or elaborate on them; and on the other, pursue different goals other than the opposition to Simonianism as such (for example the second wave of the anti-heretical writings in the 4th and 5th centuries CE which mentioned Simon while targeting Manicheans). Unfortunately this scope leaves out several interesting anti-heretical treatises written after 3rd century, such as the *Historia Ecclesiastica* of Eusebius, the *Panarion* of Epiphanius of Salamis, and also a whole cluster of the non-patristic early Christian literature like the *Didascalia Apostolorum*, *Constitutiones Apostolorum*, *Epistula Apostolorum*, apocryphal *Acts of Peter and Acts of Andrew*, and Pseudo-Clementine literature.

The sources which I am going to concentrate on are the *Book of Acts*, the *Apology of Justin Martyr*, *Adversus Haereses* of Irenaeus, *Elenchos* of Hippolytus, *Adversus Omnes Haereses* of Pseudo-Tertullian, and various works of Tertullian and Origen. Each of the chapters of my work is going to be dedicated to one writer and I will try to examine the sources chronologically in order to create a clearer picture of the emergence and development of different traditions on Simon. I am going to point out every characteristic given to him and his teaching by each source and will trace all of them throughout the Ante-Nicene patristic literature.

My usage of secondary literature on this work is mostly complementary and is usually present in order to provide more information and points of view on a particular matter. This especially concerns questionable passages in the original texts which were interpreted in different ways by the scholars. My decision not to devote a separate chapter to the history of scholarly research on Simon is partially motivated by the unwillingness to start a thesis which aims at a gradual following of the sources with a chapter where I will have to lump them together in order to provide an overview of the most important research on them. Another reason not to do so lies in the willingness to present a scholarly opinion solely in the context of each primary text it refers to, and to evaluate it on this basis of this particular source. To a high extent the decision to present scholarly arguments next to the primary text is made due to the existence of numerous scholarly theories which read earlier primary sources in the context of the later ones. The presence of a direct quotation from a primary source should allow to evaluate a theory's consistence not in a general context of Simonianism but in reference to each text separately.

To conclude, it should be stated that the goal of this study is to trace the origin and transformation of Simon's portrayal in patristic literature of the Ante-Nicene period. His role in each narrative will be determined and its development from one source to another will be analysed in the context of general changes in the Early Christian apologetic discourse.

Chapter 1. Simon the Sorcerer in Acts 8

The earliest literary source that speaks of a magician named Simon is the Book of Acts. The events described in it take place in the early 30-s CE whereas the book itself is commonly dated within the last decades of the 1st century CE. Verses 8:4-8:25 are dedicated to Philip's mission in Samaria wherein a certain magician named Simon plays the central role. When Philip arrived at the city, Simon was already preaching there, amazing the people of Samaria with his magical tricks and pretending 'to be someone great'. Being impressed by the miracles performed by Philip he got baptized together with many other Samaritans, but turned out to remain corrupt in his heart as he tried purchase the gift of the Holy Spirit from Peter and John. After being condemned by Peter for impure intentions, Simon disappears from the narrative and no further reference to him is found in the Bible.

Scholarship on Simon of Acts contains a great variety of perspectives and no consensus seems likely to be achieved at this stage. The most debated issues in relation to Simon's portrayal in Acts concern the possibility of Luke's intentional distortion of Simon's personality, and the problem of connecting Simon of Acts to later accounts of the anti-heretical literature.

In this chapter I will analyze the narrative on Simon within the Book of Acts independently from later literary sources and then connect my observations with an overview with scholarly research on Simon and the Samaritan mission. In the conclusion I will make an estimation of what aspects of the portrayal of Simon in the Book of Acts could be the prerequisites for the growing of his role in later sources.

The passage

The reader encounters Simon of Acts in Acts 8:9 where he plays a central role in the narrative on the Samaritan mission of Philip. He is introduced as follows:

Now for some time a man named Simon had practiced sorcery in the city and amazed all the people of Samaria. He boasted that he was someone great, and all the people, both high and low, gave him their attention and exclaimed, "This man is rightly called the Great Power of God." They followed him because he had amazed them for a long time with his sorcery. (Acts 8:9 – 8:11 NIV)³

The obscure words "boasted to be something (great)" – *legōn einai tina heauton (megan)*⁴ have been a subject of scholarly debate for a long time and willing to view them in a literary context I have searched for the usage of *legōn einai tina heauton* in the Book of Acts as well as in other books of the New Testament. This wordage is used only one more time in the Book of Acts - in verse 5:36 where it refers to a false prophet called Theudas. He is portrayed as a 1st century messianic prophet who rebelled against the Roman state and who also 'claimed to be something'. A religious leader called Theudas was also mentioned in the *Jewish Antiquities* of

³ *The Holy Bible: New International Version*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1984.

⁴ All Greek New Testament quotes are taken from *Novum Testamentum Graece. Nestle-Aland Revised 28th Edition*. Electronic ed. German Bible Society, 2012.

Josephus from which we know that he proclaimed himself a prophet and believed he could divide a river for a passage similarly to Moses.⁵

Provided the fact that 'boasted to be something' is used both times in Acts in reference to a religious leader, one can assume that Simon similarly was not just a magician but also a religious leader who taught a particular doctrine. Together with the fact that according to Josephus, Theudas considered himself a prophet the wordage 'said to be someone (great)' can also imply the prophetic nature of Simon's teaching, however it remains unclear whether Simon associated himself with a prophet or Messiah himself.

Apart from the Book of Acts the phrase '*legein einai tina*' is used only three more times in the New Testament each time in reference to the same narrative. Retold by Matthew, Mark and Luke the storyline of this narrative differs only in small details:

Matt 16:13-15

Ἐλθὼν δὲ ὁ Ἰησοῦς εἰς τὰ μέρη Καισαρείας τῆς Φιλίππου ἠρώτα τοὺς μαθητὰς αὐτοῦ λέγων· **τίνα λέγουσιν οἱ ἄνθρωποι εἶναι τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου.** οἱ δὲ εἶπαν· οἱ μὲν Ἰωάννην τὸν βαπτιστὴν, ἄλλοι δὲ Ἡλίαν, ἕτεροι δὲ Ἰερεμίαν ἢ ἕνα τῶν προφητῶν.

λέγει αὐτοῖς· ὑμεῖς δὲ τίνα με λέγετε εἶναι;

When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "**Who do people say the Son of Man is?**" They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets." "But what about you?" he asked. "**Who do you say I am?**" Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.

Mark 8:27-29

Καὶ ἐξῆλθεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς καὶ οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ εἰς τὰς κώμας Καισαρείας τῆς Φιλίππου· καὶ ἐν τῇ ὁδῷ ἐπηρώτα τοὺς μαθητὰς αὐτοῦ λέγων αὐτοῖς· **τίνα με λέγουσιν οἱ ἄνθρωποι εἶναι;** οἱ δὲ εἶπαν αὐτῷ λέγοντες [ὅτι] Ἰωάννην τὸν βαπτιστὴν, καὶ ἄλλοι Ἡλίαν, ἄλλοι δὲ ὅτι εἷς τῶν προφητῶν. καὶ αὐτὸς ἐπηρώτα αὐτούς· **ὕμεῖς δὲ τίνα με λέγετε εἶναι;** ἀποκριθεὶς ὁ Πέτρος λέγει αὐτῷ· σὺ εἶ ὁ χριστός.

Jesus and his disciples went on to the villages around Caesarea Philippi. On the way he asked them, "**Who do people say I am?**" They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets." "**But what about you?**" he asked. "Who do you say I am?" Peter answered, "You are the Messiah."

Luke 9:18-20

Καὶ ἐγένετο ἐν τῷ εἶναι αὐτὸν προσευχόμενον κατὰ μόνας συνῆσαν αὐτῷ οἱ μαθηταί, καὶ ἐπηρώτησεν αὐτοὺς λέγων· **τίνα με λέγουσιν οἱ ὄχλοι εἶναι;** οἱ δὲ ἀποκριθέντες εἶπαν· Ἰωάννην τὸν βαπτιστὴν, ἄλλοι δὲ Ἡλίαν, ἄλλοι δὲ ὅτι προφήτης τις τῶν ἀρχαίων ἀνέστη. εἶπεν δὲ αὐτοῖς· **ὕμεῖς δὲ τίνα με λέγετε εἶναι;** Πέτρος δὲ ἀποκριθεὶς εἶπεν· τὸν χριστὸν τοῦ θεοῦ.

Once when Jesus was praying in private and his disciples were with him, he asked them, "**Who do the crowds say I am?**" They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, that one of the prophets of long ago has come back to life." "But what about you?" he asked. "**Who do you say I am?**" Peter answered, "God's Messiah."

⁵ Josephus. *Ant.* 20.97-98. From Josephus. *Jewish Antiquities.* Books 18-19, vol. VIII; Book 20. vol. IX. Translated by Feldman, Louis. H. The Loeb Classical Library 433; 456. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965.

In each version the phrase is used twice: first when Jesus asks his disciples ‘who do people think he is’ and gets a reply that some consider him John the Baptist, others say he is Elijah or one of the prophets. And second time when Jesus asks his disciples ‘whom do they consider him to be’ and Peter replies that he is the Messiah.⁶

Looking at the narrative in Acts in the context of this Gospel narrative and seeing that Luke used the same phrase only in reference to Jesus, Theudas and Simon, one should take into the account the following detail: whereas this phrase is used in reference to Jesus through the opinion of his *disciples* and *people*, Theudas and Simon proclaim *themselves* ‘to be something’. This contrast is unlikely to be coincidental and could imply the element of competition with Christ whether proclaimed by the two false teachers themselves or attributed to them by Luke.

Another puzzling expression in this passage is ‘the great power (of God)’ - *hē megalē dunamis (tou theou)* which is present two times in Acts 8 – first time in Acts 8:10 as a quote of Samaritans who said ‘*This man is rightly called **the Great Power of God***’ and second time in Acts 8:13 where Simon is said to be ‘astonished by **the great signs** and miracles he saw’ (*theōrōn te sēmeia kai **dunameis megalas ginomenas existato***)⁷ performed by Philip. The repetition of the same words in Simonian and Christian context again suggests of a comparison between the ‘great power’ of Simon and the real ‘great power’ of Christ which amazed him. Still, the exact meaning of Luke’s words when he attributed Simon the great power of God remains obscure. The appliance of the words *megale dunamis* to a human being is unique not only in the context of the NT but is also not to be found in the Septuagint where this phrase among others often appears as a synonym for a ‘great army’.⁸ The only reference in the Septuagint which at least distantly resembles the context of Acts is Nehemiah 1:10 where God is said to have redeemed his people by his great power (*megale dunamis*), but the absence of any other links between the narratives makes the possibility of their connection too weak for further speculation.⁹

The narrative of Acts 8 continues with Philip’s missionary success in Samaria and massive baptism of Samaritans, which included Simon:

But when they believed Philip as he proclaimed the good news of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. Simon himself believed and was baptized. And he followed Philip everywhere, astonished by the great signs and miracles he saw. (8:12-8:13)

⁶ Mark 8:27-29, Luke 9:18-20, Matthew 16:13-15.

⁷ Acts 8:13.

⁸ For the military context of *megale dunamis* see 1 Chronicles 12:22, 1 Maccabees 1:10, 10:48, 10:69, Daniel 11:13 (TH), 11:25 (TH) in *Septuaginta. Vetus Testamentum Graecum*. 67 vols. Goettingen: Vandenhoeck&Ruprecht, 1967-2008.

⁹ Hans Kippenberg (*Garizim und Synagoge: traditionsgeschichtlich Untersuchungen zur samaritanischen Religion der aramäischen Periode*. Religionsgeschichtliche Versuche und Vorarbeiten 30. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1971. P.332ff.) believed that the term had a Samaritan origin and was seen as a source of divine gnosis.

Jean-Marie-Antoine Salles-Dabadie (*Recherches sur Simon le Mage*. Vol. 1 *L’«Apophasis Megale»*. Cahiers de la Revue Biblique 10. Paris: Gabalda, 1969, P.128) argued that the term *megale dunamis* did not point to the divinity of Simon, but rather to his status as a prophet.

Apart from the second usage of *megale dunamis* mentioned above, these verses are remarkable for serving an introduction to the further development of the story: on one hand they depict the greater success of Philip's mission in comparison to Simon's activity; on the other hand they illuminate Simon's character and the way he perceives Christianity. The words 'astonished by the great signs and miracles' stress that his interest lied predominantly in the external side and visual appeal of God's power manifestation rather than the essence of the Christian teaching.

Verse 13 is also the last verse where Philip is present in the narrative. Already in the next verse his role of the Christian agent is taken over by Peter and John who arrive in Samaria in order to let Samaritans receive the Holy Spirit whereas Philip disappears from the storyline. Scholarly literature considers the change of protagonists as evidence in favor of the existence of an earlier version of the Samaritan mission which was later adapted by Luke.¹⁰

The narrative continues with the arrival of Peter and John in Samaria who let the newly converted Christians receive the Holy Spirit:

Then Peter and John placed their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit. When Simon saw that the Spirit was given at the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money and said, "Give me also this ability so that everyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit." (Acts 8:17 – 8:19)

These verses reveal to the reader the corruption of Simon's faith which was only based on the ability of Philip and the Apostles to perform miracles. By manifesting his real intention which is the strive for possessing the same abilities as the Apostles, Simon is made into a back-sliding convert by the author, someone who viewed baptism was not a spiritual catharsis but a profitable enterprise. By offering the money to Peter he degrades Christian miracles to the level of magical tricks similar to his own and thereby manifesting his ignorance.

Peter's reply to Simon's offer was the following:

May your money perish with you, because you thought you could buy the gift of God with money! You have no part or share in this ministry, because your heart is not right before God. Repent of this wickedness and pray to the Lord in the hope that he may forgive you for having such a thought in your heart. For I see that you are full of bitterness and captive to sin. (Acts 8:20-8:23)

This reaction is in a way two-fold: on one hand Peter criticizes Simon for his proposition, but on the other does not perform any punitive action upon him. On the contrary, he expresses his hope that Simon will repent and pray for forgiveness. Simon's answer in turn shows that

¹⁰ The concept was introduced by Hans Waitz in "Die Quelle der Philipusgeschichten in der Apostelgeschichte 8,5–40." *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche* 7 (1906): 340–55, who argued that the original story depicted Simon and Peter whereas Philip was a Luke's modification. A similar view was supported by Dietrich-Alex Koch whereas the argumentation for Philip as the main actor was expressed by Jullian Wellhausen and a.o. Ernst Haenchen and Gerd Lüdemann. For the history of research see Samkutty, V. J. *The Samaritan Mission in Acts*. London: T&T Clark, 2006. Pp. 18-29.

although he acknowledges that 'his heart is not right before God', he acknowledges his power and fears him.

The last words said by Simon to Peter are:

Pray to the Lord for me so that nothing you have said may happen to me. (Acts 8:24)

By saying so Simon manifests his acknowledgement of the God's power on one hand and his agreement with Peter's statement on the other. His future fate remains unclear for after this phrase he disappears from the narrative and no further fate of his is known from Acts.

Summing up the information provided by the Book of Acts one gets the following portrait of Simon: He was a magician and religious leader from Samaria who had a lot of followers before Philip's arrival to the city. He was baptized by Philip together with many other Samaritans while being attracted mainly to the magical/miraculous side of Christianity. After seeing how Peter and John make the Holy Spirit come down on people he wanted to purchase the same power from Peter but was rebuked by him and after asking to pray for him disappeared from the narrative. The aspect that remains unclear is the theological aspect of Simon's teaching. Despite linguistic parallels with Theudas' from Acts 5:36 and possibly Christ in the gospels, the narrative does not shed light neither on the details of the teaching nor on the role of Simon in it.

Simon and Samaritan Mission in the context of the Book of Acts

The story of Simon falls within two patterns that could be found elsewhere in Acts: first pattern is that of the confrontation between a Christian saint and a magician where the former proves his superiority; and the second is the pattern of a back-sliding convert who despite accepting the teaching of Christ remains corrupt in his heart.

The narratives describing confrontation of Christian saints with magician are to be found also in Acts 13 where Paul is meeting a Jewish sorcerer called Bar-Jesus (Elymas) who tries to discredit Paul in the eyes of the proconsul Sergius Paulus and is instantly blinded by God as a punishment; and in Acts 19 where Paul comes to Ephesus, the city known for its sorcery. There, Paul's miracles were so admired by the citizens that some magicians who were the sons of the high Priest of Ephesus called Sceva wanted to expel a demon "in the name of Jesus whom Paul preaches"¹¹ but as a result were beaten by a possessed man after the demon in him said that he knew Paul and Jesus but did not know who were the exorcists.

These two narratives together with the story of Simon on one hand pursue the goal of portraying the superiority of the Christian faith and on the other manifest disapproval of wonder-working by the non-Christian magicians. The treatment of the sorcerers by the Apostles differs in all three stories. If Simon is only verbally accused of being a captive of sin, the Seven Sons of Sceva are beaten by a demon inside, a possessed man and Elymas is temporarily blinded. It should be noticed that the violent aspect of their treatment increases with the

¹¹ Acts 19:13.

sorcerers' attitude to Christianity and Apostles in particular. Simon is amazed at the Holy Spirit coming down on people and wants to buy this power, but he recognizes the authority of God and is only rebuked for it by Peter. He is presented as someone rather ignorant than evil and proves to fear God and Peter's words after being denounced. On the other hand, not only do the seven Sons of Sceva want to possess similar powers as Paul, but they try to take advantage of his power and are beaten for their ignorance and faulty assumptions. Elymas, unlike the characters of two previous episodes, openly confronts Paul, therefore Christianity, and is punished by God for trying to stop his patron Sergius Paulus from hearing the word of God.

The second pattern, that of a back-sliding convert, is presented only once in Acts apart from the narrative about Simon. It is to be found in Acts 5:1-11 where money also plays a central role in revealing person's real identity. The narrative describes two Christians, Ananias and his wife Sapphira, who, after selling all their property, gave Peter and the Christian community only a part of the money willing to keep another part for themselves. For this attempt to deceive the Holy Spirit they were publicly condemned by Peter and immediately struck dead. By contrast, Peter's significantly more lenient attitude to Simon causes questions about the purpose of the narrative of Acts 8 and the possible reasons behind the peaceful outcome of Peter's confrontation with Simon.

Research on Simon of Acts

In the last century, Simon of Acts has often been the subject of academic research in the context of the Book of Acts and in connection to other Early Christian literature. The conclusions made by scholars about his role in Early Christian literature vary from denying the existence of historical Simon to creating detailed portraits of him and his teaching. The questions that most scholars have approached can be narrowed down to two most fundamental ones:

- Is Simon of Acts and gnostic Simon Magus described in the anti-heretical literature the same figure?
- Who was the historical Simon of Acts?

In one way or another scholars dealing with Simon Magus have to support or refute these positions since they have been the cornerstones shaping academic research on the subject and ignoring them would mean avoiding entering an academic debate. The answer to the first question usually determines the direction in which the author's argumentation will develop and whether Simon of Acts will be studied from the perspective of later anti-heretical sources. The second question is even more speculative and the answer is an attempt to explain Luke's main reason to write Acts. The answer to the second question is usually predetermined by the first one, since Luke's intentions are studied either in comparison to or demonstratively regardless of the later literary sources.

The academic study of Simon as the same person described in different early Christian texts started with the appearance of the Tübingen school in the second half on the 19th century, which introduced the historical critical approach to the study of the Bible and Early Christian

literature. It is also since that time that the connection of Simon of Acts to Simon of the heresiologists is made through retrospective reading of the latter. The founder of the Tübingen School, Ferdinand Christian Baur, read the story of Simon in the context of the *Apology of Justin*, *Pseudo-Clementines* and the *Panarion* of Epiphanius. Baur's main thesis was that Simon was a purely mythological character created by Luke in order to conceal the criticism of Paul through distinguishing between him and Simon. His approach was continued by other scholars of the Tübingen school who advocated the same theory till Adolf Hilgenfeld reconsidered a purely symbolical role of Simon in favor of the existence of a real historical figure.¹² Adolf von Harnack also did not distinguish between Simon of Acts and Simon of the heresiologists despite his point of view being opposite to that of Baur: he saw Simon as a really existing person who tried to establish a new monotheistic religion and therefore was seen as a threat to Christianity.¹³

A new revolutionary perspective was introduced by Ernst Haenchen in the middle of the 20th century who, searching for the pre-Christian roots of Gnosticism, worked his way back to the account in Acts. He argued that the presence of the term 'the great power' used in the *Elenchos* of Hippolytus is an argument in favor of a gnostic reading of 'the great power' in Acts, which means that Simon of Acts was already a gnostic leader. Apart from that, he based his view on the *Apology of Justin* which he believed to be a proof of Simon's role as a redeemer figure.¹⁴ Gerd Lüdemann followed a somewhat similar line of argumentation in the second half of the 20th century. Also supporting the stance that Simon of Acts was a gnostic, he based his argumentation a.o. on the presence of the word *epinoia* in the narrative of Acts which he suggested to be read in a gnostic context. Apart from that Lüdemann also used the *Apology of Justin* as proof for his theory about Simon of Acts according to which he was worshipped as god.¹⁵

As a reaction to the work of Haenchen, who attributed later patristic accounts to the Simon of Acts, the scholarship of the 2nd half of the 20th century tended to separate Simon of Acts from later patristic literature. The most influential author to do so was Willibald Beyschlag who opposed Haenchen's idea of pre-Christian gnosis and historical-critical approach in general. His criticism of the retrospective reading of the sources on Simon led to a conclusion that Simon of Acts was neither gnostic nor a redeemer figure but a magician who identified himself with a 'divine man' and who was later attributed gnostic identity. However, Beyschlag believed that he should have been a person of immense importance since his status was later raised to that of

¹² Baur, D. F. C. *The Church History of the First Three Centuries*. Translated from the 1st German ed. by Allan Menzies. 2 vols. London: Williams and Norgate, 1878. P.93. Hilgenfeld, Adolf. *Die Ketzergeschichte des Urchristentums urkundlich dargestellt*. Hildesheim: Olms, 1963. P.164.

¹³ Von Harnack, A. *The Mission and Expansion of Christianity in the First Three Centuries*. Translated by James Moffatt. 2 vols. London: Williams and Norgate, 1908. Repr., New York: Harper, 1962. P.45.

¹⁴ Haenchen, E. "Gab es eine vorchristliche Gnosis?" *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche* 49 (1952): 316-349.

¹⁵ Lüdemann, G. "The Acts of the Apostles and the Beginnings of Simonian Gnosis." *New Testament Studies* 33 (1987): 420-426.

the father of gnosis.¹⁶ R. Mc L. Wilson supported Beyschlag's hypothesis about a gap between Acts and later sources and considered it impossible to connect the two: 'All attempts so far made have failed to bridge the gap between Simon of Acts and the Simon of heresiologists'.¹⁷ Wilson believed it was impossible to trace the doctrines of later Simonians back to Simon and acknowledged Simon of Acts as gnostic only in a broader and vaguer sense in which it can be also applied to Philo but not to the 2nd century gnostic sects.¹⁸

The question of Simon's real personality in Acts, however, allows a wider variety of answers than the previous one. Many opposing opinions have been expressed in reference to the existence of historical Simon (real person or symbolic), the doctrine he taught (Samaritan, Jewish, Christian, pagan), the role he played in his teaching (magician, messiah, prophet, god) and the accuracy of Luke's portrayal of him (downgrading or elevating his real status). Despite this variety of options, the personality of historical Simon in modern research is to a high extent predetermined by the answer to the question about the continuity of tradition between Acts and patristic accounts. Whereas separation of traditions inevitably leads to a separation between 'historical' Simon (usually non-gnostic) and his gnostic followers in the 2nd century, continuity of traditions approach unites most of the Early Christian accounts and turns Simon into a religious leader whose doctrine was to a certain extent influenced by Gnosticism.

As mentioned above the historically-critical study of Simon started with Baur who placed him within the context of his theory on the existence of the two opposing schools within Early Christianity – Jewish Petrine school and schismatic gentile Pauline school. According to Baur, the narrative of Acts 8:9-25 originally described the confrontation between Peter and Paul, but in order to avoid disparaging of the latter, Luke created Simon as a figure distinguishable from him. The Paul/Simon equation was first criticized by Albrecht Ritschl and later by his student Adolf von Harnack. Ritschl proclaimed Baur's theory of Simon's and Paul's identity ungrounded and argued that Simon could only be possibly associated with Paul in the Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies*, whereas all other sources, especially Acts represent him as a Samaritan Messiah figure.¹⁹ Harnack made a step further and argued that Simon founded a new monotheistic religion which combined elements of Judaism and paganism and therefore was popular with both groups. This led to a competition with Early Christianity which was portrayed by Luke in Acts.²⁰

In the 20th century a number of scholars argued for the theory that Luke changed an already existing story in order to diminish Simon's importance. This view was first explicitly expressed by Haenchen who believed the main discourse of Acts was anti-gnostic and that Luke degraded Simon's real status from that of a gnostic redeemer to a mere magician. This theory was

¹⁶ Beyschlag, K. *Simon Magus und die Christliche Gnosis*. Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 16. Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1974. P. 103.

¹⁷ Wilson, R. McL. "Simon and Gnostic Origins." (1979): 490.

¹⁸ Wilson, R. McL. "Simon and Gnostic Origins". (1979): 491.

¹⁹ Ritschl, A. B. *Die Entstehung der altkatholischen Kirche: eine kirchen- und dogmengeschichtliche Monographie*. Rev. and enl. ed. Adolph Marcus: Bonn, 1857. P. 228.

²⁰ Von Harnack, A. *The Mission and Expansion of Christianity in the First Three Centuries*. 1962. P.45 (footnote).

supported by Charles Talbert and Gerd Lüdemann who believed in the existence of Gnosticism already in the 1st century CE but cautiously avoided proclaiming it pre-Christian.²¹ Charles Talbert developed Haenchen's hypothesis of Simon's degradation by introducing a theory according to which Luke defamed Simon in order to create a vision of Christian unity.²² In his article "Anti-Gnostic Tendency" Talbert pointed out the parts of the narrative which he believed to be Luke's redactions and assumed that the goal of the Gospel of Luke and Acts was to oppose the rising alternative Christian teachings of docetic/separationist character.²³ He expressed a similar opinion in his monograph²⁴ *Luke and the Gnostics* where he stated that Luke consciously changed the role of Simon wanting to conceal the early appearance of Gnosticism. Gerd Lüdemann similarly believed Simon was in reality a gnostic redeemer figure and used later sources to prove the presence of gnosis in Acts.²⁵

Among the authors who considered the portrayal of Simon in Acts as historically accurate was the French scholar Lucien Cerfaux. He believed that Simon of Acts was a magician whose role was later elevated by the gnostics to the rank of religious leader or even a redeemer figure. Despite sharing the opinion opposite to and criticized by Haenchen, the main problem of Cerfaux's approach was the same as of his opponent, namely retrograde reading of Simon (in this case as a magician) from the Patristic sources back to Acts.²⁶

The approach according to which Luke manipulated the facts was also opposed in a recent publication by V.J. Samkutty who argued that it was unlikely that Luke did so since he portrayed crises of the early Church in other parts of Acts.²⁷ Because of that, Samkutty argued, it is unlikely that Luke would aim to present Early Christianity according to the 'truth precedes error' scheme by hiding the real identity of Simon in this particular episode.²⁸

Conclusion

Having analysed the Samaritan mission in the context of the NT and modern academic research, I attribute the following characteristics to Simon: Simon of Acts is an episodic character of Acts who is mentioned only once in the scripture and, as argued above, fits within two discourses: that of a non-Christian religious leader and that of a back-sliding-convert. Although it is hard to claim anything specific about the nature of Simon's teaching as well as the

²¹ See Lüdemann, G. "The Acts of the Apostles and the Beginnings of Simonian Gnosis". (1987): 425 - "Simonian religion is thus a candidate for a Gnosis at least contemporary with earliest Christianity". Talbert, C.H. *Luke and the Gnostics: An Examination of the Lucan Purpose*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1966. Pp. 55-56.

²² Talbert, C.H. *Luke and the Gnostics. An Examination of the Lucan purpose*. 1966. Pp.85-86.

²³ Talbert, C. H. "Anti-Gnostic tendency in Lucan Christology." *New Testament Studies* 14 (1968): 259-271. P. 263.

²⁴ Talbert, C.H. *Luke and the Gnostics. An Examination of the Lucan purpose*. 1966. Pp. 83-97

²⁵ Lüdemann, G. *Das frühe Christentum nach den Traditionen der Apostelgeschichte*, 1987 Pp. 106; "Gnostic Origins." (1987): 425.

²⁶ Cerfaux, L. "Simon Le Magicien à Samarie." *Recherches de science religieuse* 27 (1937): 615-617. See also "La Gnose Simonienne. Nos sources principales." *Recherches de science religieuse* 15 (1925): 489-511, *Recherches de science religieuse* 16 (1926): 5-20, 265-285, 481-503

²⁷ Leadership crisis (Acts 1:21), moral crisis (Acts 5.1-10), administrative crisis (Acts 6:1), theological crisis (Acts 15:1-35). Samkutty, V.J. *Samaritan Mission in Acts*. 2006P. 46

²⁸ Samkutty, V.J. *Samaritan Mission in Acts*. 2006. P. 46

social group it oriented itself at, Luke's usage of the vocabulary suggests there is a possibility of intentional portrayal of Simon as a messianic leader and a quasi-Christ figure.

The idea of the gnostic nature of Simonian teaching in Acts, as argued by many, seems far-fetched since it is based on the testimony of later sources that are then projected backwards on the Book of Acts. Even assuming that Luke concealed the real Simon behind the mask of a petty magician it is unlikely that he pursued the goal of portraying the unity of the early Church. First, the idea of Christian primacy in relation to heresy was not well-pronounced until Tertullian²⁹ and can be found in the anti-heretical works preceding him only with a certain amount of interpretation. Second, the interconnection between the hostility towards magicians and their attitude to Christianity in the context of other narratives in Acts suggests that the spread of Christianity and its acceptance by the population was an issue of primary importance to Luke despite the fact that gnosis should have existed in some form at the break of the 2nd century.

While trying to answer the question 'why is Simon called the father of all heresies in later sources?' it should be noted that Simon is one of the two heretics whose history is traced back by early Christian authors to the NT and the first magician encountered in Acts by an Apostle. On the level of speculation it can be added that Simon's portrayal as a corrupt Christian coincides with the argumentation of the anti-heretical writers who saw heretics as someone who taught a corrupt form of the Christian doctrine.

²⁹ Rasimus, T. *Paradise Reconsidered in Gnostic Mythmaking. Rethinking Sethianism in Light of the Ophite Evidence*. Leiden: Brill, 2009. Pp. 196-197

Chapter 2. Simon in the *Apology* of Justin Martyr

The role of Justin Martyr in early Christian theology can hardly be overestimated. He made a great contribution to the development of the theory of Christian Logos and is often referred to as the founder of the heresiological tradition. Before his conversion to Christianity somewhere in the first half of the 2nd century Justin was a gentile native of Judaea with a background in Stoicism and Platonism. As a Christian he lived in Ephesus and travelled to Rome where he settled down and started a school. It was during this period that he acquired most of his experience as a Christian apologist and writer. Justin's apologetics concentrated on creating clear boundaries between Christianity, Judaism and heresies and his lost work *Syntagma* is often considered the first catalogue of heresies in Christian literature³⁰ that had a strong influence on other early Christian writers, first and foremost Irenaeus.³¹ Out of the preserved works of Justin, *Apology* is probably the most famous. It was written in a form of appeal to the Emperor Antoninus Pius to stop persecution of Christians. The work consists of two parts (*First* and *Second Apology*) and explains the basics of Christian belief to the Emperor.

Criticizing the practice of Christian prosecutions by the authorities in the *Apology*, Justin made a reference to certain heretics who on the contrary were not prosecuted by the state and could preach freely. Simon Magus is mentioned among heretics twice - in chapters 1.26 and 1. 56. He is described as someone who was put forward by the evil forces and admired by the Roman authorities. From the point of view of continuity, the writings of Justin Martyr on one hand repeat certain attributes of Simon introduced in the Book of Acts (Samaritan origin, performing magic, living in the Apostolic period), and on the other, put Simon in a new theological context of anti-heretical polemics.

The paragraph about Simon in chapter 1.26 starts with speaking of demons who put Simon forward and acted through him:

...because after Christ's ascension into heaven the devils put forward certain men who said that they themselves were gods; and they were not only not persecuted by you, but even deemed worthy of honours. There was a Samaritan, Simon, a native of the village called Gitto, who in the reign of Claudius Caesar, and in your royal city of Rome, did mighty acts of magic, by virtue of the art of the devils operating in him.' (Apol. 1.26.1-2)³²

³⁰ Le Boulluec, A. *La notion d'hérésie dans la littérature grecque: Ile-IIIe siècles*. 2 vols. Collection des Études augustiniennes Série Antiquité 110. Turnhout: Brepols, 1985. Pp. 36-91. More recent studies date the origin of heresiology to pre-Justin's time and put it either in Hellenistic (Lyman, R. "2002 NAPS Presidential Address, Hellenism and Heresy." *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 11 (2003): 209-222.) or Jewish (Boyarin, D. *Border Lines: The Partition of Judaeo-Christianity*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004.) context.

³¹ See Hilgenfeld, A. *Die Ketzergeschichte Des Urchristentums, Urkundlich Dargestellt*. Hildesheim: G. Olms, 1963. Pp. 22, 49; Lüdemann, G. *Die Ketzergeschichte des Urchristentums urkundlich dargestellt*, 1963. Pp. 35-39; 46-58. For history of research on the *Syntagma* see Smith, Geoffrey S. *Guilt by Association: Heresy Catalogues in Early Christianity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014. Pp. 49-65.

³² Here and further the edition used (if not mentioned otherwise) is *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*. Edited by Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson. 1885–1887. 10 vols. Repr. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1994.

From the very beginning Justin presents a more negative picture of Simon as the agent of demons who help him perform magical tricks. In comparison to Acts, where Simon is more ignorant than evil, we see some change in his personality. Also, Simon's description in the *Apology* acquired several new features: his Samaritan origin was narrowed to the village of Gitto, and the time of his life is tied to the rule of Claudius, placing him chronologically before 54 CE.

Justin is the first author to provide information concerning the theological aspect of Simon's teaching: on one hand he interpreted certain information from Acts, and, on the other, he enriched the narrative with completely new details. The vague phrase 'pretended to be someone great' (*Acts 8:9*) was amplified by Justin to 'said that they themselves were gods', thereby attributing claims of divinity not only to Simon, but also to Menander and Marcion whom he mentions later in the paragraph. This is a supportive argument for the theories of those scholars who argue for the presence of divinity claims in the Simon in Acts.³³ In the following line Justin reveals his main argument in favor of Simon's divinity claims: his knowledge about the existence of a statue erected by the Romans to commemorate Simon:

He was considered a god, and as a god was honoured by you with a statue, which statue was erected on the river Tiber, between the two bridges, and bore this inscription, in the language of Rome: - 'Simoni Deo Sancto', 'To Simon the holy God'. (Apol. 1.26.2)

This attribution turned out to be erroneous in the 16th century when a statue was found at the place described by Justin. Instead of *Simoni Deo Sancto* ('to Simon the Holy God') claimed by Justin the inscription read *Semoni Sanco Dei* ('to the God Semo Sancus') which made it clear that Justin confused the Roman god Semo Sancus with Simon Magus, and therefore the fact that he had been accepted by the Roman Senate can also be erroneous. However, it did not stop some scholars from arguing in favor of a deeper connection between Simon and Semo. Christian Baur connected Semo to the Middle Eastern Herakles who similarly to Simon bore the title 'the Standing One',³⁴ whereas Robert M. Grant and Gerd Lüdemann both believed Semo, just like Simon, was associated with Jupiter and therefore Semo was put in connection with Simon by Simonians.³⁵

The narrative mentions other details concerning Simonian theology and social status:

And almost all the Samaritans, and a few even of other nations, worship him, and acknowledge him as the first god; and a woman, Helena, who went about with him at that time, and had formerly been a prostitute, they say is the first idea generated by him. (Apol. 1.26.3)

Justin paraphrases the statement about Simon's popularity among Samaritans mentioned in the Book of Acts and adds that people actually worship Simon as the First God and his

³³ Haenchen, E. *Acts of the Apostles: A Commentary*. Edited by R. M. Wilson. Translated by Bernard Noble and Gerald Shinn. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1971. P. 307. Lüdemann, G. *Das frühe Christentum nach den Traditionen der Apostelgeschichte: ein Kommentar*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck&Ruprecht, 1987.

³⁴ Baur, D. Ferdinand Christan. *Die christliche Gnosis oder die christliche Religions-Philosophie in ihrer geschichtlichen Entwicklung*. Tübingen: C.F. Osiander, 1835. P. 308 (footnote).

³⁵ Grant, R. M. *Gnosticism and Early Christianity*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1966. P. 74; Lüdemann, G. *Untersuchungen zur simonianischen Gnosis*. 1975. P. 51.

companion Helen as the First Conception. Justin's emphasis that 'almost all Samaritans' worship him has contributed to a theory that Simonianism is closely related to Samaritanism defended a.o. by such scholars as Heintz, Widengren and Kippenberg.³⁶

Simon's companion Helena appears for the first time in the writing of Justin and is represented as a former prostitute whom Simon proclaimed the First Thought of God (*Prōte Ennoia*). This mythological status of hers has been the main argument in favor of the gnostic nature of Simon's teaching due to the similarities with many gnostic myths where the first female principle derives from the Father. Whereas Helen's role as the First Thought is usually niched within Gnosticism by modern scholarship, her profession of a prostitute has been interpreted allegorically and connected to the pre-gnostic religious phenomena. The exact phrase referring to Helen's profession states that she previously 'stood on a roof' (*husteron epi tegous statheisan*) which is an idiom commonly used in the meaning 'to be a prostitute', but there are modern interpretations which claim a deeper meaning of these words. E.g. Gilles Quispel believed that the wordage 'stood on a roof' referred to the lunar cult of Helen of Troy and drew a parallel to a Pythagorean myth where a celestial virgin lived in a tower from which she got expelled but to which she returned later. In his argumentation Quispel even went as far as to suggest that Justin Martyr whether intentionally changed the word 'tower' (*pyrgos*) for 'roof' (*tegos*) in order to create a gnostic anti-legend where a celestial goddess is portrayed as a whore, or made it by mistake because the words were often used in place of each other.³⁷ Another scholar, Dennis Macdonald suggested a different parallel: in his opinion the idea of Helen standing on a roof referred to the moment in the Iliad when Helen of Troy was pointing to the Achaean heroes in front of her captors. He also suggests a connection between this myth and the *Acts of Andrew* which tells a story of a virgin praying on a roof and a young magician who sent demons to overpower her.³⁸ Although these parallels are interesting for the intertextual side of the study of Simon's Helena, they do not negate or put under question the gnostic side of the teaching described by Justin which is much more evident.

Chapter 1.26 continues with condemnation of Menander and Marcion and only in the end the author indirectly comes back to Simon warning the reader against him and other false prophets. The greatest threat of their teaching according to Justin was that their disciples call themselves Christians, although they have nothing in common with true Christians apart from the name:

³⁶ See Heintz, F. *Simon 'le magicien'. Acts 8.5—25 et l'accusation de mage contre les prophètes thaumaturges dans l'antiquité*. Cahiers de la Revue Biblique 39. Paris: J. Gabalda, 1997. Kippenberg, H. G. *Garizim und Synagoge: traditions-geschichtlich Untersuchungen zur samaritanischen Religion der aramäischen Periode*.

Religionsgeschichtliche Versuche und Vorarbeiten 30. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1971. Pp, 122-128; Widengren, G. *The Ascension of Apostle and the Heavenly Book (King and Savior III)*. Uppsala Universitets Årsskrift 7. Uppsala: Lundequistska, 1950. Pp. 40-43.

³⁷ Quispel, G. "Simon en Helena." *Nederlands Theologisch Tijdschrift* 5 (1951): 339-345.

³⁸ MacDonald, D. "Intertextuality in Simon's 'Redemption' of Helen the Whore: Homer, Heresiologists, and the Acts of Andrew". Pages 336-343 in *SBL Seminar Papers 1990*. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990.

All who take their opinions from these men, are, as we before said, called Christians; just as also those who do not agree with the philosophers in their doctrines, have yet in common with them the name of philosophers given to them. (Apol. 1.26.6)

It is remarkable that Simon is not given any special role in the narrative in comparison to other heretics and is mentioned in line with Menander and Marcion as one of the three false teachers whose followers consider themselves Christian. Justin pointed out the problem of the same self-designation of different groups stressing the difference between Christians and heretics and thereby being the first author to claim that Simonians considered themselves Christians.

The narrative is concluded by a statement:

And whether they perpetrate those fabulous and shameful deeds--the upsetting of the lamp, and promiscuous intercourse, and eating human flesh--we know not; but we do know that they are neither persecuted nor put to death by you, at least on account of their opinions. But I have a treatise against all the heresies that have existed already composed, which, if you wish to read it, I will give you. (Apol. 1.26.7-8)

The polemical tool of accusing the opponent of immorality was not invented by Justin and moreover was used by him with some caution: on one hand Justin does not want to claim the genuineness of the provided information, but on the other he finds it useful to include the rumors about 'shameful deeds' into the *Apology*. He uses the same approach here as when referring to Helen as a former prostitute – a fact which does not directly contribute to the heresy itself, but tarnishes the moral character of those who follow it. The accusations of Justin should be viewed in a broader context of religious opposition wherein human sacrifice and promiscuity were used by different groups to alienate their opponents. These accusations were used against proto-orthodox Christians as much as they were used by proto-orthodox Christians against 'heretics' and their credibility is very questionable.³⁹

Simon is mentioned by Justin again in chapter 1.56. There the author elaborates on the arguments expressed already in chapter 1.26, namely that the devil operates through certain people whose goal is to deceive others and that Simon was venerated by a statue. Also, Justin introduces new parallels and details, such as mentioning people who called themselves the

³⁹ Up until the 1990-s majority of scholars treated the accusations of human sacrifice and promiscuity as genuine and representative of the 'deviant ethics' of gnostics. However with a new approach to the study of gnostic ethics developed by the New School in the 1990-s a more skeptical view of these accusations started to prevail (for this phenomenon see King, K. *What is Gnosticism?* 2003. Pp.201-208). A thorough study of the matter was provided by Edwards in 1992 who in his influential article "*Some Early Christian Immoralities.*" *Ancient Society* 23 (1992): 71-82. expressed the opinion of pagan origin of these accusations as a reinterpretation of Christian attitude to marriage and sacrifice, whereas Orthodox Christians later redirected these charges against heretics (p. 72). Supporting the stance of untrustworthiness of these accusations, F.L.R. Lanzillotta points out that 'the most remarkable thing about this explanation is that while no single scholar gives credit to the charges when they are pressed against Christians, most investigators do tend to believe them when told about heretics' (p. 99). Despite this, his conclusions are completely different from those of Edwards: in his article "*The Early Christians and Human Sacrifice.*" Pages 81-102 in *The Strange World of Human Sacrifice. Studies in the History and Anthropology 1. Edited by Jan N. Bremmer. Leuven: Peeters, 2007.* Pp. 100-102. he suggested the charges were originally brought up by Christians against heretics and later were attributed by pagans to all Christians. In any case accusations of gnostics are clearly a manifestation of a broader phenomenon and should not be viewed independently of other polemical works contemporary to them.

sons of Jupiter in pre-Christian times, or stressing the fact that demons knew Jesus as the son of God.

But the evil spirits were not satisfied with saying, before Christ's appearance, that those who were said to be sons of Jupiter were born of him; but after He had appeared, and been born among men, and when they learned how He had been foretold by the prophets, and knew that He should be believed on and looked for by every nation, they again, as was said above, put forward other men, the Samaritans Simon and Menander, who did many mighty works by magic, and deceived many, and still keep them deceived. (Apol. 1.56.1)

The introduction of Jupiter in the text is not directly related to Simon, but rather to the chapters 1.20-1.22 where Justin juxtaposes Christianity and pre-Christian Hellenism, shaping the latter into a 'religion' with a supreme god Jupiter. However, attributing Jupiter this role creates a parallel with later sources, which give Simon the title of the father of all heretics. This parallel is even further strengthened by the fact that Irenaeus, who first introduced Simon in the role of an arch-heretic, also claimed he was worshipped as Jupiter.

Also, in this chapter Justin makes use a popular motive in the NT, according to which demons knew the name of Christ⁴⁰. In the *Apology*, despite this knowledge, demons try to 'put forward other men' like Simon or Menander whom Justin accuses of practicing magic and deceiving people. This aspect of Simon's characteristics closely repeats the narrative from Acts where he is described as amazing people with miracles. Already in Acts one sees the line drawn between miracle as the privilege of Christians and magic as the tool of non-Christian actors. This line of thinking develops in patristic literature owing a lot to Justin as its foremost exponent, although his criticism is closely based on Acts and does not go deeper into speculations on the nature of magic and magicians.

For even among yourselves, as we said before, Simon was in the royal city Rome in the reign of Claudius Caesar, and so greatly astonished the sacred senate and people of the Romans, that he was considered a god, and honoured, like the others whom you honour as gods, with a statue. (Apol. 1.56.2)

Apart from repeating the earlier argument about the statue, Justin mentions that Simon went to Rome, a fact not present in Acts. Several non-patristic traditions on Simon dating to approximately the same period describe events taking place in Rome.⁴¹ Justin, however, is the first heresiological writer to record this location in Simon's biography.

Justin concludes the chapter by an appeal to the Senate to take action against the heretics and destroy the statue. He again stresses that Simon was not just a magician but taught a certain doctrine which deceived many people:

Wherefore we pray that the sacred senate and your people may, along with yourselves, be arbiters of this our memorial, in order that if any one be entangled by that man's doctrines, he

⁴⁰ Mark 5:6, Matthew 8:28, Luke 8:26, Acts 19:11-20.

⁴¹ In Hippolytus' *Elen.* 6.20.2, *Acts of Peter* 4, *Didascalia Apostolorum* 6.8, *Constitutiones Apostolorum* 6.9 the conflict between Peter and Simon takes place in Rome.

may learn the truth, and so be able to escape error; and as for the statue, if you please, destroy it. (1.56.3-4)

At the start of the heresiological discourse, Simon is already presented as evil false teacher, whose teaching is a threat because of a possible confusion with Christianity. However, since the main purpose of the *Apology* was not condemnation of heretics, Simon, as well as other heretical teachers, did not play an important role in the narrative as a whole. Despite being worried about their existence and 'Christian' identity Justin did not seem to treat them as the main threat to Christianity. This approach is usually attributed to the lost *Syntagma*, which cannot be studied properly due to the lack of data. Moreover, not all scholars attribute its authorship to Justin.⁴² In any case, Justin laid foundation for the heresiological representation of Simon and indicated the features which would develop in later anti-heresiological treatises.

Conclusion: Magician-Gnostic Metamorphose

Although Justin is often considered the first anti-heretical writer, the information he provides on Simon is quite scarce in comparison with the works of e.g. Irenaeus or Hippolytus. Although he provides new information on Simon like the 'Menschenvergöttung' of Simon and the concept of the First Thought concealed in Helena, he primarily concentrates on the social status of Simon's activity: Justin gives more details about Simon's biography by mentioning that he comes from the village of Gitto, is accompanied by Helen and has a disciple named Menander. An important part of the study of Justin's apologetics is played by the lost *Syntagma* and its influence on the later literary tradition. The lost status of this treatise makes it harder to estimate whether Justin knew more about Simon than he mentioned in the *Apology*, but even according solely to the *Apology* one can see that Justin considered Simon one of the earliest and more influential heretics. However, Justin seems not too interested neither in the historical origin of heresies nor in the idea of succession between these teachings.

As mentioned above, the main concern of Justin regarding Simon was his popularity, especially since Simon's followers called themselves Christians. The goal of Justin in the *Apology* is to draw attention of the Senate to the fact of existence of 'fake' Christians who should be persecuted by the Roman state instead of real Christians. This appeal, however, proportionately plays only a minor role in the context of the whole work which focuses on defense and explanation of the Christian doctrine to the Emperor.

Although Justin's description of Simon clearly alludes to the Simon of Acts, he does not openly refer to the biblical source and provides many details that were absent in the Biblical text. Justin stresses that Simon was not just a magician but a religious leader who was deceiving people and was considered Christian by his followers. This fact indicates that the anti-heretical outbreak, that started to prevail in Christianity in the 2nd century, created a completely new

⁴² Smith. G.S. *Justin's Advertisement of the Syntagma against all heresies in Guilt by Association*. 2014. Pp.51, 61-66. Smith brought forward a challenging theory according to which Justin was not the author of the *Syntagma* but a possessor of its copy. According to Smith, Ancient authors, just like modern scholars were misled by the passage in *Apology* 1.26 thinking he attributed the authorship to himself whereas in fact he didn't.

Simon - a heretic whose goal was to deceive people and lead them away from Christianity, rather than a magician who was converted together with his followers.

Justin's description gave rise to a number of theories concerning theological aspects of Simon's teaching which until now remain an open question, such as his connection to Samaritanism, or even to Simonianism as Irenaeus of Lyon and Hippolytus described it. Justin's *Apology* is an important turning point in the development of the figure of Simon Magus: on one hand he clearly connects his Simon to the Simon of Acts, but on the other Justin is the first author who puts Simon in the anti-heretical polemic context, providing him with new characteristics that will be further developed in other literary sources.

Chapter 3. Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 1.23

St. Irenaeus was born in a Christian family in Smyrna in the first half of the 2nd century CE. In his writings he mentions that as a young man he was influenced by the preaching of Polycarp of Smyrna⁴³, although it remains unclear whether he was a disciple of the bishop or just a listener of his sermons. A chronological gap in his biography conceals the reasons that caused Irenaeus to move to Gaul, it is only known that in 177 he was already a priest in Lyon under the supervision of the bishop Pothinus and shortly afterwards became the bishop himself. Irenaeus died at the end of the 2nd century/beginning of the 3rd century CE of unknown reason and is honoured as martyr by the church.⁴⁴

The tractate '*On the Detection and Overthrow of the So-Called Gnosis*' (Ἐλεγχος καὶ ἀνατροπὴ τῆς ψευδωνύμου γνώσεως) usually shortened to *Against Heresies* (lat: *Adversus Haereses*; Greek: Κατὰ αἰρέσεων) was written by Irenaeus in Greek around 180 CE, but is fully preserved only in a Latin version made in the 3rd century. The work is a focal point for the study of anti-Gnostic polemics and one of the most detailed patristic sources on Gnosticism. This five-volume work describes most of the existing Gnostic teachings and is often given credit for introducing the concept of heretical succession, according to which all heresies stem from each other in a manner similar to Apostolic succession. According to Irenaeus, Simon Magus *ex quo universae haereses substiterunt*⁴⁵ stands at the root of this genealogical tree. This role became Simon's primary characteristic for centuries, long after Gnosticism stopped posing a threat for the unity of the Christian community.

Simon and Simonians are mentioned in every book of *Against Heresies* apart from book 5, with the most extensive narrative to be found in chapter 23 of book 1, which is entirely dedicated to Simon and his successors. In other places Simon is only mentioned briefly, often in reference to heresies which derived from his teaching or the teachings of his successors.⁴⁶

Sources of Irenaeus

There are several theories concerning the sources Irenaeus used to write *Adversus Haereses*. The one which is supported by the vast majority of scholars argues that the work of Irenaeus is based upon the lost *Syntagma* of Justin Martyr. Dennis R. MacDonald in his intertextual analysis of Simon's portrayal in early Christian sources provided a number of quite persuasive arguments in favour of the theory that the *Syntagma* was the main source of information for Irenaeus on Simon Magus: first, Irenaeus, unlike Justin, did not live in Samaria, and therefore in

⁴³ Irenaeus, *Adv.Haer.*3.3.4.

⁴⁴ Tixeront, J. *A Handbook of Patrology*. 2d edition. London: B. Herder, 1923. P.77.

⁴⁵ Irenaeus, *Adv.Haer.* 1.23.2 .

⁴⁶ Irenaeus. *Adv.Haer.* 1.27 - in reference to Cerdo and Marcion and all heretics as successors of Simon; *Adv.Haer.* 1.29 – heretics derive from Simonians, *Adv.Haer.* 2. Preface – all heretics sprung from Simon, 2.9 – Simon first brought u the idea of the untenable god ad angels creating the world, *Adv.Haer.* 2.31-32 – Simon listed with Marcion, Menander in reference to their idea of God, Simon and Carpocrates as those who perform miracles through means of magical deception), *Adv.Haer.* 2.32 – those who deceive people with magic are like Simon the magician; Simon listed with Menander and Carpocrates, *Adv.Haer.* 3. Preface – Simon as the father of all heretics, *Adv.Haer.* 3.4 – Menander as Simon's disciple, *Adv.Haer.* 3.12 – everyone who thinks Mosaic legislation was contrary to the doctrine of the Gospel was 'puffed up by Satan, being brought over to the Doctrine of Simon Magus', *Adv.Haer.* 4.6 – Simon mentioned alongside Marcion, Valentinus, Basilides, Carpocrates as inventors of an anti-cosmic false Father.

all likelihood did not have contact with Simonians himself. Also, he had no access to a Simonian writing, like Hippolytus. Nevertheless, Irenaeus was definitely acquainted with the *Apology* and the *Treatise against Marcion* written by Justin, so it's likely he read the *Syntagma* as well. MacDonald believed the role of Simon in the *Syntagma* should have been important; otherwise he would not invite the Emperor to consult on it in his *Apology*.⁴⁷

Another likely source that influenced the discourse of Irenaeus is the almost entirely lost *Hypomnemata* of Hegesippus, preserved only in several fragments quoted by Eusebius in *Historia Ecclesiastica*. It was argued by Lawlor and Streeter that Irenaeus' list of the Apostolic succession is based on the list of Hegesippus;⁴⁸ and Hilgenfeld, later supported by Lüdemann, believed that Irenaeus could not have drawn the information on the Jewish sects from the *Syntagma* of Justin who concentrated primarily on Christological heresies.⁴⁹ The quotations of *Hypomnemata* made by Eusebius mention Simonianism as one of the five Jewish sects.⁵⁰ However, since Simon is mentioned as a Christian heretic by Justin, it is more likely that his *Syntagma* was the main source of information for Irenaeus.

Despite these difficulties in identifying the origin of the new data, Irenaeus provides on Simon's teaching, the main sources of information on Simon's biography are quite clear. Describing the life of Simon in *Adversus Haereses* 1.23, Irenaeus basically reworks the narrative of the Samaritan mission in Acts and chapter 1.26 from Justin Martyr's *Apology*, thereby being the first author clearly connecting Simon of Acts with the gnostic Simon of heresiologists. According to Irenaeus the Simon met by Philip and Peter in Samaria and the individual who later went to Rome and in whose honour a statue was erected were the same person.

Simon, Divinity Claims and Christianity

Being the earliest preserved literary source that describes in detail the teachings of Simon, *Adversus Haereses* introduces a great amount of new facts which are later used by other anti-heretical authors. The foremost and best known claim of Irenaeus in reference to Simon states that he was the first heretic from whom all subsequent false teachings originated. This characteristic cannot be viewed as completely new though: despite the great role of Irenaeus in popularising Simon as the first heretic, he was not the first to mention the idea. Already in the first half of the 2nd century Ignatius of Antioch mentions Simon in his *Epistle to the Trallians* where he calls him the firstborn son of devil: '*Do ye also avoid those wicked offshoots of his, Simon his firstborn son, and Menander, and Basilides, and all his wicked mob of followers.*'⁵¹ Ignatius, however, does not mention anything about other heresies stemming from Simon, therefore Irenaeus is still credited with promoting the list of Simon's successors which includes

⁴⁷ MacDonald, D. "Intertextuality in Simon's 'Redemption' of Helen the Whore". (1990: 336-343.

⁴⁸ Lawlor, H. J. *Eusebiana: Essays on the Ecclesiastical History of Eusebius, Bishop of Caesarea*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1912. Pp. 72-90; Streeter, Burnett Hillman. *The Primitive Church: Studied with Special Reference to the Origins of the Christian Ministry*. London: MacMillan, 1929. Pp. 295-303.

⁴⁹ Hilgenfeld, A. *Ketzergeschichte*. 1884. P. 49; Lüdemann, G. *Untersuchungen*.1975. Pp. 35-36, 38.

⁵⁰ Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* 4.22.5.

⁵¹ Ignatius of Antioch, *Trall.* 11.2.

Menander, and subsequently Basilides and Saturninus.⁵² Thereby, Simon became responsible not only for being a heretic himself, but also for the rise of all other heresies.

In addition to attributing Simon the status of the first heretic, Irenaeus also explicitly states in paragraph 1 of chapter 23 that Simon proclaimed himself divine:

He taught that it was himself who appeared among the Jews as the Son, but descended in Samaria as the Father while he came to other nations in the character of the Holy Spirit. He represented himself, in a word, as being the loftiest of all powers, that is, the Being who is the Father over all, and he allowed himself to be called by whatsoever title men were pleased to address him. (Adv.Haer 1.23.1)

It is noteworthy that divinity claims are not a common attribute of heretics in *Against Heresies*: neither Valentinus, nor Cerdo or Marcus, despite all the criticism of their teachings by Irenaeus, were accused of proclaiming themselves as gods. In this sense Simon is almost unique, since the only other heretic who was attributed divinity claims by Irenaeus is Menander, a successor of Simon. According to Haenchen and Krause, the nature of Simon's divinity was rooted in the Greek worldview in which it was common for humans to be associated with gods.⁵³ Kurt Rudolph, however, suggested that these divinity claims of Simon and Menander turned them into the antipodes of the Christian redeemer and are based on the gnostic protest exegesis.⁵⁴

Another important contribution to the portrait of Simon Magus' in *Adversus Haereses* has to do with the role of Christianity in Simon's teaching. Irenaeus is the only Church father who does not simply refer to Simonianism as a Christian sect, but reinforces his argument by attributing concrete Christian aspects to its theology. Irenaeus is the first author who attributes Trinitarian thought to Simonianism stating that Simon was the incarnation of god the Father, as opposite to god the Son and the Holy Spirit. Despite all attempts to find proof for the Christian roots of Simonianism also in Acts, *Elenchos* and other sources, the real degree of Christian influence on Simonianism remains unclear. The scholarly perspectives on the role of Christianity in Simonianism vary from proclaiming Simon and his followers a heterodox Christian group to a complete denial of any relationship with Christianity. Apart from that, there is an in-between opinion according to which Simon was probably not Christian himself, but his followers were affected by Christian teaching and included it into their doctrines. These three positions are going to be discussed below.

Among those who attribute a Christian identity to Simon are the 19th century scholars of the Tübingen school. Their idea of Simon being a substitute figure created to conceal criticism of Paul implied that he was teaching nothing else than gentile Christianity, something which was opposed by Peter. Although this view was mostly expressed in the context of Acts and the Apocrypha, Adolf Hilgenfeld believed that Justin Martyr, the main source on Simonianism for Irenaeus, referred to Paul while describing Simon, because Paul was never mentioned by name

⁵² Irenaeus, *Adv.Haer.* 1.23.5-1.24.1.

⁵³ Haenchen, E., Krause, M. in "Simon und Menander." Pages 39-46 in *Die Gnosis*. Edited by Foerster. Zürich: Artemis Verlag, 1969.

⁵⁴ Rudolph, K. *Gnosis: The Nature and History of Gnosticism*. San Fransisco: Harper, 1984. P. 151. For the history of research of the protest exegesis see Williams, M. A. *Rethinking Gnosticism: An Argument for Dismantling A Dubious Category*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1996. Pp. 54-79.

in any of Justin's writings.⁵⁵ Adolf von Harnack, whose opinion diametrically opposed Baur's idea of two rival Christian streams, suggested that Simon was representative of a broader phenomenon in Samaria, where several attempts to establish new religions were made under the influence of Christianity. According to Harnack, Simon's teaching was prophetic in nature and could have been shaped after that of Jesus, which led to Simon becoming a rival figure for the early Church.⁵⁶

The opposite line of thinking which refuses a Christian identity to both Simon and his followers is usually connected to the idea of pre-Christian gnosis. This concept appeared in the beginning of the 20th century with the rise of the *Religionsgeschichtliche Schule*. Before that gnostic teachings were considered deviant forms of Christianity as was claimed by the Church fathers. The *Religionsgeschichtliche Schule* searched for the roots of Gnosticism in traditions other than Christianity, often Middle-Eastern or Graeco-Roman religions.⁵⁷ The second wave of research on pre-Christian gnosis was caused by the work of Haenchen. In "Gab es eine vorchristliche Gnosis?" he stated that Simon proclaimed himself to be a supreme divinity in Acts, which was supported by the *Apophysis Megale* quoted in Hippolytus' *Elenchos*. The idea of pre-Christian Simonian gnosis was also supported by Quispel who argued that Simon's teaching was not affected by Christianity, but rather was the result of Samaritan messianic expectations. This argument is mostly based on similarities in the description of Simon's theology in the *Elenchos* and the creation myth of the *Apocryphon of John (Ap. John)* which the author also believed to be pre-Christian.⁵⁸ Another author who favoured the theory of Simon as a representative of a pre-Lucan gnostic teaching was Gerd Lüdemann.⁵⁹ He was also critical of Simon's magician identity ascribing its invention to the Early Christian writers for whom it was common to accuse heretics of magical practices.⁶⁰

Among the authors who opposed Haenchen's theory of the pre-Christian gnostic roots of Simonianism were Beyschlag and Wilson. Beyschlag was critical of the historical value of *Apophysis Megale* and did not connect Simon of Acts with the gnostic Simon due a time gap between Acts and the *Apology*, which he believed to be a century long.⁶¹ Wilson agreed with the criticism of Beyschlag and similarly believed that all attempts to bridge Simon of Acts with Simon of the heresiologists had failed.⁶²

The third option, which ascribes Christian aspects only to the followers of Simon, but not to Simon himself, usually does not concentrate on Simon at all due to a lack of contemporaneous data. This point of view ascribes Christian gnosis to the followers of Simon, but separates it

⁵⁵ Hilgenfeld, A. *Die Clementinischen Recognitionen und Homilien nach ihrem Ursprung und Inhalt dargestellt*. Jena: J. G. Schreiber, 1848. P.319.

⁵⁶ Von Harnack, A. *History of Dogma*. 7 vols. Translated by Neil Buchanan. Boston: Little, Brown and company, 1901. Vol. 1. Pp. 245-246.

⁵⁷ Williams, M.A. *Rethinking Gnosticism*. 1996. Pp. 214-219.

⁵⁸ Quispel, G. "From Mythos to Logos." Pages 323-340 in *Man and Speech: Lectures Given at the Eranos Conference in Ascona, 1970*. Leiden: Brill, 1973.

⁵⁹ Lüdemann, G. *Das frühe Christentum nach den Traditionen der Apostelgeschichte*. 1987. P. 106.

⁶⁰ Lüdemann, G. *Untersuchungen*. 1975. P. 41

⁶¹ Beyschlag, K. "Zur Simon-Magus-Frage." *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche* 68 (1971): 395-426.

⁶² Wilson, R.McL., "Simon and Gnostic Origins", 1979: 490.

from the portrayal of Simon in Acts. Although neither the accounts of Justin nor the later accounts of Hippolytus (the parts independent from *Adv.Haer*) refer to Simonian theology as Christian, all patristic sources are usually studied together. This happens due to a wide-spread assumption that Justin's *Syntagma* was the basis for *Adversus Haereses*.

The text of *Adversus Haereses*, however, is also quite ambiguous about the question of Christian claims. Despite attributing some Christian ideas to Simon, Irenaeus also tried to make it clear that Christian thought was not the only basis for Simon's theology. Rather, Christology alongside gnostic and pagan myths formed one of the few components of his doctrine. One can see that after the introduction of the Simonian interpretation of the Trinity, there follows a passage which suggests that Irenaeus did not consider Simon sticking only to Christian heresy since he allowed '*...himself to be called by whatsoever title men were pleased to address him*'. And later in the chapter, this presumption is supported by a claim that the followers of Simon '*have an image of Simon fashioned after the likeness of Jupiter, and another of Helena in the shape of Minerva; and these they worship*.'⁶³

This is a strong claim to support the Greek influence on Simonian theology which emphasizes its syncretism as well as parallelism with other myths mentioned in relation to Simon.⁶⁴ The question remains, however, if Simon and Helen were called Jupiter and Minerva in their lifetime or whether it was a later theological development.

Analysing the text of Irenaeus one can see that despite the introduction of a Trinitarian thought, Irenaeus ascribed different attributes to his teaching and by no means considered him a Christian heretic. The fact that Irenaeus is the only Church father using this concept suggests that he could have used it solely as a polemic argument to demonise the opponent.

Helena/Ennoia

Another essential contribution made by Irenaeus to the portrait of Simon is a detailed description of Simon's companion, Helena, who was only briefly mentioned by Justin. In paragraphs 1.23.2-4 Irenaeus adds a few biographical details such as Tyre being her city of origin, and also sheds light on Helen's role in Simonian teaching. Irenaeus repeats Justin's words that Simon declared Helen to be the First Conception of his mind, and adds that she was also said to be '*the mother of all, by whom, in the beginning, he conceived in his mind [the thought] of forming angels and archangels*'.⁶⁵ According to Irenaeus, Helen descended from her father to the lower world and generated angels and archangels who created this world oblivious the existence of the Father. Not willing to see themselves as someone's progeny and guided by jealousy they detained Helen and she had to pass from one human body to another suffering in all of them. The most famous incarnation of hers was Helen of Troy,

...on whose account the Trojan war was undertaken; for whose sake also Stesichorus was struck blind, because he had cursed her in his verses, but afterwards, repenting and writing what are called palinodes, in which he sang her praise, he was restored to sight. Thus she, passing from

⁶³ Irenaeus, *Adv.Haer* 1.23.4.

⁶⁴ According to Grant R.M. (*Gnosticism and Early Christianity*. 1966. P. 29) Athene's birth from the head of Zeus was meant as a parallel of Helen being the First Thought 'born' by Simon.

⁶⁵ Irenaeus. *Adv.Haer*. 1.23.2.

body to body, and suffering insults in every one of them, at last became a common prostitute; and she it was that was meant by the lost sheep. (Adv.Haer 1.23.2)

This paragraph provides information which thus may point to the origin of the Simonian Helen myth as being both pagan and Gnostic. The former can be inferred from the reference made to Helen of Troy⁶⁶ and the latter from the story of the descent of the Ennoia into the lower world, which is likely to be a version of the gnostic Sophia myth.

An important point concerning Helen of Troy is the reference to Stesichorus and his *Palinode*. Although the original text of Stesichorus' work is not preserved, a reference to it can be found, among others, in Plato's *Phaedrus*⁶⁷. According to the legend, Helen blinded Stesichorus after he blamed her for unleashing the Trojan war. Later on, however, his vision was restored after writing a recantation (*Palinode*) where he withdrew from his earlier opinion saying that Helen never went to Troy. The *Palinode* is considered one of the few representations of a Greek myth also mentioned by Euripides⁶⁸ and Isocrates⁶⁹, according to which the real Helen never went to Troy with Paris: the gods created a phantom of her, an *eidolon*, which was sent to Troy instead, whereas she herself whether stayed in Sparta or went to Egypt.⁷⁰

The reference to the Greek cult of Helen of Troy also gave birth to a theory that there was a connection between the Simonian Helena and the cult of lunar goddess Selene, with whom Helen of Troy was associated. The structure of Selene's myth resembles that of Helen: she, Selene, was a virgin living on the Moon from which she was abducted and had to stay on Earth until she was allowed to return back.⁷¹ This abduction myth as well as association of Helen with the Moon was the corner stone of the theory of Quisiel who believed the pattern existed in multiple Mediterranean myths and could refer to different celestial goddesses. A further step in this direction was taken by Flusser who in his "Great goddess of Samaria" connected the Samaritan worship of Kore (who had a temple in Samaria in the 1st century CE) with the worship of Helen of Troy and consequently with the Simonian Helen.⁷²

Haenchen and Krause in their account on Simon in Foerster's *Gnosis* pointed out the difference between the earlier and the later versions of the Ennoia/Sophia myth. In the former one Ennoia was held back from ascension above by the angels (described in the account of Irenaeus) and in the later Sophia fell into matter as a result of her ignorance and willingness to reach the father. Whereas Ennoia was redeemed by the Father, Sophia rose above herself leaving a part of herself among humans. The second part of the story told by Irenaeus, wherein Simon saves both Helen and humanity, is according to the authors also a conflation of two myths: the earlier one where

⁶⁶ Quispel, G. (*Gnosis als Weltreligion*. Zürich : Origo, 1951. Pp. 64 f.) claims that Helen was regarded as image of the fallen Soul already in Antiquity.

⁶⁷ Plato. *Phaedrus* 243a-b, a brief reference in the Republic IX, another reference in Isocrates. *Helen*. 10.64.

⁶⁸ Euripides, *Elena*, 31-48.

⁶⁹ Isocrates, *Helen* 10.64.

⁷⁰ Zeitlin, F. "The Lady Vanishes: Helen and Her Phantom in Euripidean Drama." Pages 263-282 in *Allusion, Authority, and Truth: Critical Perspectives on Greek Poetic and Rhetorical Praxis*. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2010. – discussion of Helen and her oneness. Austin, N. *Helen of Troy and Her Shameless phantom*. Ithica: Cornell University Press, 2008 - a detailed study on the Helen's of Troy eidolon.

⁷¹ Quispel, G. "From Mythos to Logos." (1973): 329.

⁷² Flusser, D. "Great Goddess of Samaria." *Israel Exploration Journal* 25 (1975): 13-20.

Ennoia and her salvation is based on Helen's redemption from Troy, which was not connected to the salvation of humanity, and the later one connected to the Jewish concept of Sophia and the idea of her residing in people.⁷³

The gnostic aspect of Simonian Helen, namely her role as the First Thought, her descent and redemption by Simon, has distinct parallels with the creation myth commonly referred to as Sethian, which was portrayed among other sources in the *Apocryphon of John*. The text describes two cosmogonic entities whose aspects are merged in Helen. One of them is the androgynous Barbelo, the first thought of the highest divine principle Monad; the other one is Sophia (Wisdom), one of the aeons created by Barbelo and Monad. Sophia ruins the primordial order by crossing the boundary and falling into matter where she gives birth to a son, Ialdabaoth, who generates archons and creates the material world. Sophia does not get trapped in this world, but ascends above and tries to bring the knowledge about the existence of the Father to the humans.⁷⁴ From chapter 30 of the first book of *Adv.Haer* we can see that Irenaeus had access to a version of the *Ap.John*, which he retold and attributed to the Ophites.⁷⁵

Another literary source which shows clear parallels with the Simonian Ennoia despite missing Sethian characteristics is *Exegesis on the Soul (Ex.Soul)* from the Nag Hammadi library. There the Soul fell into the material body and was repeatedly deceived and defiled by the archons each of whom she considered her husbands. Finally being left by them she called upon the Father above and looking at her suffering he allowed her to ascend again. What enhances the connection even further is that *Ex.Soul* contains parallels not only to the Simonian Ennoia myth but also an allusion to the story of Helen of Troy who left her husband out of desire, but later repented and started to hate her place of detention willing to come back home.⁷⁶

Despite all the similarities between the account of Irenaeus, *Ap.John* and *Ex.Soul*, Simon is mentioned in neither source and therefore the matter of both *Ex.Soul* and *Ap.John* being Simonian is questionable.⁷⁷ However, connection of the gnostic Ennoia myth to the Greek background is evident as well as willingness of Irenaeus to connect this myth to Christianity: contrary to the whole narrative on the Fall of Ennoia, which does not contain any reference to Christ, in the very end of it Irenaeus uses the terminology of the parable in Luke 15 calling Helen the lost sheep. This contrasts the retold myth, but coincides well with his previous

⁷³ Haenchen E. and Krause, M. "Simon und Menander" in *Die Gnosis*. 1969. P. 40.

⁷⁴ *Apocryphon of John*. Pages 104-124 in *The Nag Hammadi Library in English*. Edited by Robinson M. J. Leiden: Brill, 1997.

⁷⁵ Irenaeus, *Adv.Haer*. 1.30

⁷⁶ Compare *Odyssey* 4.260-264 to *Ex.Soul* "Save me, my father, for behold I will render an account to thee, for I abandoned my house and fled from my maiden's quarters. Restore me to thyself again."

⁷⁷ A theory advocated a.o. by Ernst Haenchen and Martin Krause in *Die Gnosis*. P.40 and Gilles Quispel in "From Mythos to Logos." (1973): 344 suggests that the myth of Simonian Ennoia was an early vulgar form of gnosticism which was developed by other gnostic schools. Haenchen and Krause see a development of the same myth from the one similar to *Ex.Soul* to the one closer to *Ap.John*: in the former Sophia does not fall, but descends and does not ascend above immediately but is kept back by the archons. Quispel sees the myth of Simonian Helen and *Ap.John* parallel in time and both represent vulgar gnosis, later developed in *Pistis Sophia*. The main argument for this is absence of a developed idea of the Old Testament and Demiurge rejection.

statement about Simon who appeared among the Jews as the Son before descending as the Father in Samaria.

Docetism

The story of the Ennoia's detention is followed by Simon's descent to the lower world in the form of a man in order to grant salvation to Ennoia and humanity:

*For this purpose, then, he had come that he might win her first, and free her from slavery, while he conferred salvation upon men, by making himself known to them. For since the angels ruled the world ill because each one of them coveted the principal power for himself, he had come to amend matters, and had descended, transfigured and assimilated to powers and principalities and angels, **so that he might appear among men to be a man, while yet he was not a man; and that thus he was thought to have suffered in Judaea, when he had not suffered.** (Adv.Haer 1.23.3)*

In the Early Christian thought docetism, the doctrine according to which Christ did not have material body and only seemed human, was considered a separate kind of heresy. Docetists as a group were already mentioned by Ignatius of Antioch in his *Epistle to the Trallians*⁷⁸ in the first half of the 2nd century. However, the idea of Christ who only seemed to suffer on a cross can be also found in a number of other gnostic teachings, such as Basilideans, Ophites, Cerinthians and Valentinians.⁷⁹ This of course puts the existence of a separate group which was characterized solely by docetic views under question.

The docetism of Simon is remarkable for several reasons: first, if we believe Irenaeus, Simon proclaimed himself to come to Samaria as the Father, not as the Son. In this case the suffering of Jesus in Judaea is additional information which is not in line with the main stream of the narrative. Second, unlike many other doctrines where a separation between the material Jesus and the divine Christ is made, there is no material aspect in Simonian docetism. The idea of Simon existing only in a divine form was considered one of the few pure forms of docetism by Bart Ehrman in opposition to separationism, which he, as well as several other scholars, puts in a different category.⁸⁰

To a certain extent docetic thought can also be present in the Simonian Ennoia myth. As pointed out by Bianchi in his article "Docetism", one can draw a parallel between the legend of Helen's *eidolon* and the gnostic Sophia myth. In the same fashion as Helen's phantom is captured by Paris and brought to Troy, whereas actual Helen stays innocent, Sophia in a different form of the myth is also split in two (E.g. in *Ap. John* there are two female figures:

⁷⁸ Ignatius, *Epistle to the Trallians*, XI 'Avoid the deadly errors of the docetae'. Also can be found in Hippolytus, *Elen.* 8.1-4; 10.12 – Docetae.

⁷⁹ The precise list of teachings differs depending on the definition of Docetism. For scholarly definitions of Docetism see Slusser, M. "Docetism a Historical Definition." *The Second Century a Journal of Early Christian Studies* 1 (1981): 163-172.

⁸⁰ Ehrman, Bart D. *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture: The Effect of Early Christological Controversies on the Text of the New Testament*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1993. Pp. 181-183; On the difference between separationism and Docetism see Weigandt, P. *Der Dokerismus im Urchristentum und in der theologischen Entwicklung des zweiten Jahrhunderts*. Heidelberg, 1961. Tröger, K. W. "Dokeristische Christologie in Nag-Hammadi-Texten." *Kairos* 19 (1977): 45-52. Slusser, M. "Docetism: A Historical Definition." *The Second Century* 1. (1981): 163-172.

Barbelo and Sophia). The lower Sophia is captured and abused, whereas the higher one stays in the Pleroma with the Father. According to Bianchi, the stories of Helen of Troy and the Simonian Ennoia were mentioned by Irenaeus together for a reason: since the idea of the descended Sophia who is a duplicate of a higher Wisdom is directly connected to the idea of Helen as a deity whom 'one can never abuse even in the degraded form'⁸¹. From this perspective the Ennoia myth in Simonian gnosis could be just an adaptation of the Ancient Greek myth to a new gnostic environment. This argument has, however, one problem: when writing about Ennoia's captivity, Irenaeus did not mention a higher female figure whose existence in the narrative would allow for a clearer Helen/ Ennoia parallel. From *Adv.Haer.* 1.30 we know that Irenaeus was acquainted with the version of the myth which contained both higher Barbelo and lower Sophia, but the fact that he did not mention it in 1.23 suggests that ascribing to Irenaeus a conscious parallelism between the lower Sophia and Helen's *eidolon* might be too farfetched.

Libertinism

One of the most controversial subjects not only in the context of Simon Magus but also in Gnosticism in general is the libertinism ascribed by Early Christian authors to several heterodox groups. It was brought up by Irenaeus in the end of the chapter 1.23 and according to him the members of the Simonian sect believed that they were saved through Simon's grace and could therefore lead a libertine lifestyle without any consequences:

Moreover, the prophets uttered their predictions under the inspiration of those angels who formed the world; for which reason those who place their trust in him and Helena no longer regarded them, but, as being free, live as they please; for men are saved through his grace, and not on account of their own righteous actions. For such deeds are not righteous in the nature of things, but by mere accident, just as those angels who made the world, have thought fit to constitute them, seeking, by means of such precepts, to bring men into bondage. On this account, he pledged himself that the world should be dissolved, and that those who are his should be freed from the rule of them who made the world. (Adv.Haer 1.23.3)

This short record of Simonian ethics is representative of a viewpoint popular among the anti-heretical writers: according to it gnostic groups whether adhered to radical asceticism or to unrestrained libertinism, both being the result of a gnostic rejection of the material world and the Gnostics' manifestation of their freedom from the rule of the archons. Scholarly research traditionally accepted the existence of these marginal groups putting them within a perspective on gnostic ethics as whether libertine or ascetic. This approach was changed in the 90s when a new generation of Nag Hammadi scholars questioned the credibility of information provided by the Church Fathers. The meeting of the Society of Biblical literature in 1992 criticized the very categories of ascetic or libertine, giving place for looking into gnosticism as a more complex religious phenomenon.⁸² The members of the panel - Jorunn J. Buckley, Karen King and Michael Williams have shaped the new approach to studying Gnosticism outside the ascetism-

⁸¹ Bianchi, U. "Docetism, a Peculiar Theory about the Ambivalence of the Presence of the Divine". Pages 265-273 in *Myths and Symbols*. Edited by Joseph M. Kitagawa and Charles H. Long. Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1969.

⁸² Tite, P. L. *Valentinian Ethics and Paraenetic Discourse: Determining the Social Function of Moral Exhortation in Valentinian Christianity*. Leiden: Brill, 2009.

libertinism dichotomy.⁸³ Still, even this new wave of scholarship does not completely deny the possibility of existence of libertine sects.⁸⁴

Irenaeus is not the first author who speaks of the immoral behavior of Simonians, but, unlike Justin, who tried to distance himself from this statement, Irenaeus claims the existence of Simonian libertinism with certainty. The idea of men believing that they are saved through the grace of God is also mentioned in reference to other gnostic groups, among others Carpocratians, Basilideans, Nicolaitans and Cainites. However, there is only one text of a possibly gnostic origin which explicitly advocates libertinism - the treatise *Concerning Righteousness* attributed to a certain Epiphaneus in Clement's *Stromata*.⁸⁵

Irenaeus provides a more detailed account on the issue of libertinism than Justin, but his description of it is in many respects similar to that of other heretical groups mentioned in his work.⁸⁶ Based upon this observation, it seems possible to think that using the writings of Justin as the main source, Irenaeus decided to add extra details which originated either from another literary or oral source or were an invention of his own. This point can also be supported by the fact that Justin lived in Samaria at the same time as the Simonians, but nevertheless manifested a lack of confidence when speaking about their alleged libertinism; Irenaeus, on the other hand, who most likely never came in contact with the followers of Simon, was much more certain about their indecent lifestyle.

The practice of magic

The second major accusation Irenaeus brings against the followers of Simon apart from their libertine behavior is the practice of magic. Sorcery is one of the few attributes of Simon that can be traced through all the previous accounts about him and it is not surprising that Irenaeus, connecting Simon of Acts with the gnostic Simon, did not overlook this aspect. Moreover, as pointed out in a recent article by Christopher Mount, Irenaeus, as well as other church fathers, believed in the existence of the spirit and miracles only within the Church, whereas all similar phenomena outside it were immediately proclaimed magical acts that aim at misleading people⁸⁷:

⁸³ See Buckley, J. J. "Libertines or not? Fruit, Bread, Semen and Other Body Fluids in Gnosticism." *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 2.1 (1994): 15-31. King, K. "Neither libertine nor ascetic: a new look at Christian Ethics." Paper Presented at the American Academy of Religion or the Society of Biblical Literature. Annual Meeting. San-Francisco, 1992. Williams, M.A. "Freedom by abuse and Freedom by non-use= gnostic ethics?" Paper Presented at the American Academy of Religion or the Society of Biblical Literature. Annual Meeting. San-Francisco.1992. Pp.31-32.

⁸⁴ See van den Broek, R. "The Present State of Gnostic Studies." *Vigiliae Christianae* 37 (1983): 41-71. P.49. Perkins, P. *Gnosticism and the New Testament*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993. P. 174. King, K. *What is Gnosticism?* Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2003. P. 207

⁸⁵ See Williams, M.A. *Rethinking Gnosticism*. 1996. Pp. 163-188.

⁸⁶ See Irenaeus. *Adv.Haer.* 1.28.2 (successors of Carpocratians and Basilideans), Irenaeus. *Adv.Haer.* 1.25.4 (Carpocratians).

⁸⁷ Mount C. "Paul's Place in Early Christianity." Pages 90-115 in *Paul and the Heritage of Israel Paul's Claim upon Israel's Legacy in Luke and Acts in the Light of the Pauline Letters*. Edited by David P. Moessner et al. T&T Clark, London, 2012. Pp. 107-108; also see Irenaeus *Adv.Haer.* 1.13.1-4 (Marcus); 1.25.3 (Carpocrates); 2.31.2 - misleading human kind by means of magical deception; 5.28.2 – Antichrist performing miracles by the means of magic.

Thus, then, the mystic priests belonging to this sect both lead profligate lives and practise magical arts, each one to the extent of his ability. They use exorcisms and incantations. Love-potions, too, and charms, as well as those beings who are called "Paredri" (familiar) and "Oniropompi" (dream-senders), and whatever other curious arts can be had recourse to, are eagerly pressed into their service. (Adv.Haer.1.23.4)

From this quote one can see that Irenaeus aimed for a certain balance between the theological criticism on one hand and accusations of magic on the other. Both components are present in most of the patristic sources on Simon with magic being repeatedly emphasized. Being a popular polemic tool for alienating an opponent, magic was often counterbalanced with the Christian miracle, even if the difficulty of drawing the line between the two was approached differently by different authors. In chapter 1.23 we can see that Irenaeus chose the strategy of defining magic through the pursuing of the non-holy goals by its adepts (practice of love potions and charms, usage of incantations⁸⁸ and spirits). This opposes the Christian idea of a miracle, which happens only with the help of God and can be aimed only at positive things like healing, exorcism or baptism with the Holy Spirit.

Simonian influence on other teachings

In fine, they have a name derived from Simon, the author of these most impious doctrines, being called Simonians; and from them "knowledge, falsely so called," received its beginning, as one may learn even from their own assertions. (Adv.Haer. 1.23.4)

Continuing the idea of Simon as progenitor of all heresies, Irenaeus says that although Simon's legacy was preserved by his followers who called themselves Simonians, it also prompted the appearance of other heretical teachings.

Among those affected by Simonian heresy Irenaeus names only one person who had been already mentioned by Justin and whom he calls the follower of Simon - Menander. The other two heretics, Marcion and Cerdo, despite the claims of Irenaeus that their teachings derive from Simonianism, are not mentioned as having any contact with Simon personally. Cerdo is said to derive his teaching from the followers of Simon and his successor Marcion developed the doctrine of his teacher even further.⁸⁹

Conclusions

In his detailed narrative Irenaeus has collected the information on Simon from a number of literary sources and turned it into a coherent system. Simon in *Against Heresies* is presented as a heretic with divinity claims and Christian sentiments accompanied by docetic views and strongly influenced by Hellenistic traditions. Despite the presence of Christian thought and the Jewish concept of messiah, one can also find pagan roots in his teaching intertwined with the gnostic concept of Sophia. This Simon is not only a theologian and a leader of a cult named after him, but also the father of all the existing heretical teachings.

⁸⁸ Despite the fact that Jesus in the Gospel of Mark used a magical formula himself, it was an important point for Early Christian writers to emphasize that Jesus was not a magician because he did not incant.

⁸⁹ Irenaeus. *Adv.Haer.* 1.27.1-2.

The main problem of the scholarship at this point is to explain the connection between Irenaeus' magnificent figure to a magician from Acts to whom the author dedicated only a couple of verses. What is beyond doubt, is that Irenaeus ascribed to Simon the importance he did not seem to have in the earlier accounts of Acts and *Apology*. Although Irenaeus does not devote the same amount of attention to Simonians as he does to Valentinians, one can see that the former should have had enough influence, at least in Irenaeus' eyes, to be considered not just rivals of the Church, but also were responsible for the origin of heresy as such.

Chapter 4. Hippolytus, *Refutation of All Heresies*, VI.6-20

St. Hippolytus was a presbyter and later the bishop of Rome in the first half of the 3rd century. His criticism of the Roman clergy led to a schism within the Church and resulted in Hippolytus heading an alternative clerical group which elected him as the bishop of Rome. After he died as a martyr, his reputation was restored by the official clergy and he received the status of a saint. The principal and best-known work of Hippolytus is *Refutation of all Heresies* (Κατὰ πασῶν αἱρέσεων ἔλεγχος) also known as *Philosophumena* or *Elenchos*. For a long time it was ascribed to Origen and a large part of its text was presumed lost. Only after the manuscript of *Elenchos* was rediscovered on Mount Athos in 1842 and published by Emmanuel Miller in 1851, Hippolytus was first suggested as its most likely author.⁹⁰ Although the opinion of Hippolytus' authorship quickly became prevailing in the academia, the disputes about it lasted till the middle of the 20th century.⁹¹

As is also the case with the *Syntagma* of Justin Martyr preceding the *Apology*, an earlier work of Hippolytus, also called the *Syntagma*, most likely served the basis for the *Elenchos*. The text of this *Syntagma* is also lost but it is mentioned by several ancient authors⁹² and can be partially reconstructed from later patristic sources, as well as from the *Elenchos* itself due to multiple repetitions in the text.⁹³

Greek Philosophy and the Origin of all Heresies

Together with *Adversus Haereses* of Irenaeus, *Elenchos* constitutes the basis of the main corpus of ancient anti-heretical literature. Its contents can be separated into three parts: from book 1 to 4 Hippolytus focuses on criticism of Greek philosophical schools; starting from book 5 he turns to heretical teachings of his time and creates a list of heresies similar to that of Irenaeus; and in book 10 he provides a summary of all heresies discussed in books 5-9. Hippolytus extended Irenaeus' construct of heretical succession by introducing a broader causative-consecutive connection between heretics, philosophers and magicians. According to him, heretical teachings were false not only because their founders were corrupt, but also because they plagiarized the works of Greek philosophers and imitated the arts of magicians:

But since, also, there is another more profound art among the all-wise speculators of the Greeks— to whom heretical individuals boast that they attach themselves as disciples, on account of their employing the opinions of these (ancient philosophers) in reference to

⁹⁰ The most influential work in favor of the authorship of Hippolytus was the monograph by Johann Döllinger - *Hippolytus und Kallistus : oder, Die römische Kirche in der ersten Hälfte des dritten Jahrhunderts : mit Rücksicht auf die Schriften und Abhandlungen der Herren Bunsen, Wordsworth, Baur und Gieseler*. Regensburg : Manz, 1853. For more information on the research of the authorship of the *Elenchos* see Brent, A. *Hippolytus and the Roman Church in the Third Century: Communities in Tension Before the Emergence of a Monarch-Bishop*. Supplements to *Vigiliae Christianae* 31. Leiden: Brill, 1995.

⁹¹ For the history of research see Marcovich, M. *Hippolytus. Refutatio omnium haeresium*. Patristische Texte und Studien 25. Berlin: De Gruyter, 1986. Pp. 8-17. The last time authorship of Hippolytus was seriously questioned by Pierre Nautin in *Hippolyte et Josippe : Contribution à l'histoire de la littérature chrétienne du troisième siècle. Etudes et textes pour l'histoire du dogme de la Trinité 1*. Paris: CERF, 1947. but his arguments did not take hold in the academia.

⁹² Eusebius. *Hist.Eccl.* 6.22, Jerome. *Vir.* Ill. 61, Photius. *Bibliotheca* 121, *Chronicon Paschale* 12.22.

⁹³ Rudolph, K. *Gnosis*. 1984. P. 13.

the doctrines tempted (to be established) by themselves, as shall a little afterwards be proved... (Elen. 4.15.3)

These are the deeds of the magicians, and innumerable other such (tricks) there are which work on the credulity of the dupes, by fair balanced words, and the appearance of plausible acts. And the heresiarchs, astonished at the art of these (sorcerers), have imitated them, partly by delivering their doctrines in secrecy and darkness, and partly by advancing (these tenets) as their own. (Elen. 4.42.1-2)

Greek philosophers, in their turn, owed the origin of their doctrines to such sources as mysteries, astrologers or Egyptian magicians, but unlike heretics, who corrupted the doctrines of philosophers, they got certain credit for their work by the author. According to Hippolytus every heresy was rooted in one or several philosophical or religious traditions which it plagiarized and used as a basis for a new heretical doctrine. For example, Peratic heresy was based on astrology and corrupt interpretation of the Old Testament,⁹⁴ whereas the Sethians owed their existence to the teachings of Musaeus, Linus, Orpheus, ancient mystery cults, misinterpretation of the OT and the teaching of Andronicus the Peripatetic.⁹⁵ Thereby, Hippolytus introduced the argument which separated Christians from heretics on the historical basis: while attributing the origin of the Christian faith to the scriptures, Hippolytus saw the roots of heresy in philosophy, astrology and magic.⁹⁶ In the same fashion he believed that Simonian heresy originated from the teachings of Heraclitus on fire and a misinterpretation of the Deuteronomy 4:24, where God is portrayed as an all-consuming fire.

Hippolytus on Simon

Despite continuing the tradition of *successio haereticorum* started by Irenaeus, Hippolytus changed the order in which heresies affected each other: in the system of Irenaeus Simon played an outstanding role as the first heretic and father of the 'gnosis falsely so-called'. In the system of Hippolytus the credit of primacy was given to the Naassenes, an Ophite group⁹⁷ from which several other heresies derived, including that of Simon.⁹⁸ The claim that Simon was influenced by the teaching of the Ophites stresses the connection of the Simonian myth to the *Apocryphon of John* which Irenaeus attributed to the Ophites. Continuing the line of heretical succession, Hippolytus claimed that Valentinus used the teaching of Simon as the basis of his own doctrine (something that neither Justin nor Irenaeus had mentioned). At the same time the document called *Apophysis Megale* presented by Hippolytus in book 6 as representative of

⁹⁴ Hippolytus. *Elen.* 5.12-17.

⁹⁵ Hippolytus. *Elen.* 5.19-22.

⁹⁶ Hippolytus. *Elen.* 1.26.4, 4.7.4, 5.6.2, 9.31.1-2 – philosophers; *Elen.* 4.2.2, 4.50 – astrologers; 1.Proemium.8-11, 4.15.3-4 – philosophers and astrologers.

⁹⁷ Although the first ancient author to connect Naassenes and Ophites was Theodoret (*Quaest* 49.4. Reg. 18.4), these sects are often studied together in modern scholarship. See Casey, R. P. "Naasenes and Ophites" in *The Journal of Theological Studies* 27 (1926): 374-387; Leisegang, H. *Die Gnosis*. 5th edition. Stuttgart: Kroner, 1985. Pp. 112ff. This approach was recently criticized by Tuomas Rasimus in *Paradise Reconsidered in Gnostic Mythmaking. Rethinking Sethianism in Light of the Ophite Evidence*. Leiden: Brill, 2009. Pp. 26-27; 82-83. He argued against the broad definition of the Ophitism which includes all 'snake sects' including the Naasenes.

⁹⁸ Hippolytus. *Elen.* 5.1-4, 6.6-7.

Simonian gnosis has many common features with Valentinianism as discussed below. The similarities between Valentinian and Simonian cosmological myths were also discussed by Beyschlag in *Simon Magus und die Christliche Gnosis*.⁹⁹ Beyschlag believed that Simonian myth was not the basis for the more elaborate Valentinian system. On the contrary, he thought that the concept of Simonian Ennoia as it was portrayed in *Adversus Haereses* was the result of a confluence of two separate myths: that of the First Thought, Ennoia, and the one of the fallen Sophia.¹⁰⁰

Apart from the question of heretical primacy, Hippolytus' description of Simon and his teaching continues the tradition started by Justin Martyr and Irenaeus wherein Simon is portrayed as the founder of a heretical school. The information presented by Hippolytus to describe Simon and his teaching can be traced to at least three main sources: the first one is an unknown earlier document called *Great Revelation (Apophasis Megalē)* which Hippolytus believed to be written by Simon himself and parts of which he retold in chapters 6.9-18. The second source is *Adversus Haereses* of Irenaeus possibly based on the lost *Syntagma* of Justin. Even though Hippolytus closely followed chapter 1.23 of *Adv.Haer.* in *Elenchos* 6.19-20, he nevertheless elaborated on some facts described in the writing of Irenaeus. The third source of information is altogether different from the previous patristic records. It represents a tradition according to which Simon encountered Peter in Rome and their meeting grew into a combat between the two. This motive is present in several apocryphal texts and the *Pseudo-Clementines* and is believed to derive from the folk tradition on Simon existing parallel to patristic narrative. This tradition concentrated on the magical aspect of Simon's personality rather than on his teaching. Hippolytus is the first patristic author to include this motive into the apologetic text.

Apophasis Megale

Among the sources mentioned above, *Apophasis Megale* is without doubt the most controversial, because describes Simonian cosmological myth in a manner very different from the previous patristic accounts. According to it, Simonians believed that the originative principle of the universe was fire. The nature of this fire is two-fold – it has a manifest and secret part. Accordingly, all things can be divided into manifest and secret: the former can be cognised by Sense and the latter with Intellect. This fire is the unbegotten entity called the Great Indefinite Power which brought the world into existence through generation of the six primal roots from the fire: Mind and Intelligence, Voice and Name, Ratiocination and Reflection. The Great Indefinite Power resides on these roots and at the same time in Simon who is 'the one who stood, stands and will stand' (*ho hestōs, stas, stēsomenos*).

The first time we come across the female counterpart of the Great Indefinite Power – Intelligence is in chapter 6.12.1-2 where she is briefly mentioned as one of the six roots of the Great Indefinite Power paired with another concept called Mind. A more elaborate description

⁹⁹ Beyschlag, K. *Simon Magus und die Christliche Gnosis*. 1974. Pp.45, 133-140.

¹⁰⁰ Beyschlag, K. *Simon Magus und die Christliche Gnosis*. 1974. Pp. 138-140.

of the AM cosmology comes in chapter 6.18 where Intelligence (*Epinoia*)¹⁰¹ and Mind (*Nous*) are two offshoots of all the aeons that spring from the invisible and incomprehensible power called Silence (*Sigē*). Mind is male and manages all things, whereas Intelligence is female and produces all things. They undergo a conjugal union creating an ‘incomprehensible air that has no beginning and no end’. In the second part of the chapter Intelligence is mentioned again but in a slightly different mythological context: This part of the chapter speaks of the hermaphrodite Father, the one who stood, stands and will stand, existing in the incomprehensible air. Intelligence, previously hidden in him, proceeded forth from him and passed him in a state of duality. After that, she concealed the Father in herself and despite opposing each other, they became one entity: a hermaphrodite having a female in itself.

Even though Hippolytus believed that AM was written by Simon Magus himself, neither the dating nor the relation of the treatise to Simon or Simonianism have been undisputed in modern scholarship. Until the middle of the 20th century AM was usually dated in the 2nd or 3rd centuries CE and is considered a late form of Simonianism.¹⁰² In the beginning of the 20th century Hans Waitz became the first scholar who tried to solve the problem of connecting AM not only to Simon of Acts but also to Simon in Justin/Irenaeus tradition. He believed that the transformation of Simon’s teaching came in phases: first some followers of the magician from Acts started a cult which was later gnosticised, and afterwards this gnostic form of Simonianism developed into 2 branches: a more popular Syrian one, described by Justin, and a more philosophical Alexandrian one, present in the AM.¹⁰³

Early dating of the AM was seriously taken into consideration only after 1952 when Ernst Haenchen published his influential work “Gab es eine vorchristliche Gnosis?” where he claimed the pre-Christian origin of Simonianism.¹⁰⁴ Haenchen’s core argument was based on the fact that a term similar to the Great (Indefinite) Power (*megalē dunamis*) was also present in Acts 8:10 where Simon was called ‘the Great Power of God’ (*hē dunamis tou theou hē megalē*). According to Haenchen, this fact allows to date Simonian gnosis back to the 1st century CE. Although Haenchen himself believed AM represented a late stage of development of Simonian gnosis, his argumentation for the existence of pre-Christian gnosticism inspired other scholars in the second half of the 20th century to date AM back to the 1st-2nd centuries CE and even to Simon Magus personally.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰¹ Here and further I am following the translation of the ANF, although it would be more accurate to translate *Epinoia* as the ‘Forethought’ than ‘Intelligence’

¹⁰² Von Harnack, A. *Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte*. 3 vols. Tübingen: Mohr, 1909-1910. P.271. Hilgenfeld, A. *Die Ketzergeschichte des Urchristentums urkundlich dargestellt*. 1884. P.181. Cerfaux, Lucien. “La Gnose Simonienne: Nos sources principales” in *Recherches de science religieuse* 16, (1926): 5-20. P.15.

¹⁰³ Waitz, H. “Simon Magus in der Altchristlichen Literatur.” *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde des Urchristentums* 5, (1904): 121–143.

¹⁰⁴ Haenchen, E. “Gab es eine Vorchristliche Gnosis?” (1952): 316-349.

¹⁰⁵ Early dating of AM: Leisegang, H. *Die Gnosis*. 1985. P. 67. J. Frickel (*Apophysis Megale*. 1968. Pp.144ff) argued Simon was the author of the AM. Frickel, however, believed that Hippolytus did not summarize the actual AM but quoted verbatim its summary created by the followers of Simon. Salles-Dabadie, J.M.A. (*Recherches sur Simon le Mage*. 1969. Pp.72ff) believed AM was an example of archaic form of Gnosticism and was written by a Greek-educated Jew in the 2nd century CE. Kurt Rudolph (“Gnosis und Gnostizismus, ein Forschungsbericht”. *Theologische*

As a reaction to this tendency another group of scholars argued against the early dating of AM and its connection to Simon. The argumentation of this criticism varied: e.g. Wilson in his “Simon and Gnostic Origins” argued that it was impossible to either prove or disprove Simon’s authorship of the *Apophysis Megale* due to the lack of data,¹⁰⁶ whereas Gerd Lüdemann as well as Karlmann Beyschlag did not only deny Simon’s authorship of AM but questioned the relation of the document to Simonianism at any point.¹⁰⁷ The main argument of Beyschlag was that the document was not mentioned in any source pre-dating Hippolytus and the information presented there contradicts all previous accounts on Simon.

Although the arguments of Beyschlag and Lüdemann against the relation of AM to Simonianism make sense, there is one aspect that can’t be overlooked – a reappearing title of Simon as the one who ‘stood stands and will stand’ (*ho hestōs, stas, stēsomenos*). This term was introduced in the first reference made to Simon in the *Elenchos* 4.51 and was repeated several times throughout book 6. In chapter 4.51 this characteristic is mentioned in a list of several names Simon apparently used to constitute the Great Indefinite Power residing in him: ‘Mind, Intelligence, Name, Voice, Ratiocination, Reflection; and he who stood, stands, will stand’¹⁰⁸. Since this is not the first example of the term ‘*ho hestōs*’ to be used in the context of Simonianism,¹⁰⁹ modern authors often use this argument to argue in favor of connection of the AM to Simonianism.¹¹⁰

The first usage of the term *hestōs* in reference to Simon in the patristic corpus was made at the turn of the 3rd century by Clement of Alexandria in his *Stromata* where he wrote that Simonians ‘wish to be assimilated in manners to the standing form (*tō hestōti*) they adore’.¹¹¹ It is unclear whether in this case the term ‘standing form’ refers to Simon as divine entity or to the god of Simonians who is not identical to Simon. Still, the first option can be supported by the argument that the text was based on Justin’s account on the statue of Simon which could be referred to as the ‘standing form’. In any case these words are clearly attributed to a divine

Rundschau. (1973): 289-360.) questioned the authorship of Simon or his followers but supported early dating of the AM.

¹⁰⁶ Wilson, R. McL. “Simon and Gnostic Origins”. (1979): 489.

¹⁰⁷ Lüdemann, G. *Untersuchungen*. 1975. P.26. Beyschlag, K. *Simon Magus und die Christliche Gnosis*. 1974. P.39. For the history of the research see Meeks, W.A. “Simon Magus in Recent Research.” (1977): 137-142.

¹⁰⁸ Hippolytus. *Elen*. 4.51.9.

¹⁰⁹ Compare: Clement, *Stromata* 2.52.2 – ‘standing form’ (*hestōs*); *Homilies* 2.22.3 – ‘the standing one’ (*hestōta*) and ‘the one who will stand forever’ (*stēsomenos aei*). *Hom.* 2.24.6 – ‘standin’g (*ho hestōs*); *Recog.* 1.72.3 – ‘standing one’ (*stantem*); *Recog.* 3.47.3 – ‘standing in eternity’ (*stans in aeternum*); *Act. Petri* 31 – ‘the standing one’ (*ho hestōs*)

¹¹⁰ Gerd Lüdemann (*Untersuchungen*, 1975. P.100.) argued that since *hestōs* is not mentioned in the works of Justin and Irenaeus but is attributed to Simon by Hippolytus, the authorship of the AM could belong to an offshoot of the Simonians. Hans Waitz argued in “Simon Magus in der Altchristlichen Literatur.” (1904): 121-143 that the term *hestōs* was at the core point of the philosophical branch of Simonianism as opposed to the Syrian branch which resided on the belief in Simon and Helen. Similarly to him Barbara Aland (“Gnosis un Philosophie.” Pages 34-73 in *Proceedings of the International Colloquium on Gnosticism*. Stockholm, August 20-25, 1973. Edited by Geo Widengren and David Hellholm. Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1977. P.63) believed AM belonged to the philosophical Simonian ‘Hochgnosis’ and *hestōs* was a later development in Simonianism that had nothing to do with historical Simon. Stephan Haar in *Simon Magus: The First Gnostic?* Berlin: Walter De Gruyter, 2003. Pp.276-279 argued for the Gnostic origin of the term ‘stood, stands and will stand’ and argued it to be connected to Simon despite its broader use in Antiquity.

¹¹¹ Clement, *Stromata* 2.52.2.

figure that Simonians worshiped and this provides a precedent for the use of the term by Hippolytus or/and the author of AM in Simonian context.

Despite this, reference to God as a standing form is not unique for Simonianism: it was used by different groups in the Mediterranean and until nowadays there is no consensus about its origin.¹¹² Supporting the argument of a broader circulation of the term, it should be noticed that Hippolytus himself attributed 'stood, stand and will stand' to Christ¹¹³ and mentioned it in reference to Simon only quoting him attributing these words to himself.

So, assuming that *hestōs* does not represent an exclusively Simonian terminology, we are left with a myth which does not have much in common with the accounts of Justin and Irenaeus, but shares several aspects with Valentinian gnosis.¹¹⁴ Parallels start with the name Silence, which is not mentioned anywhere else in relation to Simonianism, but is used in descriptions of Valentinian gnosis by Hippolytus. Another aspect of the AM myth which is typical for several gnostic systems including Valentinian is the presence of syzygies (although the term itself is not used)– pairs of male and female aeons (in Valentinian version 15 pairs, in AM - 3). In Valentinianism Silence is female and has male counterpart Abyss (Bythos) with whom they generate aeons. The first aeons generated by Silence and Abyss are Mind (*Nous*) and Truth (*Aletheia*) which can be compared to the Mind and Intelligence in the AM. Together with the first syzygy they form the Pythagorean tetrad which is the root of all things.¹¹⁵ Apart from that, the hermaphrodite status of the primal Father was mentioned in relation to Valentinians by Irenaeus.¹¹⁶

Taking into account that AM is very different from the Justin/Irenaeus tradition on Simon and that it has clear parallels with Valentinian myth, it is very likely that Hippolytus' claim about the influence of Simonianism on Valentinianism was based primary on comparison of the AM and Valentinianism. Hippolytus was the only author who had access to AM and the only one who argued for connection between the teachings of Simon and Valentinus.

Helena and Simonians

In chapter 6.19 Hippolytus continues his description of Intelligence. Trying to connect the storyline of AM to the narrative clearly originating from Irenaeus' *Adversus Haereses*, he

¹¹² The scholarly opinions on the origin to *ho hestōs* are diverse: broad Hellenistic use of *hestōs* by different religious groups is discussed by Michael Williams in *The Immovable Race: A Gnostic Designation and the Theme of Stability in Late Antiquity*. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1985. Samaritan origin of the idea of God's immovability - Zahn, T. *Kommentar zum NT Bd.V, Die Apostelgeschichte des Lucas*. Leipzig: Deichert, 1919. Pp. 308-309. Quispel, G. *Gnosis als Weltreligion*. Zürich: Origo, 1951. P. 56. Kippenberg, H. G. *Garizim Und Synagoge*. 1971. Pp.347-349. Isser, S. J. *The Dositheans: A Samaritan Sect in Late Antiquity*. Leiden: Brill, 1976. Pp.138-140. Fossum, J. E. *The Name of God and the Angel of the Lord: Samaritan and Jewish Concepts of Intermediation and the Origin of Gnosticism*. Tübingen: Mohr, 1985. Pp. 120-124. Hellenistic influence on Samaritanism - Montgomery, J. A. *The Samaritans; the Earliest Jewish Sect: Their History, Theology, and Literature*. New York: Ktav Pub. House, 1968. P. 215.

¹¹³ Hippolytus, *Elen*.6.4.1.

¹¹⁴ Despite general consensus on the fact that there are some similarities between the AM and Valentinianism, A. Salles in "Simon Le Magicien ou Marcion". *Vigiliae Christianae* 12. (1958):197-224 argued against any relation between the AM and Valentinianism due to the lack of shared terminology.

¹¹⁵ Irenaeus, *Adv.Haer.* 1.1.1, 1.2.4.

¹¹⁶ Irenaeus, *Adv.Haer.* 1.11.5.

continues the usage of the AM term *Epinoia* instead of *Prōte Ennoia* used by Justin and Irenaeus. Other than that, the narration closely retells chapter 1.23 of the *Adv.Haer*, adding nevertheless two new aspects to the original description. The first one is the idiom which describes Helen as the one who ‘stood with a torch’ and the second one refers to a more vivid description of Simonians’ libertine lifestyle.

Describing Helen as someone who ‘stood with a torch’ (*Helenēn hama tēi lampadi*), Hippolytus does not provide any explanation of whether the context or meaning of this description. However, this is not the only reference to Helen with a torch – 2 centuries later Epiphanius of Salamis writes in his *Panarion* that Simonians attributed an allegoric meaning to the episode described by Homer¹¹⁷ in which Helen signaled her plan against the Phrygians to the Greeks with a lamp. According to Epiphanius, Simonians believed that with her torch Helen actually ‘indicated the display of the light from on high’.¹¹⁸ According to Gilles Quispel, Helen who ‘stood on a roof’, first mentioned by Justin and quoted by Hippolytus in 6.19.3, referred to the same scene from the *Aeneis* and that Simonians treated it as a manifestation of the gnostic myth according to which Helen/Sophia shed light onto the lower regions after which she was overthrown by the archons.¹¹⁹

Apart from discussing the role of Helen in Simonian gnosis, Hippolytus elaborated on the image of Simon’s followers. He argued that they did not only lead a promiscuous lifestyle, but also attributed sacred meaning to intercourse and considered themselves ‘*not to be overcome by the supposed vice, for they have been redeemed*’. They explained the necessity of promiscuity by a metaphorical phrase: ‘*All earth is earth, and there is no difference where any one sows, provided he does sow*’¹²⁰ and congratulated each other on the account of intercourse, employing the expression ‘*holy of holies*’ and sanctifying one another. This behavior is explained by Hippolytus through the belief of Simonians that all of them had been already saved by Christ’s intelligence whereas the notion of vice was created by archons in order to enslave people.¹²¹ Unlike Irenaeus, Hippolytus ascribed immorality not only to Simon’s followers, but also to Simon himself, claiming that he had a sexual relationship with Helen and that his followers took after him in their promiscuous behavior.¹²² Looking back at the patristic sources, we can see that the accusations of libertinism have grown from a brief comment in Justin’s *Apology* and a slightly more detailed account in *Adversus Haereses* to ritualistic promiscuity described by Hippolytus in the *Elenchos*. These claims of Hippolytus fit well into a libertinism/ascetism dichotomy used by most anti-heretical writers to describe their opponents and generally considered groundless for the academic community.¹²³ Moreover, as has been demonstrated by Koschorke in his work *Hippolyt's Ketzerbekämpfung und Polemik gegen die*

¹¹⁷ Actually, this episode is present neither in Iliad nor in Odyssey, but in Virgil’s *Aeneis* 6.18-19.

¹¹⁸ Epiphanius. *Panarion*, I.21. 3.1.

¹¹⁹ Quispel, G. “Simon en Helena”, 1951: 341.

¹²⁰ Hippolytus. *Elen.* 6.19.5.

¹²¹ Hippolytus. *Elen.* 6.19.6-7.

¹²² Hippolytus. *Elen.* 6.19.4 Stephan Haar (*Simon Magus: the first Gnostic?* 2003. Pp.287ff) argued that the accusations of immorality from the writings of Justin, Irenaeus and Hippolytus did not originally belong to the Simonian myth but originated from the accusations of the Persian Magoi with whom the author associates Simon.

¹²³ For the discussion of the academic view on libertinism see chapter 3, subtitle ‘Libertinism’.

Gnostiker, Hippolytus did not distinguish between exposition of the heretical teachings and argumentation against them, so it would not be surprising if the heretics he described would not be able to recognize themselves in his writings.¹²⁴

Apart from accusations of libertinism, Hippolytus also accused the followers of Simon of practicing mysteries. He claimed that the worship of Simon as Jupiter and Helen as Minerva, described earlier by Irenaeus, in fact took the form of a mystery and that Simonians were supposed to call Simon 'Lord' and Helen 'Lady'. If one would call them by names, he would be cast off for being ignorant of the mysteries.¹²⁵ Despite the fact that Hippolytus' connection of all 2nd century heresies to the teachings of Antiquity was not always accurate¹²⁶ and seemed quite far-fetched in an attempt to connect Simon with Heraclitus, this statement might be more trustworthy. Apart from the fact that the information provided by Hippolytus is quite specific, the practice of mysteries by Simonians had been also mentioned by Irenaeus.

'The Acts of Simon'

Ending his account on Simon, Hippolytus tells a story about Simon's encounter with Peter in Rome¹²⁷ which had not been mentioned by any other ancient source. The author does not describe the contest itself but mentions that after realizing his inferiority to Peter, Simon desperately ordered his followers to bury him alive so that he would resurrect on the 3rd day, but he never did 'for he is no Christ'.¹²⁸ Although Hippolytus is not the first author to place Simon in Rome, (this was already done by Justin Martyr in the *Apology*), in the narrative of Hippolytus Simon was present in Rome in a later period – during the reign of Nero and not Claudius as claimed by Justin.¹²⁹

Despite the story being completely original, the outline of the narrative presented by Hippolytus shares several common features with other accounts on Simon present in the apocryphal *Acts of Peter*, *Acts of Peter and Paul* and *Pseudo-Clementines*. All these stories describe Simon's encounter with Peter (or Peter and Paul) in the city of Rome and a subsequent contest between them in order to prove the superiority of their teaching to that of the opponent. Rather predictably, this contest always ends with Simon's loss. It is interesting that neither of these stories mentions Helen or the gnostic aspect of Simon's teaching, concentrating only on Simon's magical powers. Since the *Acts of Peter* are roughly contemporaneous with the *Apology* of Justin, whose knowledge about Simon's presence in Rome did not include the contents of the *Acts of Peter*, it is usually assumed that the stories of

¹²⁴ Koschorke, K. *Hippolyt's Ketzerbekämpfung und Polemik gegen die Gnostiker: Eine Tendenzkritische Untersuchung seiner 'Refutatio Omnium Haeresium'*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1975. P.48.

¹²⁵ Hippolytus. *Elen.* 6.19.

¹²⁶ See Vallee, G. *A Study in Anti-Gnostic Polemics. Irenaeus, Hippolytus and Epiphanius*. Studies in Christianity and Judaism. Vol.1. Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1981. Pp.48ff.

¹²⁷ Ferreiro, A. (Simon Magus in *Patristic, Medieval and Early Modern Literature*. 2005. P.135) just like Harnack before him believes in the historicity of Simon's stay in Rome as described by Justin. Harnack, A. *The Mission and Expansion of Christianity in the First Three Centuries*. Translated by James Moffatt. 2 vols. London: Williams and Norgate, 1908. Repr., New York: Harper, 1962.P. 371

¹²⁸ Hippolytus. *Elen.* 6.20.3-4

¹²⁹ Hilgenfeld, A. *Ketzergeschichte*, 1884. P.182

Simon's encounter with the apostles derived from an oral tradition which was at a certain point written down in the Christian Apocrypha and the *Pseudo-Clementines*.¹³⁰

In comparison to the Book of Acts, where Simon is also portrayed as a magician, Simon in folk tradition acquired a new feature: here he had a group of followers who support him even during his confrontation with Peter. This change could have something to do with the fact of existence of actual Simonians in the time of the Apocrypha composition, since in Acts all Simon's followers converted to Christianity as well as Simon himself. In this particular narrative the presence of followers whom Simon ordered to bury him even increases the allusion to Christ which is already evident from Simon's willingness to resurrect on the third day.

Basically, this narrative has nothing to do with the patristic accounts on Simon as a gnostic. It completely neglects the gnostic identity of Simon in a way continuing the tradition of Acts where Simon is portrayed as a magician who was overpowered by a Christian. However, in comparison to Acts, Simon's anti-Christian position became more pronounced and the focus of the story shifted from the successful mission of the Apostle to a severe confrontation with a heretic.

Conclusion

The way Simon and his teaching are represented in Book 6 of the *Elenchos* is different from earlier literary sources in several key points. Firstly, Hippolytus changed the structure of the heretical succession model introduced by Irenaeus taking the credit of primacy away from Simonian system. Secondly, unlike the earlier authors, he tried to historically trace the origins of Simonian heresy to other teachings of Antiquity by attributing Simon misunderstanding of the Scripture and corruption of Greek philosophy (Heraclitus). Apart from that, Hippolytus is the only ancient author who had access to a document considered Simonian in Antiquity – *Apophysis Megale* and used it in his description of Simon's teaching. Also, Hippolytus applied several changes to the narrative of Irenaeus retold by him in chapter 19: writing about Helen, Hippolytus attributes to Simon misinterpretation of the 'words of the poets', and provides parallels between Simonian Helen and the Iliad, *Apophysis Megale* and possibly the *Aeneis*. By attributing sacral meaning to Simonian libertinism, condemning the acts of magic and mysteries they practice Hippolytus distances them even further from Christianity.

The central characteristic of Simon in the narrative of Hippolytus is his claim of divinity and the attempt to manifest equality to Christ. Throughout the narrative Hippolytus repeatedly turns to this feature of Simon in different contexts (*Apophysis Megale*, rephrasing Irenaeus and in the 'Acts of Simon') thereby paying more attention to it than previous authors. Together with *Adversus Haereses*, *Elenchos* constitutes the core of the patristic accounts on Simon documenting information and framing it according to the anti-heretical paradigm. The uniqueness of Hippolytus' account resides in the recording of the *Apophysis Megale* (which is presented as a more philosophical form of Simonianism in comparison to previous accounts)

¹³⁰ Ferreiro, A. *Simon Magus in Patristic, Medieval, and Early Modern Traditions*, 2005. Pp. 133ff

and in the description of the combat between Simon and Peter which manifests Hippolytus' awareness of the existence of a non-patristic tradition about Simon.

Chapter 5. Simon in Tertullian's *De Anima* and Other Works

Quintus Septimius Florens Tertullianus, commonly referred to as Tertullian, was a native of Carthage who converted to Christianity on the break of the 3rd century.¹³¹ His multiple works date back to the first two decades of the 3rd century and are among the earliest examples of Christian patristic literature written in Latin. Being a contemporary of Hippolytus, Tertullian to a certain extent stays aside from other Christian authors of the 3rd century - no reference to him is made till the 4th century by Lactantius.¹³² One of the reasons for this can be Tertullian's conversion to Montanism around 208-212 CE. Despite the fact that Tertullian criticized gnostic teachings both before and after his conversion, it is possible that other Early Christian authors avoided him as a source contaminated by heresy due to the difficulty of distinguishing between the works written in his Christian and Montanist periods.¹³³

One of the most important contributions of Tertullian to Christian apologetics was the 'truth precedes error' hypothesis which he introduced in *Adversus Marcionem (Against Marcion)*, arguing the supremacy of the Christian gospel over heretical ones due to its earlier appearance.¹³⁴ Another famous phrase of Tertullian written in *De Praescriptione Haereticorum (Prescription Against Heretics)*: 'what indeed has Athens to do with Jerusalem?'¹³⁵ separated Gospel from the chronologically preceding classical philosophy. Heresies, in their turn, were the result of contamination of the pure Christian doctrine with pagan philosophy.¹³⁶ However, despite this radical statement, Tertullian broadly used his classical education and knowledge of philosophy to argue for the Christian cause.¹³⁷ In line with Hippolytus, Tertullian expresses in his treatises *De Anima* (Treatise on the Soul) and *De Praescriptione Haereticorum* the conviction that heresies originated from Greek philosophy. The relations he traced between concrete philosophical teachings and heresies that originated from them differed from those suggested by Hippolytus. Tertullian believed, for example, that Platonism served as the basis for the doctrines of Saturninus, Carpocrates, Apelles and Valentinus,¹³⁸ whereas Hippolytus ascribed a Platonic origin only to the teaching of Valentinus -and even then only partially.¹³⁹

Literary Sources on Simon

The way Tertullian presented Simon in his works suggests that he was acquainted with the narratives from the Book of Acts, the *Apology* of Justin and *Adversus Haereses* of Irenaeus. Adolf Hilgenfeld argued in his *Ketzergeschichte* that Tertullian's account on Simon belonged to

¹³¹ Dunn, G. D. *Tertullian*. London: Routledge, 2004. Pp.2-9.

¹³² Lactantius. *Divinae Institutiones*. 5.1.22-28. Dunn, G. D. *Tertullian*. 2004. P.17.

¹³³ On distinction between Tertullian's works of pre-Montanist and Montanist period see Barnes, T. D. *Tertullian: A Historical and Literary Study*. Oxford : Clarendon Press, 1985. Pp.42-48.

¹³⁴ Tertullian. *Ad.Marcionem* 4.4.

¹³⁵ Tertullian. *Praescr.* 7.

¹³⁶ Tertullian. *Praescr.* 7.

¹³⁷ Osborn, O. in his *Tertullian, First Theologian of the West*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997. P. 37 insisted that Tertullian was a Stoic philosopher. Timothy David Barnes was less radical in his monograph *Tertullian: A Historical and Literary Study*, 1985. P. 210 but also admitted that Tertullian used his philosophical background in argumentation thereby reconciling Christianity and classical culture.

¹³⁸ Tertullian. *De Anima* 23.

¹³⁹ Hippolytus, *Elen.* 6.21.

the so-called *Syntagma* tradition which is also present in the writings of Justin and Irenaeus, and that Tertullian used the *Syntagma* as his main source.¹⁴⁰

Most frequently the references to Simon made by Tertullian refer solely to the context of Acts 8:9-23. In *De Fuga* Simon's attempt to buy the Holy Spirit from the Apostles is compared to the attempt of several Christians to buy themselves off persecution,¹⁴¹ and in both *De Anima* and *De Idolatria* Tertullian draws a connection between Simon and Elymas the sorcerer, referring to both of them as mere magicians, thereby neglecting Simon's identity as a sect leader.¹⁴² In *De Anima* 57 Tertullian reinforces this connection by claiming that Simon, as well as Elymas, lost his sight.¹⁴³ It should be pointed out that the magical aspect of Simon's character is more pronounced in the works of Tertullian than in those of Justin, Irenaeus or Hippolytus. However, at the same time Tertullian does not make any explicit reference to the apocryphal sources on Simon which also focus on his magical powers. Alberto Ferreiro believed that the absence of Tertullian's references to the Apocrypha was caused by 'the more pressing issue of Gnosticism' which made Tertullian include the writings of Irenaeus but not the oral tradition.¹⁴⁴ This statement of Ferreiro is problematic because, as mentioned above, most references to Simon were made by Tertullian in the magical context of Acts, and not the work of Irenaeus.

Tertullian's acquaintance with Justin's account on Simon in the *Apology* 1.26 becomes apparent in chapter 13 of Tertullian's *Apology*. There Tertullian lists Simon alongside other humans who are worshiped as gods by pagans and in this way degrade the status of the divine. Tertullian criticises pagans for including Simon Magus into their Pantheon, 'giving him a statue and the title of Holy God'¹⁴⁵ which is almost a verbatim quote of Justin's account on the statue of Simon, whereas this episode is omitted by Irenaeus.¹⁴⁶

The most extensive description of Simonian heresy is provided in chapter 34 of *De Anima* which bases itself on Acts and *Adversus Haereses* of Irenaeus. The new features added to the portrayal of Simon by Tertullian are quite scarce and often deal with interpretation of a particular passage in the earlier texts. For example, Tertullian enhances the connection between the gnostic Simon of the Church Fathers and Simon of Acts by claiming that Simon bought Helen off slavery with the same money he tried to bribe Peter with to purchase the ability to impose the Holy Spirit on people.¹⁴⁷ Another new detail Tertullian introduced about Simon was the claim that he worshipped angels.¹⁴⁸ These two claims were used as the main argument of Hilgenfeld in favor of his theory that Tertullian actually relied on the *Syntagma* of Justin and not *Adv. Haer* of Irenaeus. According to him, *Syntagma* was the source of all the new details Tertullian introduced about Simon, although it seems plausible that these new details

¹⁴⁰ Hilgenfeld, A. *Ketzergeschichte*. 1884. Pp. 176-181.

¹⁴¹ Tertullian. *De Fuga* 12.

¹⁴² Tertullian. *De Anima* 57, *De Idolatria* 9.

¹⁴³ Tertullian. *De Anima* 57; *De Idolatria* 9.

¹⁴⁴ Ferreiro, A. *Simon Magus in Patristic, Medieval and Early Modern Traditions*. 2005. P. 136.

¹⁴⁵ Tertullian. *Apol*, 13.

¹⁴⁶ Justin *Apol*. 1.26.2.

¹⁴⁷ Tertullian. *Apol*. 13.

¹⁴⁸ Tertullian. *Praesc*. 9.

are in fact an interpretation of information provided by Acts and Irenaeus, as argued in the next section.

The cosmological myth

The description of the Simonian heresy by Tertullian closely resembles the one provided by Irenaeus in *Adv.Haer.* 1.23 with the exception of a few changes. The narrative starts with a description of the First Concept (*Prima Injectio*) who generates angels and archangels comprehending the will of the Father.¹⁴⁹ Although the creation of angels as sanctioned by the Father is already mentioned by Irenaeus, it might be more important in the account of Tertullian. This statement, according to which angels were a part of the Father's plan and not a mistake, can correlate with another statement made by Tertullian in *Praescriptione Haereticorum* 33, where he attributed Simon the worship of angels:

The doctrine, however, of Simon's sorcery, which inculcated the worship of angels, was itself actually reckoned among idolatries and condemned by the Apostle Peter in Simon's own person. (Praesc.33)

The question here is whether Tertullian meant by angels the gnostic archons or this has a different meaning independent of the cosmological myth described in *De Anima*.

Looking at this accusation in the polemic context, one can see that Tertullian was not the first Christian author who accused his religious opponent of worshipping angels.¹⁵⁰ The first and by far most famous case is Colossians 2:18 which attributes the worship of angels to a certain religious group - hence the name Colossian heresy.¹⁵¹ Scholarly interpretations of both 'angels' and 'worshipping' vary from invoking angels (messengers) in pagan mystery initiations to a form of sectarian gnosticised Judaic angel worship. Tertullian, however, is the first author to attribute worship of angels to a heretical group.¹⁵² This sort of accusation in an anti-heretical context is almost unique. Despite the fact that many heretical groups (including Simonians) were accused of attributing the creation of the world to angels, most Christian authors believed that heretics considered them ignorant and envious creatures and therefore could hardly worship them. Even Epiphanius who first recorded the existence of a group called Angelici was not completely sure about the origin of their name and suggested that worshipping angels could

¹⁴⁹ Tertullian. *De Anima* 34.

¹⁵⁰ Adolf Hilgenfeld (*Ketzergeschichte*, 1884. P.346) believed that veneration of angels was one of the features that united Simon and Dositheus, who initially belonged to the same religious group.

¹⁵¹ Col.2:18.

¹⁵² Dibelius, M. (in *The Isis Initiation in Apuleius and Related Initiatory Rites* in Francis F.O & Meeks W.A *Conflict at Colossae: A Problem in the Interpretation of Early Christianity Illustrated by Selected Modern Studies* (SBS 4), Rev.Ed. Missoula: Society of Biblical Literature and Scholars Press, 1975. Pp. 82ff) argued in favor of the influence of a pagan mystery cult on Colossian heresy. Lightfoot, J. (*The Colossian Heresy* in Francis, F.O. and Meeks, W.A. *Conflict at Colossae*. Missoula: Scholars Press. Pp.13-59) believed the heresy combined elements of sectarian Judaism and an early form of Gnosticism. F.O. Francis ("*Humility and angelic worship in Col 2:18.*" Pages 163-195 in *Conflict at Colossae: A Problem in the Interpretation of Early Christianity Illustrated by Selected Modern Studies*. Edited by Fred O. Francis and Wayne A. Meeks. *Sources for Biblical Study* 4. Rev. and enl. ed. Missoula: Society of Biblical Literature, 1975. Pp. 163-195) opted for the influence of Jewish merkabah mysticism. Arnold, C. (*The Colossian Syncretism - The Interface between Christianity and Folk Belief at Colossae*. Baker: GrandRapids, 1996) argued for the heresy being an example of syncretic religion sharing Christian, Judaic as well as pagan features.

be only one of the possible reasons (ascribing to themselves an angelic nature being the other).¹⁵³

Tertullian's accusations of angel worship are a debatable matter due to the absence of an obvious literary source of this information. Despite Tertullian's attribution of the world creation to angels in *De Anima* 57, he does not depart from the tradition in which angels, being ignorant and proud, captured and enslaved Helen.¹⁵⁴ This story basically repeats the account of Irenaeus, who portrayed angels as bringing mankind into bondage from which Simon released his followers. What makes the statement about Simonian worship of angels even more confusing is Tertullian's reference to Peter's criticism of Simon, which most likely derived from Acts. Since there is nothing even remotely hinting to the worship of angels in Acts, the two remaining possible sources are the *Apology* and *Adversus Haereses*. Assuming that Tertullian shared the opinion of Irenaeus concerning the status of angels in Simonianism, it is possible that he referred to Simonian magical practice of spirit-invoking (also described by Irenaeus) rather than to the gnostic cosmological myth. Whereas Justin mentions Simon as possessed by demons, Irenaeus makes a record of exorcisms, incantations and summoning of the supernatural creatures Paredri and Oniropompi, practiced by Simonians.¹⁵⁵ Also, Irenaeus directly connected Simon of Acts to the 2nd century Simonians.¹⁵⁶ So, it seems likely that Tertullian combined criticism of Simon by Peter and anti-magical context of Acts with a reinforced accusation of spirit incantations attributed to Simonians by Irenaeus.

Another important motive emphasized by Tertullian in *De Anima* is that of degradation. In addition to the degradation of the First Conception initially into Helen of Troy and then into a prostitute from Tyre, Tertullian pointed out the degradation motive in the Helen redemption myth.¹⁵⁷ He compared the redemption of Helen from Troy to her redemption from a brothel, and in this comparison portrayed Simon as a degraded form of Menelaus. In this new version of the myth a thousand ships that went to Troy to rescue Helen were substituted by a thousand pence paid by Simon 'which were more than enough to withdraw her from the stew'.¹⁵⁸ This motive of degradation can serve two purposes expressed in earlier patristic literature and in the works of Tertullian in particular: on one hand, the author emphasises the connection between pagan Greek thought and heresy, and on the other he demonstrates the latter as an inferior version of the former. Tertullian refers to this motive multiple times. For example, in *De Anima* 23 he argued that heretics abused the teaching of Plato for creating their doctrines, and in *Apology* 13 that they degrade their religion by including Simon into the pantheon. In this context it is very likely that the motive of degradation present in Tertullian's description of

¹⁵³ Epiphanius, *Panarion* 2. Anacephalaisis IV. Epiphanius, *Panarion* 2.60 - In chapter *Panarion* 2.60, dedicated to Angelici, Epiphanius added two more options: one that their name could have originated from the belief that angels created the world, and the second one according to which their name came from the city of Angelina. The only other author who with certainty ascribed the worship of angels to heretics is Augustine of Hippo. In *De Haeresibus* 39, partially based on *Panarion*, he states that Angelici are called so because they worship angels and leaves out other versions suggested by Epiphanius.

¹⁵⁴ Tertullian. *De Anima* 34.

¹⁵⁵ Justin. *Apol.* 1.26.2, Irenaeus. *Adv.Haer.* 1.23.4

¹⁵⁶ Irenaeus. *Adv.Haer.* 1.23.1-2.

¹⁵⁷ Tertullian. *De Anima* 34.

¹⁵⁸ Tertullian, *De Anima* 34.

Simon is connected to Tertullian's belief in the origin of heresies from classical philosophy, and that the idea of the degradation of Helena belongs to the same line of thinking.

Simon's followers

One of the most striking differences between the accounts of Irenaeus and Tertullian is the almost complete absence of Simonians in the latter: they are never called by name, and are mentioned only once as the 'dupes of Simon' in *De Anima* 57. This chapter is dedicated to the practice of summoning the dead souls which was attributed by Tertullian to several heretical groups. Tertullian mentioned Simonians among them and overruled this claim by saying that the souls cannot be dragged out from Hades by a demon used by heretics. Instead, he argued, heretics practiced imposture giving out demons for dead souls.¹⁵⁹

Tertullian paid slightly more attention to those followers of Simon who started teachings of their own. According to him, the line of successors of Simon includes Menander and Saturninus and thus resembles the line of succession provided by Irenaeus.¹⁶⁰ Tertullian calls Saturninus the disciple of Menander, thereby skipping Basilides who was a link between Menander and Saturninus according to Irenaeus. Both Tertullian and Irenaeus stand in contrast to Hippolytus who does not mention any of Simon's disciples by name, but briefly refers to Menander and in more detail to a certain Saturnilus in Book 7 of the *Elenchos*.¹⁶¹ There he points out the similarity between the teachings of Menander and Saturnilus but mentions neither any master/disciple relationship between them nor their relation to Simon. Basilides is also mentioned in the same chapter as a contemporary of Saturnilus, but again, no further connection between him and Saturnilus or Menander is recorded.

Conclusion:

In general, the account of Tertullian closely follows its main sources of information on Simonianism –the Book of Acts and *Adversus Haereses* of Irenaeus. One of the few puzzling episodes is Tertullian's claim about the worship of angels attributed to Simon. However, a closer look does not seem to reveal anything behind this claim except for a polemic accusation which also contradicts the information provided by Tertullian himself, since, following Irenaeus, he presented angels as ignorant and jealous creatures.¹⁶² Also, it is noticeable that Tertullian was not very interested in the followers of Simon and only made a brief notice of them. Tertullian's usage of sources shows that he was more interested in Simon as a magician than as a teacher of a particular doctrine. Whereas the narrative from *Adv. Haer* was retold only once in *De Anima* 34, all other references to him were made in the context of Acts. At the same time, similarly to Irenaeus, Tertullian does not distinguish between Simon of Acts and the Simon the Gnostic, whose followers were contemporaries of Tertullian.

¹⁵⁹ Tertullian. *De Anima*. 57.

¹⁶⁰ Compare Tertullian. *De Anima* 23 and Irenaeus *Adv. Haer.* 1.23.5- 1.24.

¹⁶¹ Hippolytus. *Elen.* 7.16.1.

¹⁶² Tertullian. *De Anima*. 34.

Despite the scarcity of the new information introduced by Tertullian to the narrative on Simon, he provided a change to the role of Simon in a broader anti-heretical context. According to Tertullian, heresies originated from Greek philosophy and Simonianism in particular was based on Platonism. To a certain degree Tertullian can be put in the same niche as Hippolytus who also opposed the thesis of Irenaeus, according to which heresies originated from Simon. One can see it as a change of perspective, according to which Simon lost the credit of primacy once the theory of the Greek philosophical origin of heretical teachings became more wide-spread. From this angle, Tertullian's portrayal of Helen's redemption from a brothel as a degraded version of the myth of Helen of Troy and Simon's presence in the pantheon as degradation of paganism can be seen as arguments reinforcing the connection between pagan Greek culture and heresy.

Chapter 6, Pseudo-Tertullian, *Against All Heresies*

The treatise *Against All Heresies* (*Adversus omnes haereses*) is a catalogue of thirty two heretical teachings which circulated attached to *Praescriptione Haereticorum* of Tertullian in the form of eight last chapters. However, Tertullian could hardly be its author, since the catalogue mentions Cataphrygians (Montanists) among heretics whereas Tertullian was a Montanist himself.¹⁶³ The work is traditionally dated to the beginning of the third century,¹⁶⁴ but the earliest text that is clearly based on it is the *Panarion* of Epiphanius which dates back to the end of the 4th century. It is also possible that Epiphanius and Pseudo-Tertullian had a common source of information and this is the reason why the lists of heresies and the order in which they are discussed are identical in both treatises.¹⁶⁵

Modern scholarship commonly accepts the theory, first brought forth by R. A. Lipsius in 1865, according to which the text of *Haer.* is to a high extent based on the lost *Syntagma* of Hippolytus.¹⁶⁶ The evidence for this theory is quite compelling: whereas Jerome and Eusebius refer to *Against All Heresies* as the work of Hippolytus, Photius¹⁶⁷ refers to the *Syntagma* of Hippolytus as a 'catalogue (*syntagma*) of thirty two heresies' which begins with Dositheus and ends with Noetians.¹⁶⁸ The fact that *Haer.* ends with Praxeans instead of Noetians is usually considered a minor point and there are multiple explanations of Pseudo-Tertullian's motivation for replacing one sect with another.¹⁶⁹

There is no consensus on the authorship of *Haer.* due to the lack of data and therefore very few suggestions have been made by scholars. In 1936 E. Schwartz suggested that it was Victorinus of Pettau who made a Latin translation of the Greek text of *Haer.* originally written whether by pope Zephyrinus or someone in his entourage.¹⁷⁰ The authorship of Victorinus (but not Zephyrinus) was also advocated by J. Quasten in *Chronica Tertulliana et Cypriana* where he argued that Victorinus used Hippolytus' *Syntagma* as the main source and also mentioned that Jerome attributed to Victorinus a work with the same title.¹⁷¹ Despite these arguments, the

¹⁶³ Haekkinen, S. "Ebionites." Pages 247-278 in *A Companion to Second-Century Christian 'Heretics'*. Edited by Antti Marjanen and Petri Luomanen. Leiden: Brill, 2008. P. 251.

¹⁶⁴ See Quasten, J. *Patrology, II: The Anti-Nicene Literature After Irenaeus*. Utrecht: Spectrum, 1953. P.164.

¹⁶⁵ Epiphanius. *Panarion* 57. For the history of research on *Against all heresies* and its relation to other ancient heresy catalogues see Isser, S. J. *The Dositheans: A Samaritan Sect in Late Antiquity*. Leiden: Brill, 1976. Pp.34ff

¹⁶⁶ Lipsius, R. A. *Quellenkritik*. 1865. Pp.33-36.

¹⁶⁷ Photius. *Bibliotheca* 121.

¹⁶⁸ Jerome, *Vir.* 3. 61, Eusebius. *Hist. Eccl.* 6.22.

¹⁶⁹ Heine, R.E. ("Hippolytus, Ps-Hippolytus and the Early Canons." Pages 142-151 in *The Cambridge History of Early Christian Literature*. Edited by Francis Young, Lewis Ayres and Andrew Louth. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004. P.146) believed that the author of *Adversus omnes haereses* replaced Noetians with Praxeans due to his acquaintance with *Adversus Praxeas* of Tertullian, the only other author to make a record of the sect. Tuomas Rasimus (*The Legacy of John: Second-Century Reception of the Fourth Gospel*. Supplements to Novum Testamentum 132. Leiden: Brill, 2010. P. 157) believed the change took place because both groups taught a similar doctrine based on patripassionism.

¹⁷⁰ Schwartz, E. (Zwei Predigten Hippolyts, SBAW zu Muenchen, Phil.hist.Abt.1936.3.38ff) – argued that *Haer.* was a Latin translation of a text written in Rome at the same time as *Ad.Praxean*.

¹⁷¹ Quasten J. *Patrology II*. 1953. Pp.412-413.

idea of Victorinus' authorship was not widely accepted by the academic community and was criticized among others by E. Kroymann in his commentary to *Haer.* in 1954.¹⁷²

Simon and his followers

Out of all the sources analysed in the chapters above, *Haer.* is the first one to mention Simon in the context where Christian heresies are opposed to Jewish ones. The author starts the chapter with a brief description of several Jewish heresies, starting with Dositheus, and then turns to those heretics "who have chosen to make the gospel the starting-point of their heresies"¹⁷³ and whom he discusses in more detail.

The list of Christian heresies starts with Simon Magus who is followed by a standard sequence of Menander, Saturninus and Basilides.¹⁷⁴ This list of Simon's disciples closely resembles the one suggested by Irenaeus in *Adv.Haer.* with the only difference being the sequence in which Basilides and Saturninus are mentioned: according to Irenaeus Saturninus follows Basilides, whereas Pseudo-Tertullian makes it the other way around.¹⁷⁵ Regardless of this, Pseudo-Tertullian's list is still closer to that of Irenaeus in comparison to Hippolytus, who does not mention the connection of any heretics to Simon, or Tertullian, who leaves Basilides out of the succession line. In general, borrowings from Irenaeus reappear throughout the whole catalogue, but these do not provide ample evidence to say whether Pseudo-Tertullian was the follower of Irenaeus or whether he just had access to a copy of *Adv.Haer.*¹⁷⁶ Nicolaus is the last heretic mentioned in the chapter and he is the only heretic not linked to Simon in any way apart from the fact that he also appears in the NT.¹⁷⁷ Here the author of *Haer.* also follows Irenaeus in linking Nicolaus the founder of the sect of Nicolaitans from the *Book of Revelation* to Nicolaus appointed one of the seven deacons in *Acts* 6:5.¹⁷⁸

Returning to the Jewish heresies, it should be noted that there is an early Christian tradition connecting Simon and Dositheus, first noted in a fragment of *Hypomnemata* by Hegesippus and preserved as a quote in *Historia Ecclesiastica* of Eusebius. Unlike Pseudo-Tertullian, Hegesippus listed both Dositheus and Simon among non-Christian heretics from whom various Christian heretical groups came into being (Menandrianists, Marcionists...etc.).¹⁷⁹ The author of the most extensive study on Dositheans, S. J. Isser, believed that Pseudo-Tertullian tradition was independent of Hegesippus and denied the possibility of historical connection between the two as well as influence of Hegesippus on the narrative in *Haer.*¹⁸⁰ Although modern scholarship

¹⁷² Schwartz, Eduard. *Zwei Predigten Hippolyts*. München: Verlag der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1936. P. 1400.

¹⁷³ Pseudo-Tertullian. *Haer.* 1.1.

¹⁷⁴ Pseudo-Tertullian. *Haer.* 1.2-4.

¹⁷⁵ Irenaeus. *Adv.Haer.* 1.24.1; Pseudo-Tertullian. *Haer.* 1.4-5.

¹⁷⁶ Isser, S. J. *The Dositheans: A Samaritan Sect in Late Antiquity*. 1976. P.35.

¹⁷⁷ Revelation 2:6; 2:15.

¹⁷⁸ Irenaeus *Adv.Haer.* 1.26.3, Pseudo-Tertullian *Haer.* 1.6.

¹⁷⁹ Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* 4.22.5 Isser believed that a list could list specifically Samaritan heretics provided that other sects in the list were mentioned as Jewish or Samaritan in other literary sources. See Isser. *Dositheans*. 1976. P. 14-16.

¹⁸⁰ Isser, *Dositheans*, 1976. P. 38.

shows no consensus concerning the historical connection between Simon and Dositheus, the authors advocating the existence of this connection are definitely in the minority: J. Weiss argued that both Simon and Dositheus represented Samaritan messianic movements and Kurt Rudolph even accepted the statement, made in the Pseudo-Clementines, according to which Simon was a disciple of Dositheus.¹⁸¹ Since Simon is presented in two different contexts in the *Hypomnemata* and *Haer.* (*Hypomnemata*: Simon as a non-Christian heretic and a contemporary of Dositheus; *Haer.*: Simon as a Christian heretic and Dositheus as a founder of Sadducees [app.3rd century BC]), I believe it is not very likely that the latter source relied on the former. Despite this, it is possible that both treatises contributed to the association of Simon with Dositheus which resulted in their later portrayal as a teacher and disciple in the *Pseudo-Clementines*.¹⁸² Pseudo-Tertullian created a link between Dositheus and Simon by mentioning Dositheus as the first in the line of the Jewish heretics and Simon - of Christian ones.¹⁸³ It is true that the author might have recorded both lists solely according to the chronological principle, but this parallelism, whether intentional or accidental, might have contributed to the further development of the theme.¹⁸⁴ This argument can also be reinforced by the fact that Pseudo-Tertullian is also the first author who specifies the Samaritan origin of Dositheus,¹⁸⁵ thereby making him a compatriot of Simon.

Simonian Myth

The short description of Simon's heresy in *Haer.* is basically a brief summary of the account of Irenaeus in *Adv.Haer.* 1.23. It starts similarly with the reference to the narrative from *Acts* 8 and continues with the description of some aspects of Simonian heresy. In *Haer.* Simon has a new title: according to the author, he calls himself the Supreme Virtue (*summa virtus*) which is explained as a synonym of the Supreme God (*summus deus*).¹⁸⁶ Other Latin texts mention different titles of Simon's self-manifestation: the *Acts* call him 'something great' (*aliquis magnus*);¹⁸⁷ the Latin translation of Irenaeus says that he called himself 'the loftiest of all powers' - *sublimissima virtus*.¹⁸⁸ The adjective 'summus' was used in Simonian context only once - in reference to the Great Power (*summa potestas*) by whose compassion the first man acquired the spark of life in Tertullian's *De Anima*¹⁸⁹. However, it is more likely that the entity referred to by Tertullian is the female counterpart of Simon, the First Thought, rather than the Supreme God himself, since in gnostic traditions it was usually a female character who was

¹⁸¹ Weiss, J., Knopf, R. and Grant, F. C. "The history of Primitive Christianity." London: Macmillan, 1937. P. 160 in *Quispel, Gilles. Studies in Gnosticism and Hellenistic Religions: Presented to Gilles Quispel on the Occasion of His 65th Birthday.* Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1981. Rudolph, K. 'Gnosis un Gnostizismus, ein Forschungsbericht'. *Theologische Rundschau.* (1973):289-360.

¹⁸² In *Hom.*2.24 Dositheus and Simon were the followers of John the Baptist, whereas in *Rec.*1.54 Dositheus is mentioned as a predecessor of Simon.

¹⁸³ Pseudo-Tertullian. *Haer.* 1.1-2.

¹⁸⁴ For more references to Simon and Dositheus in the same context see Origen *C.Celsum.* 6.11, Pseudo-Clementine *Hom.*2.24, *Rec.* 1.54.

¹⁸⁵ Pseudo-Tertullian. *Haer.* 1.1.

¹⁸⁶ Pseudo-Tertullian *Haer.* 1.2.

¹⁸⁷ *Acts* 8:9 (*Biblia Sacra Vulgata* 5th ed.).

¹⁸⁸ Pseudo-Tertullian. *Haer.*1.2.

¹⁸⁹ Tertullian, *De Anima* 23.

involved with the first man getting the spirit of life through the demiurge, and never the Father himself.¹⁹⁰

Another new term that Pseudo-Tertullian introduced was the name of Simon's female companion whom he describes as an erring daemon (*daemon se errant*) called Wisdom (Sapientia).¹⁹¹ This is rather peculiar since the term Wisdom, either as Sapientia or as Sophia, has not been used in reference to the female counterpart of Simon before Pseudo-Tertullian. Several modern scholars claim, therefore, that there was a developing connection between the Ennoia and Sophia myths in Simonianism. According to the point of view represented by a.o. Fossum and Lüdemann, Simonian myth was influenced by the Jewish Sophia myth at a certain stage of its existence.¹⁹² Karlmann Beyschlag also argued in favor of confluence of the two myths- that of the First Thought Ennoia and the fallen Sophia.¹⁹³ This approach is supported by the fact that the term Wisdom, despite its early appearance in gnostic terminology, was not applied to the Simonian myth until the 3rd century CE and therefore the merging of the two myths should have been gradual.

The treatise mentions two other aspects of the Simonian myth which clearly originate from *Adv.Haer.* of Irenaeus. First, it is the claim that the world was created by the angels of Simon (a statement discussed in more detail in chapter on Tertullian)¹⁹⁴ and a docetic claim that Simon 'had not suffered among the Jews, but was as if he had suffered'.¹⁹⁵ The original quote says that Simon suffered in Judaea, but in Pseudo-Tertullian this was changed into 'among Jews', which can be just a paraphrase, but could also refer to the statement made by Irenaeus earlier according to which Simon appeared among Jews as the Son, among Samaritans as the Father and among other nations as the Holy Spirit.¹⁹⁶

Conclusion

Analysing Pseudo-Tertullian's *Adversus omnes haereses*, the textual references to Irenaeus can hardly be overlooked. The account on Simon is retold closely to *Adv.Haer* and the idea of Simon as the first heretic can also be traced back to Irenaeus. At the same time the context of two types of heresies, Jewish and Christian, (the former starting with Dositheus and the latter with Simon) is unique. Although the juxtaposition of two kinds of heresies can be found earlier in the writings of Hegesippus, one can see that in *Haer.*, unlike in *Hypomnemata*, Simon is mentioned as the first Christian heretic in opposition to Dositheus. The direct connection between Simon

¹⁹⁰ See e.g. Irenaeus, *Adv.Haer.* 1.30.6; 1.5.5-6. On the functions of Sophia-Prouneikos in gnostic creation myths see Pasquier, Anne. "Prouneikos. A Colorful Expression to Designate Wisdom" Pages 47-70 in *Images of the Feminine in Gnosticism*. Edited by Karen King. Philadelphia: Fortress Press. 1988.

¹⁹¹ Pseudo-Tertullian. *Haer.* 1.2.

¹⁹² Lüdemann, G. *Untersuchungen*. 1975. Pp.70-71. Fossum, J. E. "The Simonian Sophia Myth." *Studi e materiali di Storia delle Religioni* 53. (1987):185-197.

¹⁹³ Fossum, J. E. "The Simonian Sophia Myth." (1987): 185-197.

Haenchen E. and Krause, M. *Die Gnosis*. 1969. P.40. Quispel, G. "From Mythos to Logos." (1973): 323-340.

Beyschlag, K. *Simon Magus und die Christliche Gnosis*. 1975. P.135ff.

¹⁹⁴ See Chapter 5. Simon in Tertullian's *De Anima* and other works. Subtitle 'The cosmological myth'.

¹⁹⁵ Pseudo-Tertullian. *Haer.* 1.2 compare with Irenaeus *Adv.Haer.* 1.23.2.

¹⁹⁶ Irenaeus. *Adv.Haer.* 1.23.1.

and Dositheus is not present, but there is a tendency traced from *Hypomnemata* to list them in the same context which creates a parallel between the two. Although the appropriation of Simon's title as the father of all heresies by a Jewish sectarian is insufficient to claim that this case is a part of the increased anti-Jewish polemic in the third century, it is still interesting to look from this perspective at the fact that the parallel between the Ennoia and Helen of Troy disappeared from the Simonian myth. This tradition couldn't have been unknown to the author of *Haer.* who had access to *Adv.Haer.*, but he still decided not only to leave it out of his treatise, but to change the name of the female companion of Simon from the First Thought to a clearly more Jewish sounding Wisdom. In perspective, the narrative on Simon in *Adversus omnes haereses* is more interesting for research in the context of more general developments in the anti-heretical discourse, to which contributes the context of Jewish sects, rather than solely in the context of other writings on Simon.

Chapter 7. Simon in *Contra Celsum* and other writings of Origen

Being one of the most productive and influential Ante-Nicene Christian writers, Origen is at the same time one of the few theologians of that period who were not canonized. Despite a great influence which his teaching had during his life and after his death, there were two anti-Origenist crises – in the beginning and the end of the 4th century and in the middle of the 6th when the purity of the Christian doctrine of Origen's works was questioned and some of his views were considered heretical and platonic.¹⁹⁷ These crises resulted in an edict issued by Justinian after the Synod of Constantinople which anathematized some of Origen's doctrines and, although it is questionable whether the 5th Universal Council ratified it, this led to many of Origen's works being destroyed or edited.¹⁹⁸

Unlike most other authors discussed in this thesis, Origen's main focus was not apologetics and heresiology. He was one of the few authors whose works covered a wide range of disciplines and therefore heresies were never discussed by him in great detail, although some information about them is scattered throughout his works. The specifics of Origen's anti-heretical polemics can be characterized by an attempt to rationalize his arguments and prove the inconsistency of heretical teachings with the help of reason.¹⁹⁹ As K. Rudolph pointed out, this rationalization together with the Platonist belief in the preexistence of souls in a way united Origen with the gnostic teachings he opposed.²⁰⁰

The period in which Origen lived may also have affected his treatment of heresies. In the middle of the 3rd century when he wrote his *Contra Celsum* he was the gradual decline of heretical teachings and this was even noted by Origen himself.²⁰¹ These historical circumstances on the one hand explain his lack of interest in the subject and on the other hand make him one of the last authors to write against heresies in the time of their actual existence.²⁰² The uniqueness of facts about Simonianism provided by him also suggests that he was probably able to get information through personal experience rather than based on the literary tradition of other authors.²⁰³

Origen's Sources on Simon:

The most detailed references to Simon Magus are made by Origen in his largest preserved work *Against Celsus* (Greek: *Κατὰ Κέλσου*, Lat: *Contra Celsum*). This apologetic treatise was written in 248 C.E. in Caesaria Maritima as a response to an anti-Christian work 'The True Word' (Λόγος Ἀληθῆς) written by a Middle Platonist named Celsus in the 2nd century C.E. Apart from *Contra*

¹⁹⁷ The most controversial views attributed to Origen by his opponents were believes in the preexistence of souls and universal salvation, however, it is questionable to what extent Origen actually supported these ideas, especially universal salvation. For more details read Scott, M. S. M. *Journey Back to God: Origen on the Problem of Evil*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2012.

¹⁹⁸ Scott, M. S. M. *Journey Back to God: Origen on the Problem of Evil*. New York: Oxford University Press. 2012. Pp. 49ff.

¹⁹⁹ For more information on the biography and works of Origen see Quasten, J. *Patrology II*. 1953 pp.37ff.

²⁰⁰ Rudolph, K. *Gnosis*, 1984. P. 17.

²⁰¹ Origen. *C.Celsum*. 1.57; *C.Celsum*. 6.11.

²⁰² The last author who referred to Simonians as a still existing group was Eusebius in *Hist. Eccl.*2.1.12.

²⁰³ Isser. *Dositheans*. P. 30: "There is no reason to assume Origen used any other source apart from the Acts and his own experience."

Celsus, Simon is also briefly mentioned in Origen's Commentaries on the gospels of Matthew and John.²⁰⁴

Probably the most striking part about Origen's account on Simon is that he does not seem to use any other literary sources on Simon apart from Acts. In the works of Origen Simon is portrayed as a 1st century messianic leader who proclaimed himself the Great Power of God.²⁰⁵ At the same time Origen had knowledge about certain connection of Simon and Dositheus and mentioned them as contemporaries first in the *Commentaries on Matthew* and then in *Contra Celsus*.²⁰⁶ This raises some questions about the origin of this knowledge. The only three known texts which mention Simon together with Dositheus are *Hypomnemata* of Hegesippus, *Against All Heresies* of Pseudo-Tertullian and *Pseudo-Clementines*. Whereas *Haer.* can be ruled out as the source due to the fact that it makes Dositheus the founder of the Sadducees and therefore places him much earlier than Simon, *Hypomnemata* and *Pseudo-Clementines* remain two possible options.

The idea of a relation between *Pseudo-Clementines* and Origen is often debated in the academic community. O. Cullmann argued that Origen should have had access to a document which was later used by the author of the Pseudo-Clementine literature. His argumentation was based on the connection between Simon and Dositheus made in both traditions and on the number of 30 followers attributed by Origen to both Simonians and Dositheans.²⁰⁷ But whereas in the version of Origen this number is the result of the sects' decline, *Pseudo-Clementines* provide a more symbolic explanation of it according to which 30 followers have to do with 30 days of the lunar calendar and in this way oppose the 12 Apostles and the symbolism of the 12 solar months.²⁰⁸ Moreover, unlike the author of *Pseudo-Clementines*, Origen refers to Simonians and Dositheans as two separate sects and does not mention any relationship between the two.²⁰⁹ Out of Cullman's arguments, the one about 30 followers seems the hardest to argue with –even if we rule out the possibility of literary borrowings there could be an oral tradition which was used by both Origen and Pseudo-Clement.

Hypomnemata, as opposed to *Pseudo-Clementines*, does not conflict with the narrative of Origen at any point. Just like Origen, Hegesippus mentions Simon and Dositheus as non-Christian heretics who, most likely, were contemporaries but not necessarily connected with each other.²¹⁰ The idea of Origen's usage of *Hypomnemata* is supported by Stanley Isser who argued that the list of Hegesippus which listed Simon together with Dositheus, contained Samaritan heretical groups, whereas Origen referred to Dositheus as a 1st century Samaritan.²¹¹

Simon and Other Heretical Teachings

²⁰⁴ Origen. *Comm. 6.17. Com on John 1.38 Matt.24.4*. The latter two are preserved only in Latin version. Found in: Origenes, *Werke XI. Commentarius in Matthaeum II*. Edited by Erich Klostermann and Ernst Benz, Ernst. Die Griechischen Christlichen Schriftsteller 38, Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1933.

²⁰⁵ Origen. *C.Celsus*. 5.62; 6.11, *Com. Matt.24.4*.

²⁰⁶ Origen. *Com.Matt. 24.4, Contra Celsus 1.57*.

²⁰⁷ Cullmann, Oscar. "Le problème littéraire et historique du roman Pseudo-Clementin: étude sur le rapport entre le gnosticisme et le judéo-christianisme." *Études d'histoire et de philosophie religieuses* 23. Paris: Alcan, 1930.

²⁰⁸ Pseudo-Clement. *Homilies 2.23*.

²⁰⁹ Origen. *C.Celsus*. 6.11.

²¹⁰ Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* 4.22.5.

²¹¹ Isser, *Dositheans*, 1976. P.33.

As mentioned above, Simon Magus is first briefly mentioned in the *Commentaries* of Origen where he is listed together with Dositheus.²¹² Later on, in *C.Celsus*.1.57 Origen gives a more detailed description on Simon while refuting the argument of Celsus who compared Christ to other messianic figures of the 1st century. In total, Origen mentions four of them: Theudas, Judas, Dositheus and Simon, and creates a distinction between their sects and Christianity on the basis of their small number of followers in comparison with catholic Christians. All false prophets apart from Dositheus are first mentioned in the Book of Acts²¹³ and none of them is referred to by Origen as a Christian heretic. On the contrary, Dositheus is mentioned as a Samaritan, whereas religious convictions of Theudas and Judas are not specified. However, both Theudas and Judas are also mentioned by Josephus in *Hist.Ant*, and in his version Judas of Galilee was not a religious leader at all but the leader of a rebellion which started as a reaction to the introduction of the *fiscus judaicus*. Theudas, on the other hand, is described by Josephus as a religious leader and a magician who was executed in the times of Cuspius Fadus.²¹⁴ Based on this information we can see that the probability that Origen considered Simon a Christian heretic is almost non-existent. Moreover, this context suggests that Origen did not seem to view Simon a magician, but as a messianic leader.

There is another teaching which Origen connects to Simonians but, unlike other groups, not on the basis of messianic claims. In *Contra Celsus* 5.62 Origen mentions a certain group called Hellenians which worships Simon's consort Helen and is closely associated with Simonians. This is the only place where Origen manifests his knowledge of the existence of Helen, moreover, he is the only ancient author who makes a record of this sect. The only sect with a relatively similar name – Hellenians, is mentioned in the *Dialogue with Trypho* of Justin as one of seven Jewish sects.²¹⁵ Out of all the theories about the origin of this name, almost none connects the name Hellenians with Helenians or Helen. The two most popular theories are: that Hellenians were a Hellenized group of Greek-speaking Jews,²¹⁶ or the term 'Hellenians' was Justin's misspelling for Hellelians, a name coming from the patriarch Ellel mentioned by Epiphanius in *Panarion*.²¹⁷ Neither of these options goes well together with the explanation provided by Origen and the only attempt to bridge Hellenians with Simonians was made by J. Danielou, whose approach did not gain any popularity. He argued that Hellenians were a Judeo-Christian sect of which Simon was a member before starting a teaching of his own.²¹⁸ An alternative view on the Origen's Hellenians was provided by K. Beyschlag in his *Simon Magus und die Christliche Gnosis* who suggested that Origen's mention of both Simonians and Hellenians is an example of reduplication which he also used in case of Carpocrations and their Roman branch named Marcellinians after its founder Marcellina.²¹⁹ This does not seem very likely seeing that the name Hellenians as well as its connection to the Simonian Helen are presented by Origen as mentioned by Celsus. In his reaction to this statement Origen makes reference only to Simonians and leaves Hellenians (and Helen) out. This fact together with the absence of references to Simon's consort in other works create no ground to suspect that Origen was acquainted with the Simon-Helen tradition.

²¹² Origen. *Com.Matt.* 24.4.

²¹³ Theudas and Judas - Acts 5:36-37, Simon - Acts 8:9-25.

²¹⁴ Josephus. *Antiquities* 18.3.ff; *War.* 2.118 (Judas), *Antiquities* 20.97ff (Theudas).

²¹⁵ Justin, *Dial. Tryph.* 80.4.

²¹⁶ See Pearson, B. A. *Gnosticism, Judaism, and Egyptian Christianity*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990. Pp. 20-21.

²¹⁷ Epiphanius. *Panarion* 30.4.3-5. See also Boyarin, D. "Justin Martyr Invents Judaism." *Church History* 70 (2001): 427-461, p.453. Barnard, L. W. *Justin Martyr: His Life and Thought*. London: Cambridge University Press, 1967. P.50.

²¹⁸ Danielou, J. *Théologie Du Judéo-Christianisme*. Paris: Desclée, 1958. P.85.

²¹⁹ Beyschlag, K. *Simon Magus und die Christliche Gnosis*, 1974. Pp. 68-69.

Simon and his teaching

The picture of Simon created by Origen in his works has not much in common with the works of other anti-heretical writers. First of all unlike all of them he clearly denies any connection of Simon's teaching with Christianity:

...the Simonians do not at all acknowledge Jesus to be the Son of God, but term Simon the power of God. (Contra Celsum 5.62)

Every time Simon is mentioned, he is referred to as a false prophet calling himself the Power of God.²²⁰ Origen makes another reference to Acts writing about Simon's attempt to acquire the power of giving the Holy Spirit.²²¹ Moreover, speaking about the state of Simonianism in his days he referred to Acts as the only literary source of information on Simon:

'while in the rest of the world, through which he desired to spread the glory of his name, you find it nowhere mentioned. And where it is found, it is found quoted from the Acts of the Apostles; so that it is to Christians that he owes this mention of himself, the unmistakable result having proved that Simon was in no respect divine.' (Contra Celsum 1.57)

Although the fact that Origen did not manifest his knowledge of other sources does not prove that he was not acquainted with them, it is rather peculiar that all the information he provided on Simon came whether from Acts or is completely unique. E.g. Origen's reference to Simon as a messianic figure together with Theudas and Judas can be a compilation straight from Acts, but such combination of facts as non-Christian character of Simon's teaching, 30 followers and the existence of Helenians does not derive from any known source.

A completely new piece of information about the social life of Simonians concerns their acceptance of pagan rituals. Origen mentions that Simon allowed his followers to participate in pagan worship in order to avoid persecution:

'in order to gain over to himself many followers, Simon freed his disciples from the danger of death, which the Christians were taught to prefer, by teaching them to regard idolatry as a matter of indifference. But even at the beginning of their existence the followers of Simon were not exposed to persecution.' (Contra Celsum 6.11)

This fragment explains the words of Justin who complains in his *Apology* that Simon and his followers are, unlike Christians, not in any way persecuted by the Roman authorities.²²²

The last major point Origen makes about Simonians concerns their decline in the middle of the 3rd century. In *C.Celsum*. 1.57 he mentions that there were around 30 followers of Simon left in Palestine and that this was the last place where they were to be found. In *C.Celsum*. 6.11 he says that Simonians were nowhere to be found throughout the world. Out of these two options the first one looks more persuasive due to the precision with which Origen states the number of Simonians, but at the same time it is discredited by the fact that in *C.Celsum* 6.11 he says the same thing about Dositheans. Basing himself on this information, Oscar Cullmann argued that

²²⁰ Acts 8:10.

²²¹ See Origen. *Comm. John* 1.38, 6.17, *C.Celsum*.5.62.

²²² Justin. *Apology* 1.26.

there was a connection between Simonians and Dositheans, and that Origen was acquainted with an early version of *Pseudo-Clementines*.²²³ Contrary to this position, Isser was critical of any connection between the sources and attributed the origin of number 30 whether to a hearsay or wishful thinking of Origen.²²⁴ In either case Origen witnesses the decline of the Simonians and other early Christian heresies. He uses this as an argument against the credibility of their faith in comparison to Catholic Christianity which by that time had enough followers to significantly outnumber other messianic and gnostic religious movements.²²⁵

Conclusion

Out of all patristic sources mentioned above, the information provided by Origen on Simon seems to be the most independent from the anti-heretical discourse. Although some of the information he provides can be traced either to the Book of Acts or possibly to *Hypomnemata*, the general picture he draws is very different from that of other patristic writers. According to Origen, in the middle of the 3rd century Simonians were a messianic Judaic sect on the edge of extinction. No reference is made either to gnostic or to the magical aspects of the Simon and his teaching. It seems that by the time when Origen wrote *Contra Celsum* Gnosticism had already started to lose its status as a major threat to catholic Christians.

The most questionable aspect of Origen's account concerns Simon's connection to Dositheus. Although *Hypomnemata* could be the source of information for Origen on the matter of non-Christian nature of Simon's teaching and its similarity or connection to the teaching of Dositheus, the origin of the number of followers which is the same for Dositheans and Simonians remains a mystery. Taking into consideration that Origen also knew about the practice of Simonians to take part in pagan rituals, it is possible that the number of followers originated from the same source, most likely a hearsay. Another controversial aspect is Origen's record of the sect of Helenians, although Origen did not claim to know anything about this sect and reacted to the words of Celsus. Since no other source mentions this group, it could be the mistake of Celsus who misread or misspelled the word Hellenians and secondarily attributed to it Simonian etymology.

Basically, Origen's account on one hand provides a return to the earliest tradition about Simon, namely the Book of Acts, and on the other is filled with new information from independent sources which was not recorded by other anti-heretical writers. He should be also viewed as the witness of the waning of Simonianism and therefore one of the last authors who was able to use his personal experience as a source.

²²³ Cullmann, O. "Le problème littéraire et historique du roman Pseudo-Clementin: étude sur le rapport entre le gnosticisme et le judéo-christianisme". *Études d'histoire et de philosophie religieuses* 23. Paris: Alcan, 1930. Pp. 12-19

²²⁴ Isser, S. J. *The Dositheans: A Samaritan Sect in Late Antiquity*. 1976. P. 30.

²²⁵ Origen. *C.Celsum* 1.57; 6:11.

Conclusions

To conclude my research I would like to briefly sum up the traditions about Simon Magus present in the literary sources I have analysed.

Looking back at the main body of my research we can see that **Acts of the Apostles** definitely played the most important role in shaping the role of Simon in patristic literature. All studied authors made reference to the account in Acts and referred to the sect of Simonians as deriving from the same Simon who tried to buy the Holy Spirit from Peter and John. The Book of Acts is the source from which the two main characteristics of Simon, that of a religious leader and that of a magician, come from. Having compared the narrative from Acts 8 to other narratives in the NT, I have also argued that Luke saw Simon in a way as a competitor to Christ, and therefore this tradition is not the invention of the Church Fathers and should be traced back to Simon's appearance in Acts. Despite this, the narrative in Acts 8 does not manifest any influence of Christianity or Gnosticism on Simon's teaching and in this respect should be separated from the later patristic sources. Another characteristic given by Luke to Simon but not elaborated on in detail by other authors is that of a back-sliding convert, someone who despite his conversion to Christianity stayed corrupt. Simon's conversion was mentioned only by Irenaeus and later repeated only by Hippolytus, but neither of them paid much attention to it.²²⁶ Basically, Simon of Acts is an obscure episodic figure whose role can be interpreted as that of a Samaritan messianic leader, but also as that of a mere magician.

Starting from the narrative of **Justin** in the 1st *Apology*, Simon acquires several new characteristics. First of all he is described as having a consort named Helen who used to be a prostitute and whom Simon calls his first conception – Ennoia. The followers of Simon are said to call themselves Christians but unlike catholic Christians they are not persecuted by Roman authorities. Another characteristic of Simon concerns him being recognized as god by the Romans, a conclusion based on Justin's erroneous attribution of the statue of a Sabine god Semo Sancus to Simon. Apart from that Justin is also the first author to accuse Simonians of cannibalism and libertinism though he does not elaborate on this and manifests uncertainty about the authenticity of these accusations. On a more general scale, Justin is the founder of the anti-heretical discourse on Simon whose followers are seen as competitors and a threat to the proto-Orthodox Christianity.

Later in the 2nd century C.E. **Irenaeus** followed the tradition started by Justin Martyr and provided the most influential and informative account on Simon. Despite the fact that the lost *Syntagma* of Justin is often considered to be his source, Irenaeus may have added some information himself. The most important change concerns the role of Simon as the father of all heresies from whom all other teachings came in existence. Irenaeus introduces a succession line of heretics which starts with Simon and is followed by Menander, Basilides and Saturninus. Indirectly Simon also influences the heresies of Cerdo and his disciple Marcion. Following the tradition started by Justin, Irenaeus applies more Christian aspects to Simon's teaching, such as Trinitarian thought or calling Simon's consort Helen 'the lost sheep'. Apart from this, Irenaeus

²²⁶ Irenaeus. *Adv.Haer.* 1.23.1 Hippolytus. *Elen.* 6.20.2

claims that Simon's followers had a docetic belief in Simon (Christ) as not suffering on the cross and only seeming to suffer. Developing the characteristics of Simon's First Conception - Helen, Irenaeus draws a parallel between her and Helen of Troy. He also mentions Stesichorus thereby manifesting his acquaintance with the myth according to which Helen did not go to Troy, but her phantom was sent there instead. Also, Irenaeus reinforced the link between Simonianism and paganism by claiming that Simon and Helen were associated with Jupiter and Minerva. This parallelism most likely alludes to the pagan myth about Minerva's birth from the head of Jupiter, in a way similar to the 'birth' of the First Conception from Simon. Unlike Justin, Irenaeus is much more detailed about the practice of magic by Simonians. He makes detailed references to the love charms they make and spirits they communicate with. In my research I have argued that demonstration of the evil goals which Simonians tried to pursue with magic was a way for Irenaeus to distinguish between magic and miracle which in his case lied in the intentions of those who carried out these actions.

The most important change applied by **Hippolytus** to the picture of Simon Magus created by Irenaeus is a shift of perspective from seeing Simon as the first heretic to heresy deriving from ancient Greek philosophy. Although Irenaeus already mentioned pagan influence on the appearance of heresies, Hippolytus made this statement much more pronounced by claiming that all heresies have root in various pagan practices. Moreover, even in this framework Hippolytus did not view Simon as the first heretic giving the credit of primacy to Naassenes. Hippolytus' perspective on the teaching of Simon was strongly shaped by the document *The Great Revelation (Apophysis Megale)* which he believed to be Simonian. According to this document the originative principle on Earth was fire and Hippolytus argued this was an example of combined plagiarism of the teaching of Heraclitus and Deuteronomy 4:24. In the chapter dedicated to the account of Hippolytus I have doubted the relation of AM to Simonianism and argued it contained more details in common with the Valentinian myth. Apart from the AM, Hippolytus had at least two more sources of information, one being *Adversus Haereses* of Irenaeus and another probably deriving from the oral tradition on Simon. In *Elen.* 6.19 Hippolytus closely follows the narrative of Simon adding several new details to the portrait of Helen and Simonian libertinism which according to him was of a ritualistic nature. The narrative which I assume to originate from the oral tradition describes the duel between Simon and Peter in Rome where each of them tried to prove the superiority over the other one. Apart from the *Elenchos*, the references to such a duel are made in the *Acts of Peter* and *Pseudo-Clementines*, however this particular version where Simon dies after failing to raise being buried alive is unique in Early Christian literature.

Hippolytus' argument about the origin of heresies from pagan practices was supported by **Tertullian** who believed that heresies resulted from Christian ideas being contaminated by pagan ideas. However, unlike Hippolytus, Tertullian believed Simonians were one of the groups affected by Platonism and not by the teaching of Heraclitus. Tertullian's sources on Simon were most likely *Acts* and *Adversus Haereses* of Irenaeus. It should be noted that Tertullian, unlike earlier authors, made most of his references to Simon in the context of the *Acts* and viewed him as a magician rather than a gnostic leader. In various works Tertullian brought such charges

against Simonians as worshipping angels and giving out the act of summoning demons for talking to the dead. Simon as a gnostic leader was approached by Tertullian in detail only in the *De Anima* and his account closely resembled the narrative of Irenaeus. The only contribution of Tertullian consisted in the reinforcement of the degradation motive according to which heresy is a degraded form of philosophy. He exemplifies this argument with the story of Simon and his redemption of Helen from a brothel in Tyre being a degraded version of Menelaus and his redemption of Helen from Troy. The motive of degradation is also present in *Apology* 13, where Tertullian argues that by including Simon in their Pantheon pagans degrade their religion.

The account on Simon in *Adversus omnes haereses* also uses Irenaeus as a source, but it is also the first of the researched sources which mentions Simon in the same context as Dositheus. Basically, **Pseudo-Tertullian** juxtaposed Simon as the first Christian heretic to Dositheus as the first Jewish heretic. Simon and Dositheus were earlier mentioned together only by Hegesippus but there neither of them was listed as a Christian heretic. Another interesting detail in this account is the name used by Pseudo-Tertullian for Simon's consort: instead of referring to her as the First Thought (Ennoia) or the Forethought (Epinoia), following the tradition started by Justin, he called her Sapientia. This is either the result of confluence of the Ennoia myth with the Sophia myth or a deliberate change that could manifest an early stage of shifting from anti-heretical polemic to anti-Jewish in patristic literature.

The last of the researched sources –**Origen** – returns in his works to the description of Simon from Acts. He mentions Simon as a 1st century messianic leader alongside Dositheus, Theudas and Judas the Galilean. Although the latter two are present in the Book of Acts, Dositheus is not, which could point to Origen's acquaintance with *Hypomnemata* of Hegesippus' where Dositheus and Simon are mentioned as non-Christian heretics. Apart from this, Origen does not seem to have any knowledge of other patristic sources on Simon which is manifested in his silence on Helen. Despite the arguments that Origen could have had access to a source which was later used by the author of *Pseudo-Clementines*, I tend to think that his knowledge of the number of Simonians, as well as about the fact that they practiced pagan worship to avoid persecution, originated from hearsay.

Looking back at the sources, one could see how the portrayal of Simon changed from the 1st to the middle of the 3rd century CE. Presented as a magician and most likely a religious leader in Acts 8, Simon turned into a Christian heretic in the writings of Justin and stayed in this role in the works of Irenaeus, Hippolytus, Tertullian and Pseudo-Tertullian. It should be noticed, however, that chronologically descriptions of Simon as heretic are tied to a rather narrow time span: from the 2nd century C.E. to the first half of the 3rd century, the period when gnostic heresies prospered. Already in the writings of Tertullian one can notice that he is more interested in magical powers of Simon and Simonians rather than their teaching, which could derive either from the absence of Simonians in North Africa or could indicate the decline of the group. As we can see from the *Elenchos* of Hippolytus, there was another tradition on Simon, existing parallel to the patristic one. It is preserved in the form of literary fiction in various apocryphal texts and most likely owes its origin to the oral tradition. In this tradition Simon was presented as a powerful magician and opponent of Peter. Although this tradition most likely

also derived from Acts, it exploited the magical and anti-Christian aspects of Simon, but not the gnostic one. Finally, in the work of Origen we can see that he also neglected the gnostic tradition on Simon and, referring solely to Acts, portrayed Simon as a Jewish messianic leader who was in a way a competitor of Christ, but who lost the battle to Christianity alongside other leaders of Jewish messianic cults.

Basically, we can see that patristic literature on Simon contains three ways of portraying him – as a non-Christian religious leader, as a Christian heretic and as a magician. These characteristics can be combined in most literary sources but are still traceable. Whereas Simon's role as a Christian heretic was popular only in a short period, Simon as a magician existed parallel to it and reappeared in patristic writings in the 3rd century. Simon's role as a Jewish/Samaritan religious leader can be guessed in Acts and reappears in the writings of Origen when Gnosticism has almost ceased to exist. Also, Origen is the first author who openly compares Christ and Simon in order to demonstrate superiority of the former.

This current study can become the basis of a further research of traditions on Simon which would include not only later patristic sources but also non-patristic literature of the Ante-Nicene period, such as Pseudo-Clementine literature, NT Apocrypha and Church Orders. This approach will let me extend the chronological and contextual boundaries set for the current study and will help me to look at the portrayal of Simon from different perspectives. For example, I will be able to dedicate more attention to the tradition of the 'Acts of Simon' in which he opposes the Apostles in polemic and magical contexts. In addition to that, I will be able to trace further development of the patristic tradition on Simon well into the Middle Ages and see how it changes in the context of anti-Manichean polemics and Trinitarian schisms.

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