

Les Actes de Pierre et des douze apôtres (NH VI, 1)

Auteur(s):

Victor Ghica

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Acta apostolorum and fantastic tale, post-resurrectional account and parable of the quest for the Kingdom, ode to the resistance against persecutions but also founding myth of the Christian mission, propaganda text as much as manual of mystical evasion, the first treatise of the codex VI of Nag Hammadi lends itself to multiple readings. This polysemy stems from a complex redactional process, of which the text preserves numerous traces, that crystallises into four distinct discourses concealed in as many stories, at once autonomous and interdependent: a multivocal theology, at the same time ecstatic and symbolic, conveyed by the hybrid story of Lithargoel, both allegory of the soul's salvation and psychanody; an euthymic teaching transmitted by the resurrected Jesus of an epiphanic scene; a diaconal theology and an innovative theory of the Christian mission, corollaries of a missionary account; and an ascetic theology as well as an eulogy to the perpetuation of the Church that both underpin a wide metaphor of endurance. Whilst its last compositional phase could be attributed to a Meletian circle of the very beginning of the 4th century, this apocryphon seems to circulate, not only in Egypt but also in Rome, Nubia and Palestine, at least until the 12th century.