

Stephen Haar  
Simon Magus: The First Gnostic?

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James D. G. Dunn · Richard B. Hays  
Hermann Lichtenberger

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Dedicated to

MICHAEL LATTKE

Professor for New Testament and Early Christianity  
at the University of Queensland, Brisbane, Australia

*It is the supreme art of the teacher  
to awaken a thirst for research, knowledge, and writing.*



## Preface

This book is a revision of my dissertation accepted by the University of Queensland in May 2002 for the award of Doctor of Philosophy. The revision has been shaped in part by comments on the thesis by its examiners, Professor Kurt Rudolph of Philipps-Universität Marburg, Privatdozent Dr Ferdinand Prostmeier of the University of Regensburg, and Dr Johan Ferreira of Queensland. For their insightful and helpful criticisms I am deeply appreciative, but they have not seen this revised work and this book still reflects very much the standard of my own scholarship rather than theirs.

My most profound thanks go to my former PhD Supervisor, Professor Michael Lattke of the Studies in Religion Department at the University of Queensland, Brisbane. I am proud and privileged to call Professor Lattke my teacher and mentor. I am indebted to his patient tutelage and advice, and thankful for his encouragement and friendship. Special thanks are also due to Dr. Rick Strelan of the University of Queensland, for his hospitality and valued comments given over many hours spent in discussion about Simon. This is also an opportune time to thank Dr. Victor Pfitzner of Luther Seminary, North Adelaide, who instilled in me a love for the New Testament as well as an awareness of relevant Graeco-Roman and Jewish literature.

I don't know how any author could have a better experience with a publisher than I have had with the people at Walter de Gruyter. My thanks to the editors of BZNW—Profs. Michael Wolter, James D.G. Dunn, Hermann Lichtenberger, and Richard Hays—for reading and approving my work for publication. In particular I wish to thank Dr. Claus-Jürgen Thornton, who has overseen the preparation and presentation of my material in this published form with a remarkable degree of patience and expertise.

I also acknowledge the generous assistance provided by the staff of Löhe Library at Luther Seminary, North Adelaide; especially Jocelyn Morris, Don Keast, and Ms Lavinia Gent. Thank you for your good humour and unexcelled skills.

The LS Greek® and LS Hebrew® fonts for Windows® used in this book are TrueType fonts available from *Linguist's Software Inc.*, P.O. Box 580, Edmond WA 98020-0580 USA tel (206) 775-1130.

Finally, I thank my wonderful family, Janet, Nathan, Joshua, Jennifer, and Rachel, who remained loving and understanding towards their husband and father despite his being “under the spell” of Simon for so many years.

Stephen Haar

Adelaide 2003



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## Abbreviations

AAR.AMA/SBL	American Academy of Religion. Annual Meeting Abstracts. Society of Biblical Literature. Missoula, Montana.
<i>ABD</i>	<i>Anchor Bible Dictionary.</i>
<i>ABR</i>	<i>Australian Biblical Review.</i>
ABRL	The Anchor Bible Reference Library.
ACW	Ancient Christian Writers. Westminster, Maryland etc.
<i>Adv. Haer.</i>	Irenaeus, <i>Adversus Haereses.</i>
AGJU	Arbeiten zur Geschichte des antiken Judentums und des Urchristentums. Leiden 8,1970–15,1978.
AGSU	Arbeiten zur Geschichte des späteren Judentums und des Urchristentums. Leiden 1,1961–7,1968.
AIIFCS	The Book of Acts in Its First Century Setting. 5 Vols. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm B. Eerdmans, 1993–1996.
AIIFCS 1	— 1. Literary Setting
AIIFCS 2	— 2. Graeco-Roman Setting
AIIFCS 3	— 3. Paul in Roman Custody
AIIFCS 4	— 4. Palestinian Setting
AIIFCS 5	— 5. Diaspora Setting
<i>AJT</i>	<i>American Journal of Theology.</i> Chicago, Illinois 1,1897–24,1920.
<i>AMI</i>	<i>Archäologische Mitteilungen aus Iran.</i> Berlin.
<i>Anaceph.</i>	<i>Anacephalaeosis.</i>
AnBib	Analecta Biblica.
ANFa	Ante-Nicene Fathers. New York 1–10, 1886–1887 [etc.]
ANRW	Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt. Geschichte und Kultur Roms im Spiegel der neueren Forschung. Berlin/New York: Walter de Gruyter.
ANRW I	— I. Von den Anfängen Roms bis zum Ausgang der Republik.
ANRW II	— II. Principat.

<i>Ant.</i>	Josephus, <i>Antiquitates</i> .
<i>Apol.</i>	Justin, <i>Apology</i> ; Tertullian, <i>Apologeticum</i> .
<i>APt</i>	<i>Apocryphal Acts of Peter</i> , <i>The</i>
ARGU	Arbeiten zur Religion und Geschichte des Urchristentums. Edited by G. LÜDEMANN. Frankfurt a.M./Berlin/Bern/Wien/New York/Bruxelles.
ATLA	Amercan Theological Library Association.
Av.	Avesta.
BAGD	A Greek–English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature. Edited by BAUER, W./ARNDT, W./GINGRICH, F.W./DANKER, F.W. Chicago: University Press, 1979.
BCNH	Bibliothèque Copte de Nag Hammadi. Québec/Louvain.
BCNH.E	— Section «Études».
BCNH.T	— Section «Textes».
BDF	Blass/Debrunner/Funk.
BEAT	Beiträge zur Erforschung des Alten Testaments und des antiken Judentums. Frankfurt a.M. [etc.] 1, 1984–
<i>Beginnings</i>	<i>The Beginnings of Christianity</i> . Part One. <i>The Acts of the Apostles</i> . Edited by F.J. FOAKES–JACKSON and K. LAKE, 1920–1933.
BETHL	Bibliotheca ephemeridum theologicarum Lovanien-sium. Louvain [etc.].
BEvTh	Beiträge zur evangelischen Theologie. München.
BIDEZ/CUMONT	<i>Les Mages hellénisés. Zoroastre, Ostanès et Hystaspe d'après la tradition grecque</i> . Edited by Joseph BIDEZ/Franz CUMONT. Volume I: <i>Introduction</i> . Volume II: <i>Texts</i> . Second Edition. Paris: Société d'édition « <i>Les Belles Lettres</i> », 1973 (=1938).
<i>BJ</i>	Josephus, <i>Bellum Judaicum</i> .
<i>BJRL</i>	<i>Bulletin of the John Rylands Library</i> . University Library. Manchester.
BWANT	Beiträge zur Wissenschaft vom Alten und Neuen Testament. Stuttgart.
BZAW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft. Berlin/New York.
BZNW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche. Berlin/New York.

CAH	Cambridge Ancient History. Edited by S.A. COOK/ F.E. ADCOCK/M.P. CHARLESWORTH. Volume X: <i>The Augustan Empire</i> . Volume XI: <i>The Imperial Peace</i> . Volume XII: <i>The Imperial Crisis and Recovery</i> . Cambridge.
CAnt	Christianisme antique. Paris.
CBQ	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i> . Washington D.C.
CCER	Cahiers du Cercle Ernest-Renan pour Libres Recherches d'Histoire du Christianisme. Paris 1,1954ff.
CChr.SL	Corpus Christianorum. Turnhout. Series Latina. 1,1953ff.
CD	Cairo (Genizah text of the) Damascus (Document)
CIG	Corpus inscriptionum Graecarum. Berlin 1,1828–6.2, 1877.
CIL	Corpus inscriptionum Latinarum. Berlin.
CQ	<i>Classical Quarterly</i> . London [etc.]
CRB	Cahiers de la Revue biblique. Paris 1,1964ff.
CRI	Compendia rerum Iudaicarum ad novum testamentum. Assen. —I. The Jewish People in the First Century. 1,1974ff. —II. The Literature of the Jewish People in the period of the Second Temple and the Talmud. 1,1988ff. —III. Jewish Tradition in Early Christian Literature. 1,1990ff.
CSCO	Corpus scriptorum christianorum orientalium. Roma [etc.]
DCB	<i>Dictionary for Christian Biography</i> .
DECA	<i>Dictionnaire encyclopédique du christianisme ancien</i> . Sous la direction de Angelo DI BERARDINO. Adaption française sous la direction de François VIAL. Vols. I– II. [Paris:] Editions du Cerf, 1990.
Dial.	Justin, <i>Dialogue with Trypho</i> .
DIOG. L.	Diogenes Laertius.
DK	Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker. Translated by Her- mann DIELS. Edited by Walther KRANZ. Sixth Edition. Vols. I–III. Dublin/Zürich: Weidmann, 1951/52.
DTbC	<i>Dictionnaire de théologie catholique</i> .
DTV	Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag. München.

EDNT	<i>Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament</i> . Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm B. Eerdmans, 1990-1993.
EEC	<i>Encyclopedia of Early Christianity</i> . Second Edition. Edited by Everett FERGUSON. 2 Vols. New York/London: Garland Publishing, 1992.
EECh	<i>Encyclopedia of the Early Church</i> . 2 Vols. Cambridge: James Clarke/New York: Oxford University Press, 1992.
EKK	Evangelisch-Katholischer Kommentar.
EPRO	Études préliminaires aux religions orientales dans l'empire romain. Leiden.
EQ	<i>Evangelical Quarterly</i> . London [etc.].
Eranos	<i>Eranos</i> . Yearbook. Leiden 39,1970–
ERE	<i>Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics</i> . Edited by James HASTINGS. Edinburgh 1–13, 1908–1926 [etc.].
EuChJ	<i>Eusebius, Christianity and Judaism</i> . Detroit: Wayne State University, 1992.
FC	Fontes Christiani. Zweisprachige Neuausgabe christlicher Quellentexte aus Altertum und Mittelalter. Herausgegeben von N. BROX/W. GEERLINGS/G. GRESHAKE/R. ILGNER/R. SCHIEFFER. Freiburg/Basel/Wien/Barcelona/Rom/New York: Herder.
FGH	Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker.
FO	French original.
Fontes	<i>Fontes historiae religionis Persicae</i> . Carolus CLEMEN (collegit). Bonn: A. Marcus & E. Weber, 1920.
Fr.	Fragment.
FRLANT	Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments. Göttingen.
FS	Festschrift.
FS Berger	<i>Religionsgeschichte des Neuen Testaments. Festschrift für Klaus BERGER zum 60. Geburtstag</i> . Herausgegeben von A. VON DOBBELER/K. ERLEMANN/R. HEILIGENTHAL. Tübingen/Basel: A. Francke Verlag, 2000.
FS Dodd	<i>The Background of the New Testament and Its Eschatology. In honour of Charles Harold Dodd</i> . Edited by W.D. DAVIES/D. DAUBE. Cambridge, UK: University Press, 1956.
FS Georgi	<i>Religious Propaganda and Missionary Competition in the New Testament World. Essays Honoring Dieter Georgi</i> . Edited



- by L. BORMANN/K. DEL TREDICI/A. STANDHARTINGER. Leiden/New York/Köln: E.J. Brill, 1994.
- FS Goodenough *Religions in Antiquity. Essays in Memory of Erwin Ramsdell Goodenough.* Edited by J. NEUSNER. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1968.
- FS Jonas *Gnosis. Festschrift für Hans Jonas.* Edited by B. ALAND. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1978.
- FS Kuhn *Tradition und Glaube. Das frühe Christentum in seiner Umwelt. Festgabe für Karl Georg Kuhn zum 65. Geburtstag.* Edited by G. JEREMIAS/H.-W. KUHN/H. STEGEMANN. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1971.
- FS Meeks *The Social World of the First Christians. Essays in Honour of Wayne A. Meeks.* Edited by L.M. WHITE/O.L. YARBROUGH. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995.
- FS Michel *Josephus-Studien. Untersuchungen zu Josephus, dem antiken Judentum und dem Neuen Testament. Otto Michel zum 70. Geburtstag gewidmet.* Edited by O. BETZ/K. HAACKER/M. HENGEL. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1974.
- FS Quispel *Studies in Gnosticism and Hellenistic Religions. Presented to Gilles Quispel on the Occasion of his 65th Birthday.* Edited by R. VAN DEN BROEK/M.J. VERMASEREN. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1981.
- FS Schmid *Orientierung an Jesus.* Edited by P. HOFFMANN. Freiburg: Herder, 1973.
- FS Schneider *Der Treue Gottes trauen. Beiträge zum Werk des Lukas für Gerhard Schneider.* Edited by C. BUSSMANN/W. RADL. Freiburg/Basel/Wien: Herder, 1991.
- FS Smith *Christianity, Judaism and other Greco-Roman Cults. Studies for Morton Smith at Sixty.* Edited by Jacob NEUSNER. SJLA 12. Four Parts. (1) New Testament, (2) Early Christianity, (3) Judaism before 70, (4) Judaism after 70. Other Greco-Roman Cults. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1975.
- FS Stuhlmacher *Evangelium – Schriftauslegung – Kirche. Festschrift für Peter Stuhlmacher zum 65. Geburtstag.* Edited by J. ÅDNA/S.J. HAFEMAN/O. HOFIUS. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1997.
- FS Wilson *The New Testament and Gnosis. Essays in Honour of Robert McLachlan Wilson.* Edited by A.H.B. LOGAN/A.J.M. WEDDERBURN. Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1983.

GCS	Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten drei Jahrhunderte. Berlin/New York: Walter de Gruyter.
GMPT	<i>The Greek Magical Papyri in Translation. Including the Demotic Spells.</i> Edited by H.D. BETZ. Chicago/London: University of Chicago Press, 1986.
GO	German original.
GOF.H	Göttinger Orientforschungen. Reihe 6: Hellenistica. Wiesbaden.
GRBS	Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies. Cambridge, Massachusetts 1,1958ff.
GrTS	Grazer theologische Studien. Graz.
GTA	Göttinger theologische Arbeiten. Göttingen.
Haer.	Ps.—Tertullian, <i>Adversus omnes haereses (haereticos)</i> .
Hdt.	Herodotus.
H.E.	Eusebius, <i>Historia Ecclesiastica</i> .
HEChD	<i>A History of Early Christian Doctrine before the Council of Nicaea.</i> 3 Vols. Translated and Edited by J.A. BAKER. London: Darton, Longman and Todd.
Helios	<i>Helios: Journal of the Classical Association of the South-western United States.</i>
HNT	Handbuch zum Neuen Testament. Tübingen.
HO	Handbuch der Orientalistik. Leiden.
Hom.	Pseudo-Clementine <i>Homilies</i> .
HTbR	<i>Harvard Theological Review.</i> Cambridge, Massachusetts 1,1908ff.
HUCA	<i>Hebrew Union College Annual.</i> Cincinnati, Ohio.
IDB	<i>Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible.</i>
IP	Instrumenta patristica. 's-Gravenhage [etc.].
IrAnt	<i>Iranica antiqua.</i> Leiden.
IVP	Inter-Varsity Press.
JAAR	<i>Journal of the American Academy of Religion.</i> Boston, Massachusetts [etc.].
JAC	<i>Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum.</i> Münster in W.
JBL	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature.</i> Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.
JJS	<i>Journal of Jewish Studies.</i> London.
JRAS	<i>Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland.</i> London.
JRS	<i>Journal of Roman Studies.</i> London.

- JSJ *Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic and Roman Period.* Leiden.
- JSNT *Journal for the Study of the New Testament.* Sheffield.
- JSNT.S — Supplement series.
- JSOT *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament.* Sheffield.
- JThS *Journal of Theological Studies.* Oxford [etc.].
- JWSTP *Jewish Writings in the Second Temple Period.* Edited by M.E. STONE.
- KEK Kritisch-exegetischer Kommentar über das Neue Testament. Göttingen.
- KP *Der Kleine Pauly.* Lexikon der Antike. Stuttgart, 1–5 1962–1975.
- KST Kohlhammer Studienbücher Theologie. Edited by G. BITTER/E. DASSMANN/H. MERKLEIN/H. VORGRIMLER/E. ZENGER. Stuttgart: Verlag W. Kohlhammer.
- KTa Kröners Taschenausgabe.
- LACL *Lexikon der antiken christlichen Literatur.* Edited by S. DÖPP/W. GEERLINGS/P. BRUNS/G. RÖWEKAMP/M. SKEB. Freiburg: Herder, 1998.
- LCA *Lexikon der christlichen Antike.* KTA 332. Edited by J.B. BAUER/M. HUTTER/A. FELBER. Stuttgart: Alfred Kröner Verlag, 1999.
- LCL [= LOEB] Loeb Classical Library.
- LS *A Latin Dictionary.* Edited by C.T. LEWIS/C. SHORT. Oxford: Clarendon.
- LSJ *Greek-English Lexicon.* Edited by H.G. LIDDELL/R. SCOTT. Revised and augmented throughout by H.S. JONES/R. MACKENZIE. 2 Vols + Supplement. Oxford: Clarendon.
- LSSW *Lexikon der Sekten, Sondergruppen und Weltanschauungen.* Freiburg: Herder, 1990.
- LTJ *Lutheran Theological Journal.* Adelaide.
- LTbK *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche.* Second Edition. Freiburg: Herder, 1,1957–10,1965.
- MM The Vocabulary of the Greek New Testament Illustrated from the Papyri and Other Non-Literary Sources. Edited by J.H. MOULTON/G. MILLIGAN. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm B. Eerdmans, 1980.

<i>Mn.</i>	<i>Mnemosyne: Bibliotheca Classica Philologica Batava.</i> Leiden 1,1852–11,1862.
MSSNTS	Monograph Series. Society for New Testament Studies. Cambridge.
<i>Nat. Hist.</i>	Pliny, <i>Natural History</i> .
NDIEC	<i>New Documents Illustrating Early Christianity.</i> Edited by G.H.R. HORSLEY/S.R. LLEWELYN. Macquarie University, North Ryde, Sydney, 1,1981–7,1996.
NEB	The New English Bible. Oxford: University Press, 1970–
NHC	Nag Hammadi codex (codices).
NHMS	Nag Hammadi and Manichaean Studies [Formerly Nag Hammadi Studies. Eds. J.M. ROBINSON/H.J. KLIMKEIT]. Edited by H.W. ATTRIDGE/R. CAMERON/W.-P. FUNK/C.W. HEDRICK/H. JACKSON/P. NAGEL/J. VAN OORT/D.M. PARROTT/B.A. PEARSON/K. RUDOLPH/H.-M. SCHENKE/W. SUNDERMANN. Leiden/New York/Köln.
NHS	Nag Hammadi Studies. Leiden.
NIV	New International Version. The Holy Bible.
<i>NovT</i>	<i>Novum Testamentum. An International Quarterly for New Testament and related Studies.</i> Leiden.
NovT.S	— Supplements
NP	<i>Der Neue Pauly. Enzyklopädie der Antike.</i> Herausgegeben von H. CANKIK/H. SCHNEIDER. Stuttgart/ Weimar: Verlag J.B. Metzler, 1999–
NPNFa	A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers. Second Series. Edited by P. SCHAFF. Grand Rapids, Michigan 1–14, 1952–1956.
NS	New Series.
NTD	Das Neue Testament Deutsch. Göttingen.
NTOA	Novum Testamentum et Orbis Antiquus. Fribourg [etc.].
<i>NTS</i>	<i>New Testament Studies.</i> Cambridge [etc.].
NTTS	New Testament Tools and Studies. Leiden.
<i>Numen</i>	<i>Numen. International Review for the History of Religions.</i> Leiden.
OCA	Orientalia Christiana analecta. Roma.
OCPM	Oxford Classical and Philosophical Monographs. Oxford.

ODCC	<i>The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church</i> . Second Edition. Edited by F.L. CROSS/E.A. LIVINGSTONE, 1990.
OHCW	<i>Oxford History of the Classical World</i> . Oxford: University Press, 1995.
ÖTK	Ökumenischer Taschenbuch-Kommentar. Gütersloh.
<i>Pan.</i>	Epiphanius, <i>Panarion</i> .
PatMS	Patristic Monograph Series. Cambridge, Massachusetts.
PG	Patrologiae cursus completus. Accurante Jacques-Paul MIGNE. Series Graeca. Reprinted [1857–1866] Turnhout, 1959ff.
PGM	<i>Papyri graecae magicae. Die griechischen Zauberpapyri</i> . Edited by Karl PREISENDANZ. Second revised edition by A. HENRICHS. Stuttgart.
PL	Patrologiae cursus completus. Accurante Jacques-Paul MIGNE. Series Latina. Reprinted [1857–1866] Turnhout, 1959ff.
<i>Praescr.</i>	Tertullian, <i>De praescriptione haereticorum</i> .
PRE	<i>Panhys Real-Encyclopädie der classischen Alterthums-wissenschaft</i> . Neuausgabe begonnen von Georg WISSOWA. Stuttgart. —1. Reihe 1, 1894–24, 1963. —2. Reihe 1(= 25), 1914–10(= 34), 1972. —Supplement. 1, 1903–16, 1980.
PRE.S	—Supplement. 1, 1903–16, 1980.
Ps.	Pseudo.
PsCl	Pseudo-Clementine.
PTS	Patristische Texte und Studien. Berlin/New York.
RA	<i>Revue d'assyriologie et d'archéologie orientale</i> . Paris.
RAC	<i>Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum</i> . Edited by Th. KLAUSER. Stuttgart: Anton Hiersemann, 1950–
RE	<i>Realencyklopädie für protestantische Theologie und Kirche</i> . Third Edition. Leipzig: Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung, 1896–1913.
REAug	<i>Revue des études augustinienes</i> . Paris.
Rec.	Pseudo-Clementine <i>Recognitions</i> .
Ref.	Hippolytus, <i>Refutatio omnium haeresium</i> .
REJ	<i>Revue des études juives</i> . Paris.
RevB	<i>Revue Biblique</i> . Paris.
RGG	<i>Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart</i> . Third Edition, 1957–1965.

RGRW	Religions in the Graeco-Roman World. Edited by R. VAN DEN BROEK/ H.J.W. DRIJVERS/ H.S. VERSNEL. Leiden.
RGVV	Religionsgeschichtliche Versuche und Vorarbeiten. Berlin/New York.
RMM	<i>Revue de métaphysique et de morale</i> . Paris.
RSR	<i>Recherches de science religieuse</i> . Paris.
RVV=RGVV	Religionsgeschichtliche Versuche und Vorarbeiten. (Giessen etc.) Berlin.
SBL.DS	Society of Biblical Literature. Dissertation Series. Missoula, Montana.
SBL.MS	Society of Biblical Literature. Monograph Series. Missoula, Montana.
SBL.SCS	Society of Biblical Literature. Septuagint and Cognate Studies. Chico, California.
SBL.SP	Society of Biblical Literature. Seminar Papers. Missoula, Montana.
SBL.TT	Society of Biblical Literature. Texts and Translations. Chico, California. 1,1972ff.
SBS	Stuttgarter Bibelstudien. Stuttgart.
SBT	Studies in Biblical Theology. London.
SBT.SS	Studies in Biblical Theology. Second series. London.
SBW	Studien der Bibliothek Warburg. Leipzig.
SC	Sources chrétiennes. Paris.
SCHNT	Studia ad corpus Hellenisticum Novi Testamenti. Leiden.
SCJud	Studies in Christianity and Judaism. Études sur le christianisme et le judaïsme. Waterloo, Ontario. 1,1981ff.
SCM	Student Christian Movement.
<i>SecCen</i>	<i>The Second Century. A Journal of Early Christian Studies</i> . Abilene: Abilene Christian University.
SEG	Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum.
<i>Self-Definition</i>	<i>Jewish and Christian Self-Definition. The Shaping of Christianity in the Second and Third Centuries</i> . Edited by E.P. SANDERS. 3 Vols. London: SCM, 1980—
<i>Semeia</i>	<i>Semeia. An Experimental Journal for Biblical Criticism</i> . Missoula, Montana.
SHG	Subsidia hagiographica.
SHR	Studies of the History of Religions. Leiden [= Suppl. to Numen].

SIG	<i>Sylloge Inscriptionum Graecarum</i> . 4 Vols. Edited by W. DITTENBERGER. Hildesheim/Zürich/New York: Georg Olms Verlag.
SJLA	Studies in Judaism in late antiquity. Leiden.
SMSR	<i>Studi e materiali di storia delle religioni</i> . Roma.
SPCK	Society for Promotion of Christian Knowledge.
Spicq, <i>Notes</i>	<i>Notes de lexicographie néo-testamentaire</i> . Edited by Ceslas SPICQ. 3 Vols. (I) <i>Agathopoieo—Lupeo</i> , (II) <i>Mainomai—Pseudologoi</i> , (III) Supplement. Freiburg: Éditions universitaires; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1978–1982.
SST	Studies in Sacred Theology. Washington, DC.
StAAA	Studies on the Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles. Edited by J.N. BREMMER. 1,1995–
StPB	Studia Post Biblica. Leiden. 1,1959ff.
Str.-B.	H.L. STRACK and P. BILLERBECK. Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch.
<i>Strom.</i>	Clement, <i>Stromata</i> .
TANZ	Texte und Arbeiten zum neutestamentlichen Zeitalter. Tübingen/Basel.
TAPA	Translations of the American Philological Association.
TDNT	<i>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</i> . Edited by G. FRIEDRICH/G. KITTEL. 10 Vols. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm B. Eerdmans, 1933–1979.
Tert.	Tertullian.
ThHK	Theologischer Handkommentar zum Neuen Testament. Leipzig [etc.] 1,1928ff.
THNT	Theologischer Handkommentar zum Neuen Testament. Berlin.
TbR	<i>Theologische Rundschau</i> . Tübingen.
TLG	Thesaurus linguae Graecae.
TNTC	Tyndale New Testament Commentary.
Trans.	Translated.
TRE	<i>Theologische Realenzyklopädie</i> . Berlin/New York.
TS	<i>Theological Studies</i> . Woodstock, Maryland 1,1940–
TSAJ	Texte und Studien zum Antiken Judentum. Tübingen.
TThZ	<i>Trierer theologische Zeitschrift</i> . Trier.
TU	Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur. Berlin/New York: Walter de Gruyter.





## CHAPTER ONE

### Introduction

#### *1. Purpose and Rationale*

Simon does not feature like a Peter, James, or Paul, in the story of earliest Christianity. He is not mentioned as a key disciple, leader, or major witness to the life and teachings of Jesus. He is no hero or model of the faith. Instead, the image of Simon is painted with the shades of villainy and ignominy, and by some he is framed even as an anti-apostle if not an anti-Christ.

In the modern era it is said, “image is everything.” Business Corporations, Celebrities, and Politicians engage marketing consultants to shape their image in the public arena, and hire public relations specialists to enhance and protect that public identity; a task made more demanding in our digital age when anyone can be subjected to what has been termed “digital kidnapping.”<sup>1</sup> However, the misrepresentation and distortion of public *personae* is not a new phenomenon. Simon appears to be a case in point.

Details available to scholarship of the life and teachings of Simon are not first-hand; and the release of an authorised biography is no longer possible. The only surviving accounts have been written by Simon’s opponents and critics. Consequently, these reports should be treated with caution. In all likelihood they are prejudicial in their assessment, if not hostile; or, at the very least they manipulate the image of Simon to suit their particular narrative purpose. For the record, Simon is given many labels, including: Christian, Samaritan, pagan, founder of a religious sect,

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. KUCHINSKAS, “Image is Everything” [Online].

magician, charlatan, philosopher, heretic, father of all heresies, a false messiah, pretended incarnation of God; and the first of the Gnostics.

According to Hippolytus, the third century CE Christian writer, a certain Simon of Samaria had himself buried alive by his followers, with the promise to rise on the third day; yet he remained in the grave because he was not the Christ.<sup>2</sup> Simon may well have been unable to rise from the dead, yet he has continued to enliven the imaginations of those who investigate the beginnings of Christianity. He has been the focus of controversy since the second century CE when Irenaeus, the bishop of Lyons, identified him as the “father of all heresies.” From that time until the nineteenth century there is almost unanimous testimony that Simon was the first individual to be called a Gnostic, and that Simonianism was the earliest form of Gnosticism.

However, while from the second century CE onwards Christian tradition is virtually unanimous that the Simon of Acts is the root of all heresy—founder of the Simonian sect, and the first of the Gnostics—modern scholarship is unconvinced, in light of more recent discoveries, that all forms of Gnosis can be traced back to Simon. In fact, rather than confirming his reported status in the writings of ancient Christian authors, as father of the Gnostic heresy which posed a severe threat to Christian communities of the second century CE, many modern scholars deny the existence of a historical Simon. FILORAMO (1990: 147) claims that a thankless task faces anyone who attempts to satisfy their curiosity over the historical figure of Simon through the means of original source criticism. MEEKS (1977: 141) was more despairing in his assessment that “the quest for the historical Simon is even less promising than the quest for the historical Jesus.”

The purpose of this book is to examine the literary portraits of Simon of Samaria, a contemporary of the Apostles of Jesus and of Philo Judaeus of Alexandria, through a critical and analytical review of sources, including the New Testament account of Acts and other literature from the first four centuries of the common era. Its focus is not so much to uncover the “historical” Simon beneath almost 2000 years of tradition and legend, but to clarify the certainties and uncertainties surrounding the first century CE figure of Simon, the so-called “first Gnostic.”

Ernst HAENCHEN (1971: 307) and Gerd LÜDEMANN (1975: 42) both claimed that Luke—the author of Acts, the earliest extant source for the

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<sup>2</sup> HIPPOLYTUS, *Ref.* VI 20,3.

Simon story—knowingly recast Simon as a Samaritan magician in order to discredit a popular Gnostic hero. Charles BARRETT (1979: 286) disagrees, stating that “there is nothing in Acts 8 to suggest that Simon was a Gnostic.” More recently, in his widely acclaimed commentary on Acts in the *International Critical Commentary* series, BARRETT (1994: 407) claims that “the historical Simon may not have been a speculative Gnostic theologian downgraded by Luke but a very ordinary magician upgraded so as to appear as a divine man.” This amounts to a representation by BARRETT of the view already proposed in 1937 by Lucien CERFAUX,<sup>3</sup> that Simon was not a Gnostic but a μάγος:

As, among others, Lucien Cerfaux has pointed out, for Luke Simon was not a Gnostic but a μάγος—and indeed it is possible through Irenaeus’ account of the Gnostic heretic to see traces of the μάγος, and conversely to discover a contribution of μαγεία to the development of Gnosticism. But the question that we have to ask is, what did Luke mean by μαγεύειν, μαγεία? He uses neither word elsewhere, though he describes the Jewish false prophet Elymas-Barjesus as a μάγος (13:6,8). Of this group, μάγος is the only word to occur elsewhere in the New Testament. This is in Matt 2, with reference to the “wise men”, where (though the meaning is different) there is equally little to suggest Gnosticism. What did the words mean to Luke? (BARRETT 1979: 286)

The opinions of LÜDEMANN and BARRETT represent the antipodes in modern scholarship and commentary on the story of Simon in the book of Acts. The aim of this book is to contribute towards the removal of that lack of clarity perceived by BARRETT concerning the meaning of μαγεύειν in the writings of Luke, and to pursue the question of a possible contribution from μαγεία and the history of the μάγοι in the development of Gnosticism. In addition to clarifying the meaning of the term μαγεύειν in Luke and tracing the development of the term γνωστικός in the literature of late antiquity, this book will argue that rather than being mutually exclusive perceptions and descriptions of Simon the categories of μάγος and γνωστικός can be viewed as complimentary. In other words, the observer can discern Simon’s Gnostic identity through aspects of his activity as a μάγος, and, conversely, perceive Simon’s “magos” identity through aspects of his interactions as a “Gnostic”. Finally, this book will test the counter-claims of BARRETT, who on the one hand denies anything Gnostic about Simon

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<sup>3</sup> Cf. CERFAUX 1937: 615–17.

in Luke's writings, and LÜDEMANN, who on the other hand argues that the phrase "the thought of your heart" in Acts 8:22 not only presents an ironical reference to Simon's σύζυγος—his female companion Helen—but also demonstrates Luke's knowledge of the foundations of Simonian Gnosis being present in a period "at least contemporary with earliest Christianity."<sup>4</sup>

## *2. Structure and Method*

A study of the literary portraits of Simon in Christian literature of the first four centuries CE could be structured in any number of different ways. The approach I have adopted, as suggested by my declared aims, is to analyse the sources for the Simon story in order to determine to what extent they confirm or deny the assessment and categorisation of Simon as a "magician" and/or "Gnostic". A necessary step in this analysis will be the clarification of key terminology and an overview of how these key terms are used also in contemporary literature beyond the agreed sources.

The surviving primary sources will be dealt with sequentially, beginning with the earliest record in Acts 8 and then proceeding in order through the accounts of Justin, Irenaeus, Hippolytus and Epiphanius. Finally, the portrait of Simon in the Pseudo-Clementine literature and the apocryphal Acts of Peter will be considered. This approach has the advantage of tracing the image of Simon step-by-step as it emerges from the sources, allowing issues of influence and interdependence, as well as various matters of continuity and discontinuity to be discussed concurrently. Further, a thematic and sequential approach enables various methodological matters appropriate to a particular text or literary unit under investigation to be dealt with as they appear in each chapter.

Chapter 2 traces the major responses of scholarship to questions raised by the portrayal of Simon in the sources. This history of research adopts a chronological approach to presenting the background debates that form part of the interpretative matrix for discussions about Simon. It observes that scholarship has largely applied only secondary focus on Simon, dealing with him more or less as a test case for larger questions

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<sup>4</sup> Cf. LÜDEMANN 1987: 425.

concerning the reliability of historiography in Luke-Acts, as well as the debate concerning the nature and origin of Gnosticism.

Chapter 3 examines the agreed primary sources for the Simon story. Introductory, background and biographical information is provided to ensure the accessibility of materials by allowing the Simon story to unfold itself before the reader, as it comes from the pens of those who authored it. In addition, an overview of references to the Magoi in classical Graeco-Roman literature is included since the perceived activities and social status of the Magoi in antiquity played a vital role in shaping the figure of Simon in popular Christian imagination.

Chapter 4 considers the reputation of Simon being a “magician”. It first provides a brief overview of magic in the Graeco-Roman world, and then, second, details how Jewish Magic was more than widely recognised in antiquity: it was revered. A third section responds to the claimed links between Simon and “other magicians” in the New Testament book of Acts.

Chapter 5 aims to provide clarifications and possible answers in response to the question of a Gnostic Simon. Issues surrounding the terminology of Gnosis and Gnosticism are discussed. An approach is outlined for determining claims of Simon being the first Gnostic. Fragmentary evidence from early Christian writers is analysed and considered.

Chapter 6 presents conclusions and provides an answer to the focal question: Was Simon Magus the first Gnostic? Commentary is provided to explain why an unqualified “yes” or “no” answer regrettably cannot be given. Embracing modern estimations of “identity” this study argues that the identity of Simon never existed as some inherent or abstract quality – always presenting the same face to researchers in every generation – but was generated in interaction with others, through the simultaneous contribution of a complex mix of cultural, sociological, psychological, and geographical factors. The question of Simon’s identity is approached from three perspectives: from the Messina definition of Gnosticism; the viewpoint of ancient Christian Writers prior to 400CE; and, from a select number of reconstructed original traditions of Simon.

In addition to those matters of method and structure detailed above, there are certain other broader interpretative issues and perspectives that have contributed to the completion of this work and need to be mentioned by way of general introduction. First, my interest in Biblical studies and the history of earliest Christianity began in 1972 with my enrolment and candidature as a Lutheran pastor in training at Luther Seminary, North Adelaide, South Australia. My professors were graduates

from various German universities. They not only taught me critical methodology, but also instilled in me a love of the New Testament and an awareness of relevant Jewish and Graeco-Roman literature. I admit that I maintain an interest in theological issues as these relate to the presentation of Simon in the book of Acts and other early Christian literature; especially those associated with the development of early Christian thought leading to the emergence of a normative form of Christianity from a variety of early Christian communities. Further, the scholarly dialogue in which this work is intended to engage is primarily with traditional New Testament and Simon researchers rather than modern literary or social-scientific critics.

Second, a thesis held by many historians is that the formative experiences of life, for both individuals and societies, are stubbornly imprinted and hold enormous influence. The 1960s and 1970s heralded periods of change in Australia with the meeting of countervailing social, racial, political, moral, religious, and intellectual forces. About the same time the field of New Testament studies was challenged by the proposal of a new method of investigating early Christianity that took seriously the dynamics of historical and cultural forces upon traditions from and about Jesus. J.M. ROBINSON and H. KOESTER proposed that rather than presupposing static backgrounds of early Christianity (for example, apocalyptic Judaism, rabbinic Judaism, Hellenism, Gnosticism) an approach to the sources was needed that recognised there is movement across the board.<sup>5</sup> This trajectory-critical approach called for a rejection of lines of demarcation between canonical and non-canonical, orthodox and heretical. It served notice that the writings of the New Testament emerged from a context where boundaries between religious traditions and movements were not as fixed as some scholarship had assumed or suggested.

At that time, the *redaktionsgeschichtliche* approach typified by scholars such as CONZELMANN and HAENCHEN, still dominated investigations of Luke-Acts. It described Luke as a creative editor who shaped the traditions at his disposal to support his theological bias (*Tendenz*). Accordingly, it was proposed that Luke's theology is discovered by examining the way in which he altered his sources. More recent scholarship, however, argues that not only authors of ancient texts but also their interpreters have specific temporal, psychological, social, and

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<sup>5</sup> ROBINSON/KOESTER 1971: 13.

cultural contexts that affect and inform both their general perceptions and descriptions of events. In the investigation of early Christian history and the interpretation of early Christian writings it needs to be acknowledged that there is no such thing as “immaculate perception” (CARNEY 1975: 1).

So, third, we cannot entirely ignore or avoid the dangers of approaching an area of research apart from our pre-conditioning and pre-judgments, irrespective of whether the starting point is a faith perspective or a critically constructed model. There is no guarantee of an entirely objective starting point in historical reconstruction, even when methods from various other disciplines are introduced. The analytical commentary provided on Simon research in this book never intends to suggest that all prior scholarship has chosen the wrong way, and that this study is somehow more objective. Rather, it is my intention to engage in an ongoing scholarly dialogue by first making my own background and approach explicit, and in so doing to avoid possible mistakes in fact and method.

### *3. Outlining an Approach*

While modern New Testament and Simon research remains broadly committed to the objective, historically orientated model formulated since the early days of BAUR and HARNACK, recent scholarship does not always endorse the specific interpretive conclusions of previous research. Indeed, a groundswell of opinion now suggests that an exclusive historical methodology no longer will suffice. For example, since the earliest days of form criticism it was generally acknowledged that there had been an oral stage prior to the written text of the New Testament. What was erroneously assumed, however, is that the transition from oral tradition to text had been a continuous and complete development, with written texts replacing oral tradition as soon as they were composed. The historical-critical method tended to equate Christianity with written documents, both surviving texts and hypothetical reconstructions. The challenge for modern scholarship is to fully appreciate the role of oral/aural media in the formation of earliest Christianity. Joanna DEWEY notes:

[W]e are still a long way from understanding the high degree of orality in ancient Mediterranean cultures and the ways orality and literacy interacted, working together and working against each other ... We do not yet have an overview of how orality and literacy affected the

development of the early churches and the formation of the New Testament canon. We have yet to consider fully how Christianity itself participated in orality and literacy. We are just beginning to develop a sense of the first-century media world and how Christianity fits within it. (DEWEY 1994: 38)

Contemporaneous with this focus in New Testament scholarship on the media and narrative worlds of the first-century, has been the publication of numerous studies in ancient historiography<sup>6</sup> which highlight marked differences from those conventions followed in our modern era.<sup>7</sup> The clear conclusion arising from these studies, in contrast to previous assessments, is that when considering the question of historical reliability in Acts—as with all ancient accounts of history—21<sup>st</sup> century readers need to re-evaluate their criteria before making any assessment. Luke appears to have worked within ancient conventions (Lk 1:1–4), and it is doubtful those who received his report would have expected more.

While scholarship during the last quarter of the twentieth century did not produce the collapse of the historical-critical method, it promoted a considerable shift in focus. As Sean FREYNE comments:

Insights and methods from various disciplines are increasingly brought to bear on the New Testament writings, since today, with a heightened hermeneutical awareness, many scholars have come to recognise that no one perspective can exhaust the possibilities of our texts, or adequately uncover their varied fields of reference. (FREYNE 1988: 3)

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<sup>6</sup> Cf. STERLING 1992; WINTER 1993.

<sup>7</sup> For example, Thucydides, widely regarded as the greatest of ancient historians, records the following insightful comments in his history of the Peloponnesian War I 22,1–4: “As to the speeches which were made either before or during the war, it was hard for me, and for others who reported them to me, to recollect the exact words. I have therefore put into the mouth of each speaker the sentiments proper to the occasion, expressed as I thought he would be likely to express them, while at the same time I endeavoured, as nearly as I could, to give the general import of what was actually said: ὥς δ’ ἂν ἐδόκουν ἐμοὶ ἕκαστοι περὶ τῶν αἰ παρόντων τὰ δέοντα μάλιστ’ εἰπεῖν, ἐχομένῳ ὅτι ἐγγύτατα τῆς ξυμπάσης γνώμης τῶν ἀληθῶς λεχθέντων, οὕτως εἴρηται.” (JOWETT’S translation as quoted in BRUCE 1990: 34) Note JOSEPHUS, who, in parallel accounts of the one episode, places two distinct speeches into Herod’s mouth: *Bj* I 373–379; *Ant.* XV 127–146.



This observation carries important implications and generates new impetus for any interpretation of a first-century historical narrative such as Acts, and for the unravelling of traditions concerning Simon. In the current climate of postmodernism—where the intellectual and epistemological certainty that characterised more than a century of research is now questioned, and the aim for objectivity is denied as a myth—scholarship is being challenged to embrace new hermeneutical tools in an interdisciplinary approach to the New Testament and studies of Earliest Christianity, to better communicate in a research climate that is suspicious of the historical-critical metanarrative.

In general it can be said that modern critical approaches to the New Testament and other early Christian literature—including more conventional literary analysis, reader-response criticism, biographical criticism, and social world approaches—have made the research community much more aware of the fact that early Christianity was not just a movement of ideas, but rather a movement in which social realities emerged with implications that were economic, social, and political as well as religious and theological.

In summary, I intend to follow an interdisciplinary approach to the sources in order to clarify the certainties and uncertainties surrounding the first century CE figure of Simon, the so-called “first Gnostic.” This approach will employ a variety of analytical methods in the interest of illuminating the portrait of Simon more clearly than previous investigations have achieved. In particular, this work will proceed being cognisant of the narrative world of Luke-Acts, while not losing sight of the social-historical world of the various authors and critics who reported the story of Simon.

## CHAPTER TWO

# History of Research

### 1. Preliminary Remarks

Modern research, as Gerd LÜDEMANN (1987: 420) correctly observed, has treated Simon more or less as a test case for larger questions. In fact, for almost two centuries the shape and direction of Simon Magus research has ebbed and flowed with the tide of New Testament critical analysis. This has occurred first with questions concerning the reliability of historiography in Luke-Acts; and second, within the debate concerning the nature and origin of Gnosticism.

The following overview of research does not claim to present a complete history of these discussions, nor does it simply rehearse what is available elsewhere.<sup>1</sup> Nonetheless an adequate history of Simon Research cannot avoid recognising the background debates which provide the broad backdrop for discussions on Simon. So, the significant responses of scholarship to questions raised by the portrayal of Simon in the sources are traced chronologically, points of convergence are noted with the background debates of New Testament critical analysis, and commentary provided on how the figure of Simon has appeared either sharper or more diffused through the lens and foci adopted by his respective investigators.

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<sup>1</sup> The monographs of Karlmann BEYSCHLAG, *Simon Magus und die christliche Gnosis*, and Gerd LÜDEMANN, *Untersuchungen zur simonianischen Gnosis*, provide extensive reports about the history of these discussions which have principally preoccupied German scholarship. Valuable introductions to Simon Research are likewise provided by Wayne MEEKS in his article "Simon Magus in Recent Research," and by Kurt RUDOLPH in his "Simon – Magus oder Gnosticus? Zum Stand der Debatte."

## 2. *Simon Observed within the Debate over the Historical Value of Acts*

The Tübingen School, founded by Ferdinand Christian BAUR (1792–1860), questioned the Eusebian model of church history; namely, that unity existed before division and truth must of necessity precede error.<sup>2</sup> BAUR and his colleagues embraced a conflict and tension model of history that viewed the record of earliest Christianity as the outworking of a clash between two rival parties. On the one hand there was the Jewish-Christian party championed by Peter. On the other hand there was Paul who represented a Gentile-Christian party, a newer broader Christianity, which rejected the practice of circumcision and a narrow Jewish interpretation of the Law.

BAUR's methodological starting point was the evidence of dispute—in the New Testament letters to the Romans, Galatians, 1 and 2 Corinthians—between Paul and the Judaizers, and Paul with Peter and the original “so-called” apostles. He concluded that this was not merely a temporary conflict but one which continued for a long period after Paul's death. BAUR claimed evidence in support of his hypothesis from the *Pseudo-Clementine Homilies*, for which he argued an early date of composition (about 170CE). In the Pseudo-Clementine contest between Peter and Simon “the magician” BAUR discerned a disguised attempt to vilify the apostle Paul. On this identification BAUR rested his entire thesis, that a bitter dispute between Pauline (Hellenistic) and Jewish Christians continued late into the second century.

An investigation into the life and activity of the apostle Paul according to the sequence in Acts, in his *Paulus, der Apostel Jesu Christi*, led BAUR to conclude that on the narrative level only a few sections of Acts have any positive historical value.<sup>3</sup> BAUR cited two reasons for this conclusion: first, the miracle stories, which he considered patently unverifiable; and second,

<sup>2</sup> Cf. EUSEBIUS, *H.E.* IV 22,2–6, “They used to call the Church a *virgin* for this reason, that she had not yet been seduced by listening to nonsense. But Thebouthis, because he had not been made bishop, began to seduce her (by means of the seven sects to which he himself belonged) among the people. From these came Simon and his Simonians, Cleobius and his Cleobienes, Dositheus and his Dositheans ... every man introducing his own opinion in his own particular way. From these came false Christs, false prophets, false apostles, who split the unity of the Church by poisonous suggestions against God and against His Christ.”

<sup>3</sup> BAUR 1845: 5, “Indem ich nun hier, um den Standpunkt für die folgende Untersuchung zu bezeichnen, daß ich in ihr keine rein objective, sondern nur eine durch ein subjectives Interesse alterirte Darstellung erkennen kann.”

the omission of any reference in Acts to the conflict between Paul and the other apostles. Having stated this BAUR maintained that the book of Acts nevertheless continued to be an extremely important source for the history of the apostolic period, once the researcher applied a strict historical criticism to its material.<sup>4</sup>

BAUR's conclusions about the historical reliability of Acts and other early Christian literature were correspondingly reflected in his portrait of Simon. BAUR concluded that Simon was as a purely mythological person.<sup>5</sup> On the basis of an overestimation of the Pseudo-Clementine literature, he interpreted the Simon in Acts 8 as a characterisation of Paul fabricated by the Jewish-Christian party, which the author of Acts then neutralised through the historical differentiation of Paul in Acts chapter 9. That is, the author of Luke-Acts intended to protect Paul from disparaging associations by his depiction of Simon as someone entirely different from Paul. BAUR said the author's placement of two apostles in parallel—Peter appearing as Pauline and Paul as Petrine—is the peace proposal of a Paulinist who intended to purchase recognition for Gentile Christianity through accessions to Judaism. Further, through a *religionsgeschichtliche* approach, BAUR drew an interpretive link between the Lukan predication of Simon in Acts 8:10 as ἡ δύναμις τοῦ θεοῦ ἡ καλουμένη μεγάλη and the Pseudo-Clementine description of Simon as “standing one”:

... der Name sollte im Ganzen dasselbe ausdrücken, was die Christen in Christus verehrten, das höchste göttliche Princip, durch welches alles geistige Leben in seinem Seyn und Bestand erhalten wird, den unwandelbaren, über alles Vergängliche erhabenen, Hort des Lebens. (BAUR 1967: 306)

Significant also for BAUR was the report in Justin Martyr<sup>6</sup> that when Simon came to Rome under Claudius (41–54CE) he was honoured as a holy god for his magical miracles by a statue on the island in the river Tiber with the inscription: SIMONI DEO SANCTO. BAUR pursued this reference backward through the tradition, and outlined how the ancient Roman god

<sup>4</sup> BAUR 1845: 13, “Sie bleibt ... eine höchst wichtige Quelle für die Geschichte der apostolischen Zeit, aber auch eine Quelle, aus welcher erst durch strenge historische Kritik ein wahrhaft geschichtliches Bild der von ihr geschilderten Personen und Verhältnisse gewonnen werden kann.”

<sup>5</sup> BAUR 1968: 65–66. Supporters of this hypothesis, among others, were: ZELLER, LIPSIUS, SCHMIEDEL, and HILGENFELD; although, both LIPSIUS and HILGENFELD later changed their minds.

<sup>6</sup> JUSTIN, *Apol.* I 26,2; 56,2.

Sem(o) was also revered as an ancient-eastern deity, namely the sun-god Herakles; who, like Simon, was also conferred with the title “standing one.” BAUR (1967: 306) traced the derivation of the names “Simon,” and “Simeon” to the oriental stem “Sem,” and claimed that the magician Simon should be identified with the ancient regional deity of Samaria: namely, the oriental sun god Sem-Herakles.

In contrast, Adolf HILGENFELD—the first person to consistently apply BAUR’s historical principle to the question of Simon—concluded that the Simon “legend” in Acts does not arise from the mythology of nature religion but from the domestic history of earliest Christianity: “... der Magier Simon nicht aus der Mythologie der Naturreligion, sondern vielmehr aus der inneren Geschichte des Urchristenthums zu stammen” (HILGENFELD 1868: 358).

HILGENFELD confirmed<sup>7</sup> what BAUR had already argued; namely, that the Simon of the Pseudo-Clementines is not the historical person known in the Acts, but an idealised personality: “[Der Simon der Klementinen ist] ... nicht die historische Person, die wir aus der Apostelgeschichte ... kennen, sondern eine idealisirte” (BAUR 1831: 126). In addition, HILGENFELD’s source-critical analysis of the Pseudo-Clementine Simon-story, which identified four strata, provided a new contribution to scholarly investigation in conjunction with his assessment that even the report of Justin Martyr clearly understands that no one other than the apostle Paul is meant by the portrayal of Simon Magus, since Justin never calls the apostle by his own name:

[Justin soll unter dem Simon Magier niemand anders haben verstehen können] ... als den Apostel Paulus, welchen er bei seinem wirklichen Namen niemals nennt. (HILGENFELD 1848 cited in LÜDEMANN 1975: 10)

For decades the Tübingen School’s critical assessment of the historical value of Acts provided the springboard for scholarly analysis. While those literary hypotheses now have been universally discarded there are certain historical points of view established by those hypotheses which continue to be advanced: (1), the contrast between Paul and the “primitive” church; (2), the distinction between Jewish and Gentile Christianity; and (3), the

<sup>7</sup> Later, following the research of RITSCHL and others, HILGENFELD (1966: 164) convinced himself about the historicity of Simon Magus. “Aber bei weiterer Forschung habe ich mich doch von der Geschichtlichkeit des Magiers Simon überzeugt ...”.

struggle of Paul with Judaizing groups.<sup>8</sup> So, the legacy of BAUR cannot be ignored.<sup>9</sup>

The beginning of the end for BAUR's equation of Simon with Paul was heralded first in the publication of *Die Entstehung der altkatholischen Kirche* by A. RITSCHL (1822–1889), and then later through the writings of T. ZAHN, H. HOLTZMANN, and A. VON HARNACK.<sup>10</sup> RITSCHL, a one-time protégé of BAUR, departed from his master's dictum about the conflict in earliest Christianity and demonstrated that early Christian history was not the story of two opposing forces grinding against each other. Peter needed to be distinguished from the Jewish Christians, and there was a Gentile Christianity distinct from Paul and little influenced by him. RITSCHL strongly argued that "catholicism"<sup>11</sup> was not the consequence of a reconciliation between Jewish and Gentile Christianity, but was an identifiable stage within the movement and rise of Gentile Christianity, independent of Paul. RITSCHL's thesis was later developed by Adolf VON

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<sup>8</sup> Cf. LÜDEMANN 1983; 1989a.

<sup>9</sup> The task of radical historical criticism in the twentieth century was championed for more than three decades by R. BULTMANN's "demythologizing" and "existential interpretation," and then by E. KÄSEMANN's observation of "early catholic" tendencies in the Pastoral Epistles. The literary-critical works of J. WELLHAUSEN, M. DIBELIUS, H. J. CADBURY, K. LAKE and F. J. FOAKES-JACKSON, as well as the redaction-critical work of W. ROHDE, W. MARXSEN, H. CONZELMANN, G. STRECKER, and E. HAENCHEN should also be mentioned. Further, BAUR's opinion that from the beginning the Christian community was divided over theology and practice has been developed by Walter BAUER (1904–1960) in his book *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity*. According to BAUER, in many geographical areas of antiquity so-called heresy was in fact prior to orthodoxy, and the heretical groups of the second century CE were the theological descendants of first century varieties of Christianity. BAUER's study, then, gave rise to the publication of J.M. ROBINSON's and H. KOESTER's argument for cultural and religious pluralism in the Hellenistic and Roman eras. ROBINSON and KOESTER proposed a method of investigating early Christianity that took seriously the dynamics of historical and cultural forces upon traditions about Jesus, and questioned established views about the background of early Christianity (eg. apocalyptic Judaism, rabbinic Judaism, Hellenism, Gnosticism). They advocated a trajectory-critical approach to the sources that rejected lines of demarcation between canonical and non-canonical, orthodox and heretical. They argued that the New Testament writings emerged from a context where boundaries between religious traditions and movements were not as fixed as previous scholarship had assumed or suggested.

<sup>10</sup> HOLTZMANN 1892; VON HARNACK 1911a; ZAHN 1917.

<sup>11</sup> The term "Frühkatholizismus" was not coined by the Tübingen school. Yet BAUR and his disciples argued in effect for an ongoing "catholicism" in the compromise between two rival factions.

HARNACK in his famous statement about the acute hellenization of Christianity.

Diametrically opposed to the conclusions of BAUR, Adolf VON HARNACK produced a three volume work (between 1906 and 1911) in defence of the historical value of Acts;<sup>12</sup> a New Testament book that he regarded as one of the pillars of our historical knowledge of early Christianity, along with the letters of Paul and Eusebius' *Church History*. HARNACK labelled BAUR's description of Simon as a mythological person as a "critical loss of direction,"<sup>13</sup> and claimed that "[t]he whole figure as well as the doctrines attributed to Simon ... not only have nothing improbable in them, but suit very well the religious circumstances which we must assume for Samaria."<sup>14</sup> He asserted with considerable confidence that in the Apostolic age there were attempts to establish new religions in Samaria, which, in all probability, were influenced by the tradition and preaching concerning Jesus.

Dositheus, Simon Magus, Cleobius, and Menander appeared as Messiahs or bearers of the God-head, and proclaimed a doctrine in which the Jewish faith was strangely and grotesquely mixed with Babylonian myths, together with some Greek additions. (HARNACK 1905: 245)

HARNACK concluded (1905: 246) that the main point about Simon in the sources (including Acts!) was his endeavour to create a universal religion of the supreme God; and, this explained his success among the Samaritans and Greeks. HARNACK argued that Simon was portrayed as a rival to Jesus, and he was convinced that at some early period the Simon movement proved "a real temptation for the early Church: to what extent, however, we cannot tell" (HARNACK 1962: 45). By this assessment, the Simon movement was a caricature of earliest Christianity, and the impression given in the sources of the reported success of Simonianism even beyond Palestine into the West (HARNACK was thinking of Rome) seemed to support his opinion.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>12</sup> HARNACK 1906(I); 1908(III); 1911(IV).

<sup>13</sup> HARNACK (1931: 270 n. 1), "Simon Magus für eine Fiktion zu halten, war eine schwere Verirrung der Kritik ...". Cf. BEYSCHLAG (1974: 79), "Die neuere Geschichte der Simon-Magus-Forschung beginnt mit einer enormen wissenschaftlichen Fehlleistung."

<sup>14</sup> HARNACK 1905: 246 n. 1.

<sup>15</sup> JUSTIN, *Apol.* I 26,3: Καὶ σχεδὸν πάντες μὲν Σαμαρεῖς, ὀλίγοι δὲ καὶ ἐν ἄλλοις ἔθνεσιν, ὡς τὸν πρῶτον θεὸν ἐκείνον [sc. Σίμωνα] ὁμολογοῦντες, ἐκείνον καὶ προσκυνοῦσιν.

The flow of Simon Magus research took on a new direction with the publication of H. WAITZ's 1904 article "Simon Magus in early Christian literature." WAITZ abandoned the *Tendenzkritik* of the Tübingen School and applied a literary-critical analysis to the Pseudo-Clementine materials, placing the problem of the Pseudo-Clementines on a new source-critical foundation by arguing for two source documents in addition to the primary document; namely, the *Acts of Peter* and the *Preaching of Peter*. WAITZ claimed that the Pseudo-Clementines and the *Acts of Peter* shared the same underlying source, which reported the pursuit of Peter by Simon from Caesarea through Sidon to Antioch (and not to Rome).

WAITZ identified some congruence between the reports about Simon in the canonical Acts and the *Acts of Peter*. He argued that they originally presented a Peter story and not a Philip story. Also, WAITZ drew parallels between the Simon of Acts and a like-named Jewish magician and adviser of the Procurator Felix reported by Josephus in *Ant.* XX 7,2. These conclusions distanced him from other scholars who attempted to identify Simon as a Gnostic or messianic figure. WAITZ was convinced that the historical significance of Simon existed rather as he is portrayed in Acts – as a magician: "... was sein ständiger Beiname sagt, als Magier d.h. Zauberer" (WAITZ 1906a: 358).

In a series of articles produced between 1925 and 1926, the Belgian Catholic scholar Lucien CERFAUX continued the literary and source-critical work begun by WAITZ; although, CERFAUX expressed extreme scepticism over against the Pseudo-Clementines and placed greater trust in the writings of the Church Fathers. According to CERFAUX (1926: 272) the Simon of Acts came from the "pagan *milieu*" of Samaria and was principally a magician about whom the reports detail no clear boundary between Magic and Mystery. CERFAUX staunchly defended the historical accuracy of the Simon account in Acts 8 and pointed to the confirmation of details later reported by ancient Christian writers, in particular the text of Irenaeus (*Adv. Haer.* I 23,4).

CERFAUX claimed that Simon belonged to a brotherhood of ancient magicians whose teachings and practices are now accessible through the Greek Magical Papyri. His thesis was that Simon was an historical first century figure, a magician who was much later elevated by the Gnostic tradition to the rank of a spiritual master, if not a quasi-divine figure. Further, CERFAUX sought through meticulous investigation to furnish proof that the Syntagma tradition of Hippolytus was the foundation for all early Christian descriptions of Simonianism. However, the *Apophysis Megale* ("Great Revelation")—considered by some later



scholars<sup>16</sup> to be a genuine work of Simon himself—CERFAUX (1926: 18 n. 1) labeled as belonging to the extreme edge of any perspective; more like the work of some later disciples because of its strongly philosophic flavour.

Besides the methodological difficulties posed by CERFAUX's retrograde interpretation—viewing Acts 8 in light of later Patristic writings—his work can also be criticised for its lack of objectivity when dealing with the question of ancient magic, and for its disregard shown for the specific character and context of individual materials used in his comparative analysis. For example, the premise of CERFAUX about ancient magic corresponded with nineteenth century scholarship which distinguished between magic and religion. Accordingly, astrology and magic were considered as popular superstitions and mere shadows of genuine religion. “L’astrologie et la magie enchaînaient alors la superstition populaire et pénétraient toutes les dévotions” (CERFAUX 1926: 265).

Further, CERFAUX intentionally compared the figure of Simon in Acts 8 with the successful second century CE prophet and miracle worker Alexander of Abounoteichus, whose biography *Alexander, the False Prophet* was penned by Lucian of Samosata.<sup>17</sup> Lucian reported the reactions of the people of Abounoteichus who believed Alexander to be “the god visible” (ἐναργὴ τοῦ θεοῦ) and therefore prayed to him and worshipped him. In this example it can be demonstrated that CERFAUX not only subscribed to Lucian's depiction of Alexander as a “charlatan without scruples” before considering the questions of authorial objectivity or intent, but also sketched the person of Simon with similar colours. So, CERFAUX interpreted Acts 8 by applying the insights and information recorded in Patristic and contemporary Graeco-Roman literature without pausing to consider their polemical, satirical, or apologetic tenor; neither did CERFAUX consider the possibility that the Lukan text presented a subjective or inaccurate picture of Simon.

In his *Gnosis und spätantiker Geist* (GO 1934) Hans JONAS mirrored the approach of CERFAUX to the question of Simon by attempting to identify the historical Simon in light of contemporary figures such as pseudo-

<sup>16</sup> Cf. SALLES-DABADIE (1969: 143) who describes the *Apophysis Megale* as a genuine work of Simon which contains “... la gnose archaïque et rudimentaire.”

<sup>17</sup> Lucian was a second century CE writer who considered religious beliefs, visions, ghosts, and magic to be the contemptible inventions of charlatans that needed to be exposed. Most of Lucian's books are satirical in form and aim to entertain. Yet, some works have a more serious link with the intellectual life of his time. Cf. *OHCW* 1995: 671.

messianic prophets, Apollonius of Tyana, and Alexander of Abounoteichus.<sup>18</sup> JONAS (1967a: 103) commented that with regards to the deification of Simon “the terms in which Simon is said to have spoken of himself are testified by the pagan writer Celsus to have been current with the pseudo-messiahs still swarming in Phoenicia and Palestine at his time about the middle of the second century.” However, a disappointing and frustrating feature of JONAS’ work is that he almost entirely neglects questions of time and context. In this regard Florent HEINTZ correctly observes the failure of JONAS to recognise the context or character of the passage he quotes from Celsus, and the impossibility of transferring to Simon a comment which originally was clearly meant to refer to Jesus:

Là encore, l’argument omet de prendre en compte que le texte de Celse est un libelle fortement polémique dirigé contre Jésus et les Chrétiens, englobant dans son attaque tous ceux qui se disent “fils de Dieu” et dont la nuance est loin d’être le souci premier. En somme, Jonas ... ne [fait] que transférer sur Simon une notice ouvertement tendancieuse que son auteur destinait à Jésus. (HEINTZ 1997: 11)

Ernst HAENCHEN was a chief exponent of the new hermeneutical approach to Luke–Acts, which initially dominated scholarly investigations after 1945. This *redaktionsgeschichtliche* approach asked not only about primary and secondary traditions, but also about authorial intention and social context. HAENCHEN described Luke as a creative editor who shaped the traditions at his disposal to support his theological bias (*Tendenz*). He proposed that Luke’s theology is best discovered by examining the way in which Luke altered his sources.

The book of Acts may be read properly as source material for early Christianity only if the reader frees himself from the charm of its simplified presentation and does not overlook the thread of what is edifying in the Lukan fabric. (HAENCHEN 1976: 265)

According to HAENCHEN<sup>19</sup> the Simon of Acts 8 and the Simon reported by various Church Fathers were identical: a Gnostic worshipped by his followers as a redeemer god of Helen/Ennoia the female companion of Simon. Except for the Samaritan acclamation of Simon as “the great power of God” HAENCHEN considered that the Lukan account — a blend of

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<sup>18</sup> Cf. WILSON (1979: 491) who agrees that “[f]or Simon himself the prophets of Celsus, or such figures as Apollonius of Tyana and Alexander of Abounoteichus, still seem to provide the closest parallels.”

<sup>19</sup> In particular reference is made to HAENCHEN 1952: 316–349; 1973: 267–279.