

ON THE LEGEND OF SIMON MAGUS
– TRACES OF THE MAGICIAN AND OF GNOSIS
IN JAN VALENTIN SAETHER'S ART

by Hanne Storm Ofteland

TRIPTYCH

by Jan Valentin Saether

Right panel (or random order)

The rush of love
 from childhood through maturity
 that angels bring
 without the slightest touch of jealousy
 renders earthly life so densely unreal
 we fail to see with accuracy
 that mortals also fly
 Birth to sky

Center panel

In a famous moment
 above the city of the Beast
 rose Simon Magus the magician
 Until the one they called the rock
 he who also was a Simon
 ruled flying out with hypocrisy and law
 And so the magic falls
 Flight to stone

Left panel

The stars above
 are in time the dust below
 and the blackness of the waiting room
 the vastness of a zero
 A single witness
 gazing from a planetary crust
 perceives an ancient light
 whose source by now might well be ash
 Dying into life

Introduction

My first introduction to Simon Magus was through the poem *Triptych* cited on the left page, which Jan wrote in 2002. I had never heard about Simon from Gitta until then, even though I was well familiar with Jan's large, enigmatic painting *Magus*. But both the poem and the painting intrigued me, and I soon started connecting the dots. Ruth Weisberg's excellent analysis of *Magus* in her article "Jan Valentin Saether: The Light Divided"¹ pointed me in the direction of the underlying and partly hidden Gnostic cosmology in Jan's art. To this day, her article is the most thorough investigation into his Gnostic world view in relation to the themes in his art. But there were no references to Simon from Gitta there. Or to Helen of Tyre.

I have spent the last fifteen years cataloguing and studying Jan's art and his writings both on art and Gnostic topics, as well as reading about so-called Gnosticism and the Gnostics. In addition I have tried to get an overview of Gnostic iconography throughout history. When it comes to iconography, there really isn't much research to go on, though. Some gems depicting *Abraxas*²; the *Ouroboros* motif; *Sophia*; the *Bridal Chamber*; some alchemical illustrations; sigils in the margins of ancient manuscripts... Of these, only *Abraxas* seem to be "exclusive" to the Gnostics. C.W. King's *The Gnostics and their Remains, Ancient and Mediæval* (1864) is perhaps still today (150 years later!) the most thorough study in this field.

Then there is the question regarding Simon from Gitta. Few traces of him are to be found, neither in writings nor in art. Several bas reliefs do exist, though, as well as some paintings. But these are depicting defamatory stories of the early church fathers in their attempt to discredit Simon³. The most rendered story is "The Fall of Simon": Simon falling from the sky, dying, being humiliated (and even killed) by the apostle Peter. Alberto Ferreiro in his article "Simon Magus: The Patristic-Medieval Traditions and Historiography"⁴ refers to the *Princeton Index of Christian Art* for an overview of the catalogued iconography on Simon Magus. He also describes several of the known depictions of Simon Magus in his article.

Are there any other traces of a Gnostic cosmology/mythology in western art? William Blake's unique visionary oeuvre is perhaps what comes closest to presenting a *Gnostic world view*: His watercoloured etching *The Ancient of Days* depicts Urizen setting his compass to the earth. Urizen is often seen as the Demiurge (or false god), or the God of the Old Testament, and a key Gnostic figure. And then there are Blake's Christ depictions, including his *Resurrection*. According to Lynda Harris, Gnostic (Cathar) elements are also to be found in

Hieronymus Bosch's works.⁵ Another famous mystical work is the beautiful coloured Flammarian⁶ wood engraving by an unknown artist, showing a traveller putting his head under the edge of the firmament. Seeing through the machinations can be interpreted as a Gnostic view – but not exclusively so.

Upon a closer look it appears that much Gnostic material is suppressed and not visible in the public domain.

But who were (or are) these Gnostics? Their metaphysics was so thoroughly wiped out by the early church that if it hadn't been for the discovery of the *Pistis Sophia* in 1773 and of the *Nag Hammadi Library* in 1945, we would still be grasping at straws.⁷ Perhaps we still are? And where does Simon from Gitta fit into the picture? And what makes me so sure it's him that is being depicted in Jan's painting *Magus*?

The aim of this article is to analyse the painting *Magus* in light of available writings on the Simon Magus stories, and try to see whether it can actually be read as a depiction of Simon from Gitta and Helen of Tyre, and if so, how it differs from the way Simon (and Helen) have been presented in art until this day.

How to interpret Jan's art without a thorough knowledge of the esoteric currents underlying European art and history? I do not think it is possible. The Gnostic mythical landscape is vast, and cannot be covered here. Myths and concepts necessary for the analysis of the painting *Magus*, will be briefly introduced, as will apocryphal and patristic writings pertaining to Simon and Helen, as they too are essential to my argument and analysis.

The Fall from and Return to the Pleroma

As stated above, I am not going to give any in-depth survey of Gnostic mythology. Much has already been written on this,⁸ and it is not the scope of this article. Suffice it to say that the *Gnosis Archive* web site⁹ is an excellent starting point for those interested in learning more. Another good introduction to the subject is Giovanni Filoramo's book *A History of Gnosticism*¹⁰. For a brief overview of the stages of the Gnostic system, see James J. Hurtak's *Gnosticism: Mystery of Mysteries*¹¹, pp. 86-87. Andrew Phillip Smith's *A Dictionary of Gnosticism*¹² is also a very useful resource.

The guiding lines of ancient Gnostic myths are "the Fall from the Pleroma¹³ and the reconstruction of primordial unity".¹⁴ *Sophia* (Greek, "wisdom"), the lowest of the aeons¹⁵ "experiences a fall that brings the material universe and the demiurge¹⁶ into being. She is then restored, at least partially, to her former position by an aeon who may be known as the Savior."¹⁷

According to Tor Kaare Kvaal, in his unfinished manuscript (pre 1994), Gnostic mythology (as well as Simonian mythology) contains five “mandatory” phases:

1. The pre-existence of and emergence of a spiritual universe;
2. Creation as a cosmic error;
3. The incarceration and humiliation of the human soul that belongs with God;
4. The rescuing of the human soul by the saviour;
5. The termination of the created world.¹⁸



Sophia

Simon from Gitta

Simon Magus is a mysterious figure. Called “the Father of Gnosticism”, and “the Father of All Heresies” by Irenaeus, referred to as Satan in *The Acts of Peter*, used as model for the Faust character. A contemporary of Jesus (they probably knew each other or knew about each other), student and alleged successor of John the Baptist, influenced by Heraclitus and Greek philosophy... According to legend (and the church fathers) a statue was erected in his honour in the middle of the river Tiber in Rome. A powerful charismatic figure, obviously – yet almost no traces of him remain in contemporary sources. He was born in Gitta, Samaria (only a few miles from Nazareth, when one studies the map), and according to the *Clementine Recognitions*, a late Jewish-Christian romance written in the voice of Clement of Rome¹⁹, his father was one Antonius, his mother one Rachel.²⁰

With primary sources non-existing, and early secondary sources sparse, the question of whether he really even did exist emerges from time to time. Was “Simon Magus” a cipher for the apostle Paul? Some have claimed that his real identity could be Iamblichus or Marcion.²¹ Much has been thought and written about this.²² But this being an art historical article, and not Bible exegesis, I will analyse the painting in light of the character Simon Magus as he is presented in the available sources without further ado.

Sources

As already mentioned, there are no primary sources available. Most stories concerning Simon are written by vehement enemies – long after he’s gone. The following information is to a large extent based on G.R.S. Mead’s excellent book on *Simon Magus* from 1892.²³ In part I he lists all available sources of information, while he reviews the “authorities” in part II.

The Acts of the Apostles mention Simon briefly (8:9-24). This man, believed by his followers in Samaria to be “the Great Power of God,” lets himself be baptised by the apostle Philip. When Peter and John later visits Samaria and give their new followers the Holy Spirit by their laying of hands on the subjects, Simon is impressed and wants to purchase the secret as to how this can be done. He is rebuked by Peter who curses him, and the story ends with Simon answering Peter: “Pray ye to the Lord for me, that none of these things which ye have spoken come upon me.” And that is all there is of Simon in the Bible. I’ve cited the entire passage from the Acts on the next page:

The Acts of the Apostles, Chapter 8:9-24²⁴

- 9 But there was a certain man, called Simon, which beforetime in the same city used sorcery and bewitched the people of Sa-ma'-ri-a, giving out that he himself was some great one:
- 10 To whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, This man is the great power of God.
- 11 And to him they had regard, because that of long time he had bewitched them with sorceries.
- 12 But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.
- 13 Then Simon himself believed also: and when he was baptized, he continued with Philip, and wondered, beholding the miracles and signs which were done.
- 14 Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Sa-ma'-ri-a had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John:
- 15 Who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost:
- 16 (For as yet he was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.)
- 17 Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost.
- 18 And when Simon saw that through laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money,
- 19 Saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost.
- 20 But Peter said unto him, Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money.
- 21 Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy heart is not right in the sight of God.
- 22 Repent therefore of this thy wickedness and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee.
- 23 For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity.
- 24 Then answered Simon, and said, Pray ye to the Lord for me, that none of these things which ye have spoken come upon me.

The Great Declaration – Simon's Own Writing? Ironically, thanks to one of the church fathers, *Epiphanius* (ca. 310/320-410), sections of what is said to be Simon's own work, *The Great Declaration* (or *Apophasis Megale*), survives to this day. *Epiphanius'* book *Panarion*²⁵ (written 374-377), also known as "Against

Heresies”, quotes the only remnants of what is said to be Simon Magus’ own text. This text has recently been reconstructed and translated by Robert Price²⁶. And it is in the *Apophysis Megale* Helen enters the story. Whether Simon of Gitta actually wrote this text himself or not, remains an open question. The importance of the text on the other hand is not. It is a very fascinating text, strangely modern and psychological.

The Helen (or Sophia) of The Great Declaration. In chapter 7 of the *Great Declaration*, Helen (or Sophia) is introduced. The chapter starts by retelling the story of the female form *Thought*, who is “set upon and defiled by the angels and lower powers who made this world of matter” when she appears in the “midst of the rushing water of the realm of becoming”. *Thought* is the lost sheep of the parable, and the masculine *Mind* seeks her out “at the cost of abandoning all his goods”. She “passes from body to body, ever abiding in the forms of women, and ever does she hurl the powers of the world into confusion, pitting the one against the other, by reason of her superior beauty, as of the heavens themselves.” When *Thought* incarnates in the streets of Tyre, and ends up in a brothel in the figure of Helen²⁷, her *zyzygy*²⁸, *Mind*, gains “entry to the realm of her captors by appearing in the likeness of their creatures as a man.” *Mind* takes on the form of Simon, a man, though he “was not really a man”. The chapter ends: “Thus I [Simon/*Mind*] wrought the ransoming of the human race, recalling to myself the sparks of the latent fire which the angels used to order their creation, and this must issue in the dissolution of the world, but equally in the redemption of all who believe in me.”²⁹

Apocryphal Writings. According to Alberto Ferreiro, two principal sources about Simon Magus perpetuated his memory. In addition to the story from the *Acts of the Apostles* (cited and referred to above), two apocryphal writings, the *Actus Petri cum Simone* (*Acts of Peter*) and the *Passio Sanctorum Apostolorum Petri et Pauli* (*Passio*) play a part.³⁰ An alternate version to the *Passio* is *The Acts of Peter and Paul*, with variances in the introductory part of the text.³¹ *The Acts of Peter* is the oldest of the two, originally composed in Greek during the second half of the second century, probably in Asia Minor.³² Epiphanius claims that the author is one Leucius Charinus. The *Acts of Peter and Paul* is a younger text, thought to date after the fourth century. Both texts tell the stories of Peter’s encounters and duels with Simon in the city of Rome. Here we can read the two different stories concerning dogs, we can read about the Emperor Nero, about challenges including the killing of a young boy and raising of the dead, and the famous story of Simon’s fall from the sky on the Campus Martius in Rome, leading to his death.

Patristic Writings. There are writings about Simon both prior to the Synods of Antioch (264-268 AD) where Gnosticism was condemned as a heresy, and

prior to the First Council of Nicea (325 AD), as well as later. Mead lists and goes through the different church fathers' writings about Simon. They are all based upon the Acts and ActsPet, and were embellished and embroidered by them. I will therefore not go into detail about what each church father has written, but just list them briefly here:³³

Justin Martyr, 100-165 AD: *Apologia 1 and 11*, and *Dialogus cum Tryphone*.

Irenæus, ?-202 AD: *Contra Hæreses*.

Clemens Alexandrinus, 150-215 AD: *Stromateis*.

Tertullianus, 160-224 AD: *De Præscriptionibus adversus Hæreticos*,
and *De Anima*.

Hippolytus(?), 170-235 AD: *Philosophumena*.

Origenes, 184/5-253/54 AD: *Contra Celsum*.

Philastrius, ?- pre 397 AD: *De Heræsisibus*.

Epiphanius, 310/20-403 AD: *Contra Heræses*.

Hieronymus, 347-420 AD: *Commentarium in Evangelicum Matthæi*.

Theodoretus, 393-457 AD: *Hereticarum Fabularum Compendium*.

Justin Martyr is the first of the church fathers to mention Simon's companion, Helen. He is also responsible for the everlasting confusion as to whether the statue already mentioned was erected in Simon's honour or not, as he confused the inscription on the monument, "Semo Sanctus" (a Sabine god, the equivalent of Hercules) with "Simoni Deo Sancto".³⁴

The Simon of Myths and Legends – Enter Faust. In the Pseudo-Clementine³⁵ text, *The Recognitions* (translated into Latin and into Syriac, both about 400 AD), the Simon of the legends appears for the first time. Here the competition between Peter and Simon Magus is further embroidered upon, ending with magic duels in the presence of the Emperor Nero. This type of literature was meant to provide entertainment along with edification. In later times, the medieval story of Faust was based on the Simon of the *Recognitions*.

Simon Magus is *the* prototype of the European magician. He's the figure Christopher Marlowe's and Goethe's Faust characters were modelled upon. And still today, the name of Simon Magus lives on, both in films and fiction literature. He appears in Dante's *La Divina commedia* (written in the early 1300s) as well as in Theodor Roszak's novel *Flicker* from 1991, just to mention a few well known titles.

Magic in the Ancient World

In the time of Jesus, magic was a common part of the world. According to Morton Smith, the magician had to be able to perform miracles. "In popular thought 'son of god' and 'magician' are alternative titles for the miracle man."³⁶

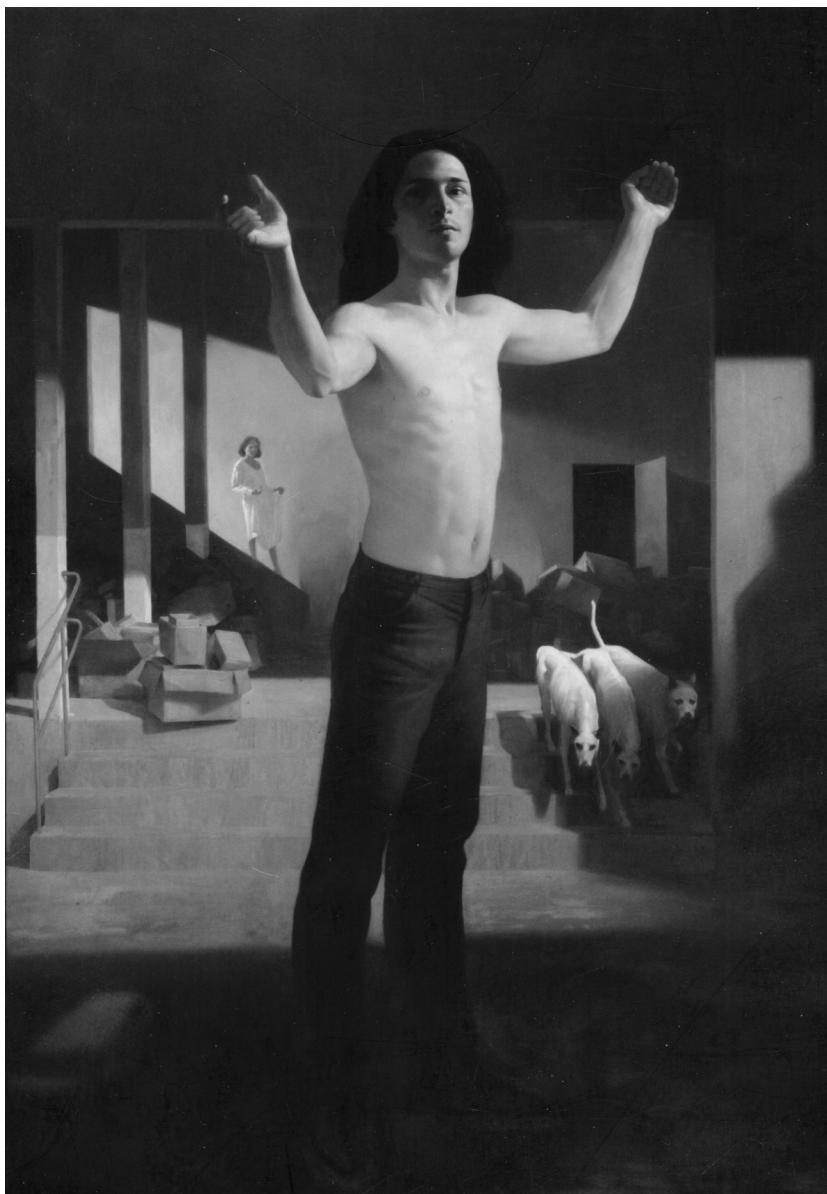
Then there was also the claim of divinity. *Magi* had distinctive ethical and eschatological teachings. A magician was one who could appear as a teacher and attract a following.³⁷ Magis were accompanied by inner circles of devoted disciples. They were “credited with prophesies, exorcisms, cures, and an occasional raising of the dead”. They taught as if with authority, came into conflict with the established clergy of the temples they visited and tried to reform, and made severe moral demands on their hearers.³⁸ This held true for Jesus, and for Appolonius of Tyana, – and surely for Simon Magus, as well. Art historian Harry Felt describes the age of Simon Magus as an age imbued with magic, a pre-scientific intellectual world beyond the laws of logic. Like the antique world in general, the *Old Testament*, is filled with magic, and magic is no stranger to the *New Testament* either. Magic is an integral part to Christian intellectual history. To be canonized a saint in the Roman Catholic Church, at least two miracles must have been performed through the saint’s intercession after his or her death.³⁹ There is white magic and black magic, the latter type connected with the Devil and with demons.⁴⁰ So, being a magician in the ancient world was something quite different than the idea of the magician today.

Simon Magus in Art

Even though Simon Magus has followed the western world from the first century AD until today, there really isn’t much art to show for it. His enigmatic character has been transformed into the Faust character, and he is also the model for many a sorcerer – but this is all in *literature*. Going through available sources, image databases and research, the results are meagre. The first mentioning is of the statue erected in Simon’s honour in the middle of the Tiber in Rome. As mentioned on the preceding page, this was first recorded by Justin Martyr in his *Apologia* 1.26,⁴¹ but has later been refuted by many scholars. The inscription “Semo Sanctus” was wrongly interpreted by him (and other church fathers) to indicate a monument to Simon.⁴² Then, from medieval times, through the Renaissance, and until the Baroque era, Simon is depicted both in reliefs, drawings and paintings, most often the subject being “the Fall of Simon”⁴³, where he is cursed into his death by Peter. This motif is inspired by the two apocryphal texts, the *Acts of Peter* and *Acts of Peter and Paul*,⁴⁴ and they must be seen as part of the church’s propaganda.

Magus

Magus is a part of Jan’s series of paintings *Gnostic Journey*. In my view, this is perhaps *the one* painting of his that provides the viewer with a key, opening up to the Gnostic myths and his world view. Many other of his art works are also filled with Gnostic references, but not as clearly as *Magus*.



Magus

Magus depicts a vast, *empty*, basement-like room. (I've emphasised the word "empty", as it is important for the interpretation and I will return to it later.) The ceiling is quite high, we cannot see it. Actually, it is not possible to really fathom the dimensions of the room. There are no indications as to where it ends, but for the back wall. The room seems to stretch backwards – a wide low staircase is drawing the attention of the viewer back, back, into the innermost part of this huge basement. Three square pillars on the left-hand side in the picture, and the red railing on this staircase are aids that lead the eye backwards. The room is semi-divided at the staircase, – a lintel is cutting across the room, almost like a frame, ending in a partial wall on the right, acting as a sort of right-hand side frame. Another, taller staircase is coming in from the left in the picture's back. At least I assume it's a staircase, by the triangular shape leading downwards from the picture's left, and into the middle of the pictorial space. A soft, bluish light is flowing down from upstairs. To the right, furthestmost back, is a plain unframed door wide open – into blackness.

The pictorial composition is built around strong, architectonic lines. Jan presents us with an unadorned interior. I sense some sort of rectangular concrete object in the shadow in the foreground, aiding in drawing the gaze inwards, towards the middle by its direction.

The foreground half of the picture is lit by some mysterious light source from the right, and the back (as described earlier) by the soft light shining down from the top of the left-hand side staircase. A dark and dramatic shadow play is caused by the light sources cast onto the sparse architectonics of the room.

The only objects in this vast room are cardboard boxes – two huge piles of empty cardboard boxes, one to the left in the middle distance, another partially covering up the view of the door to the right in the background. These boxes compositionally add to the feeling of depth in the picture.

There are two people in the painting. The one I must assume is the *Magus* is standing in the painting's forefront. He is impressive, a towering character, and the painting's centre of attention, as well as physical centre. He has long, dark brown/black hair, his face is shaved, and he is clad in a pair of simple black trousers. I sense some black shoes on his feet. Otherwise he is stripped to the waist. Half his face is bathed in light, the other half is in darkness.

To his left, in the background, a tiny female figure is entering the scene, coming down the staircase on the far left. She is clad in a simple white dress which seems to be a night gown, barefoot, and has her soft, brown hair loose, reaching down to her shoulders.

To the right, in the middle distance, three beautiful, enigmatic white dogs are coming towards us, descending the stairs into the middle of the rendered space. They are clustered together in a tight group, looking at us. The one to the right has its tail high in the air.

The colour scheme is simple: Walls and floors are painted in warm, soft grey tones. The cardboard boxes are kept in a warm light brown. The dogs, the bottom part of the pillars, and the woman's dress are white. The man's skin tones range from dark shadows to whitish where the light hits his bare chest. The only strong colour in the painting is the red thin railing on the front staircase's left side.

So, – how come I think this is the Simon Magus of *The Acts of the Apostles*? And the woman in the background Helen?

This male figure is standing in a very particular position. Is he waving, praying? What is he up to? The ancient way of depicting people in prayer (and the way prayers were performed in antiquity) was with hands raised up towards the sky. So this could indicate some sort of religious activity taking place. Him being bathed in light may also point in the direction of some divine presence. His facial expression is very calm, sincere, – is he looking directly *at* us, or at something *behind* us? It is difficult to interpret. Is he inviting us in, into the picture, into his world, – or is this some private situation taking place – between him and some divine entity? The woman in the background seems to have little to do with his activities. Or is he perhaps conjuring her forthcoming? His arms are stretched wide, – like the medieval apsis mosaic of the *Pantocrator* of Monreale, Sicily. The posture exudes *power*. But his hands and fingers are held in a somewhat different position than the traditional pantocrator's, or world ruler's. Our man seems to be measuring something with his index and thumb fingers. Something small. Could he also be exhibiting a measure with his arms – of something larger?

According to Filoramo, in the *Corpus Hermeticum*⁴⁵, one theme that is presented is “...the structure of the cosmos and the relationship between its elements; the nature of disorderly, irrational matter; the relationship between the macrocosm and the particular microcosm that is the human being.”⁴⁶ Perhaps the two measures that our lead character is making, can be seen as the measuring of the macrocosm (with his arms), and the microcosm (with his fingers)? The large measure and the small measure – the universe and man. We know that Simon is supposed to have travelled to Alexandria, where he studied Greek philosophy among other subjects. His writing, the *Apophysis Megale*, bears witness of this connection.⁴⁷ As above, so below.

Simon Magus in the *Great Declaration*, chapter 1, refers to himself as “He Who Has Stood, Stands, and Will Stand”.⁴⁸ And there surely is something monumental about the man we see in Jan's painting. His pose recalls both the young shepherd-Christ of early Christian Christ depictions, the Christ-Helios, a young, unbearded Christ clad in simple clothing, as well as the later, more imposing Christ as Pantocrator – a Zeus-inspired iconography. Both these motifs were very popular in late Antiquity and well into the Middle Ages.

*Kenosis*

Then there is the question of the *exile*. In Gnostic mythology, the exile is an essential state of being. Sophia is exiled, human beings are exiled. It is about finding the way home, finding the spark within each one of us, about connecting with our divine source. Simon is a representative for a *double exile*. In addition to his exile as part of the human condition, he is exiled from the church, branded a heretic by the church fathers.

What then about the boxes and the vast empty space? What do they signify? In Christian theology, *kenosis* is the concept of the “self-emptying” of one’s own will and becoming entirely receptive to God and the divine will. It is used both as an explanation of the Incarnation, and as an indication of the nature of God’s activity and will.⁴⁹ In another work of Jan’s, called *Kenosis*, two Bibles have been stripped of their contents, – the empty covers are fastened to a sheet of lead with melted beeswax that covers the entire work, with light, unreadable text engravings, washed with blue paint, its support being a wooden panel that can be folded. The *emptying* is an important premise in the process of connecting with the divine spirit, for finding and experiencing *Gnosis*.

Jan explores the themes of Exile and Kenosis in most of his work: E.g. the portrait series, *Exile*, his short art novel, *An Artist in Exile: The Viloshin Letters*, as well as in his major circle of works, *Gnostic Journey*. To convey the feeling of the unconscious, of the nomadic, he employs cardboard boxes, paper bags, envelopes, cold concrete environments, etc. both in his paintings and material based works. He makes use of our rubbish, leftovers, containers without any warmth, to communicate this.

In the background of *Magus* we see a woman coming down the stairs, emerging from bluish shadows, cast by the moonlight perhaps?

In Simon’s version of the Gnostic myth, the female form *Thought*, was “set upon and defiled by the angels and lower powers who made this world of matter” when she appeared in the “midst of the rushing water of the realm of becoming”. *Thought* is the lost sheep of the parable, and the masculine *Mind* seeks her out “at the cost of abandoning all his goods.” Passing from body to

body, ever abiding in the forms of women, *Thought* finally incarnates in the figure of Helen. Her zzygy, *Mind*, gained “entry to the realm of her captors by appearing in the likeness of their creatures as a man,” – Simon. Looking at the painting, I see *Mind* and *Thought* coming together in this bare basement with all of its connotations of emptying, of exile, of the unconscious. This brings to mind another Gnostic image: *The Bridal Chamber*. Are we witnessing the union of two yoke-mates, a prelude to the *Bridal Chamber*? Being the place where the bride united with the groom, it serves as a metaphor for the “union of the soul with the spirit that is the result of Gnosis”.⁵⁰

There is also the question of the three dogs clustered together, almost like if their bodies were one. Of course, the first association that comes to mind is the three-headed dog *Kerberos*. And the door opening onto the intense blackness could be interpreted as the gate to *Hades*. Is the man in the foreground then a gatekeeper? Another way of seeing the dogs is as representations of the unconscious. In ancient times dogs were sacrificed to deceased people to function as pathfinders in the afterworld. Interestingly enough, the dogs are *white*. Traditionally, magicians’ and witches’ dogs are black, e.g. Faust’s dog.⁵¹

It may be a bit far fetched, but the Simon Magus of the church fathers derives from two different stories involving dogs when it comes to the Simon / Peter duels, both originating in two apocryphal Christian documents, the *Actus Petri cum Simone (Acts of Peter)* and the *Passio Sanctorum Apostolorum Petri et Pauli*.⁵² mentioned earlier.

In the *Acts of Peter*, Peter arrives in Rome to rid the congregation of the evil grip of Simon Magus, who is “lodged in the house of Marcellus a senator, whom he had convinced by his charms” (*Acts of Peter*, verse VIII). Simon refuses to go out to meet Peter, saying to the servants that he is not home, and Peter puts a spell on a dog, giving him the ability to talk like a human being, and sends the dog in to tell Simon to come out – to the astonishment of the crowds that have gathered to witness the event. Not much happens, but Peter wins the crowds over by his magic.

The *Acts of Peter and Paul* tells a somewhat more dramatic story: The emperor Nero has summoned Simon, Peter and Paul to a hearing to find out what the animosity among the three is about. Simon has convinced him of his magical skills, while Peter and Paul try to show what a fraud or *goes*⁵³ Simon really is. Peter tells Nero that he can prove that Simon is a fraud, that he can expose Simon by reading his mind – while Simon will not be able to guess what he (Peter) is thinking about. Peter then has a barley loaf brought, and secretly given to him. He breaks it, and has it heaped up in his sleeves. An enraged Simon (according to the story) cries out: “Let the great dogs come forth, and

eat him [Peter] up before Cæsar,” conjuring up some angry dogs that rush at Peter. Peter then stretches forward his hands to pray, shows to the dogs the loaf which he has blessed; which the dogs seeing, no longer appeared. Peter thereafter says to the Emperor: “Behold, I have shown thee that I knew what Simon was thinking of, not by words, but by deeds; for he, having promised that he would bring angels against me, has brought dogs, in order that he might show that he had not god-like but dog-like angels.”⁵⁴

Of these possible interpretations, I think the Hades/Kerberos explanation is the most likely one. The dogs may be seen as symbols of the realm of the dead, baptism traditionally being seen as death and rebirth, the unconscious – these are plausible explanations, building up the argument regarding the rest of the painting’s contents. However, the stories about Simon, Peter and the dogs are still interesting ones, worth considering in this context.

The Simon stories were “popular” in medieval iconography. The motifs actually traveled so wide and far in Europe so as to reach the utmost corners. In Nes (Sauherad, Norway), a church from the 1180s has several illustrations from the *Acts of Peter* on its inner northern wall⁵⁵ – just like the southern European, more central churches, e.g. the Cappella Palatino in Palermo, which sports two Simon Magus stories on the northern side of its nave. These are also from the 1100s, probably somewhat 50 years older than the depictions in Norway. This tells us that the legends about Simon were widely disseminated by the church. But why?⁵⁶ For some reason, he was (and remains to this day) a serious threat to the Catholic church, that she needs to demonize in writings and art.

As time goes on, depictions of Simon gets rarer, as does the public’s knowledge of him. And as we approach our own age, he has all but disappeared. The unflattering term “simony” is all that seems to be left of him in the collective consciousness. – Or?

Strangely enough, two movies about Simon Magus have seen the light of day lately: *Simon Magus* (1999), directed by Ben Hopkins, and *Simon mágu* (also 1999), directed by Ildikó Enyedi. There is also Victor Saville’s 1954 movie, *The Silver Chalice*, Paul Newman’s debut movie. And, on a much more serious note, in the end of *The Red Book*, Carl Gustav Jung reveals his companion ΦΙΛΗΜΩΝ (Filemon) to be Simon Magus.⁵⁷

While the poem *Triptych* retells the story first rendered in the *Acts of Peter*, the most depicted story concerning Simon, where Simon the Magician battles Simon Peter in Rome, leading to his falling from the sky as Peter challenges the evil demons holding him up, leading to the death of Simon, Jan’s painting shows a quite different Simon – a Simon that has never been depicted in this way (a *Gnostic* way) throughout the ages. But as for his poem, the first and third

verses cancel out the sad story in the middle verse, telling the eternal truths all Gnostics can relate to – about how love conquers all, about eternity, and that mortals *do* indeed also fly.

Gnostic Journey

Art always tries to reach beyond daily experiences into something more subtle and profound. It pushes the envelope into other realms.

– Jan Valentin Saether⁵⁸

It is perfectly all right to study Jan's art without any prior knowledge of Christianity, Gnosticism, or history. His works contain so many other qualities in addition to the "literary" ones, by means of composition, colour schemes, excellent craftsmanship, and a painterly dialogue with past and present traditions within the figurative field. I suspect most beholders do not know the amount of content they are missing out on – and still have an absolutely valid aesthetic experience while looking at his art works.

But for the curious spectator, there are clues to set him or her on the path to the paintings' intrinsic meanings. The titles are, of course, the first door openers (as in so much art).

At his first solo exhibition at Kunstnerforbundet in Oslo in 1972 – in addition to his working with portraits as a main subject at that time – two other themes of interest emerge, pointing out the direction he would later take: The solitude and estrangement of contemporary man in sparsely furnished (nomadic) surroundings, represented by the works *Young Man in a Doorway*, and *The Real Pacifist*; and works dealing with spiritual or religious matters, such as the paintings *Easter*, and *Judith and Holofernes*.⁵⁹ Karl Erik Harr in a review of the exhibition, pointed out how a surreal note was to be found in Jan's works, in addition mentioning the ascetic qualities in his paintings: "...an intentional lack of colour that is appealing".⁶⁰ Johan Frederik Michelet found the works to consist of "vague feelings and a dreamlike atmosphere" and to be "strangely embellished, idealized and aloof in our own time".⁶¹ He also mentioned how the landscape *Easter* had as its real motif an unearthly light in the distance.⁶² Thus, at least two different critics at this early stage of Jan's career sensed the eerie, supernatural that permeates most of his work.

However, it was not until his return to painting after a sculpture interlude in the late 1970s that the mystical, magical realistic in his works became clearly visible to the beholder: With the large triptych *Anathema* (begun in 1979) and the little sketch *Limbo* (1979) it is no longer possible to overlook these aspects in his works. *Anathema* (see ill., p. 60) shows three cardboard boxes, laying on

what seems to be a light blue kitchen bench, on their sides, the openings facing the viewer. The flaps of each box make out uneven crosses, skewed and torn. Inside each box is an object; a bearded man's head, a rose, and a fish cut in two pieces with glistening meat.⁶³ These paintings mark the beginning of his art project, *Gnostic Journey*, which he has been working on ever since.

From where did this interest in mystical, esoteric subjects come? What initiated it? As far back as in 1968, Jan was experiencing an existential crisis he felt was almost driving him mad – a dark inner voice told him there was a fundamental flaw in him. After further descent into darkness, suddenly an eight foot tall, bluish mandorla appeared before him, emanating an all-encompassing light and grace. This experience, over time, also provided him with new insights.⁶⁴ Some ten years later, while studying Wolfram von Eschenbach's descriptions of the Holy Grail in his Venice studio, on an impulse he asked his friend and assistant Daniel Young where one might find the Grail in Los Angeles.⁶⁵ Daniel suggested he'd attend the lectures of Manly P. Hall at the Philosophical Research Society in Los Feliz, a place offering a vast range of lecturers on esoteric topics, among these Roger Weir, and Dr. Stephan Hoeller. Jan attended Roger's lectures for a period of time, and then, one day after a lecture on Parsifal, he posed the question once again, asking Roger where one could find the Grail work. Roger suggested a Gnostic church on Hollywood Boulevard. Thus, on Ash Wednesday 1982 Jan made his first visit to the Ecclesia Gnostica. He had found his spiritual home.

Jan's art production in the 1980s consists of large canvases, often showing mysterious female (less often male) figures, many of them nude, set in barren, modern surroundings. What they are up to the beholder can only guess. Still, perhaps the titles do give some indication as to what we are looking at; f.ex. *Oracle*; *Vesica Piscis* (later renamed *Epiphany*, see ill. p. 102); or *Magus*. These are ancient concepts and words. In the modern world there seems to be little room for oracles and *magi*, or sorcerers. Once among the most powerful people in society, mystics in modern times are ridiculed and marginalized, – as are revelations. Clearly such people would feel some *dis*-ease with the world of today.

He continued working in a classical technique and experimenting with pictorial compositions, however, adding a sense of the early Italian Renaissance to his paintings, yet depicting scenes set in a modern world. Composition, colour, and light take on both Renaissance and American qualities.

One word that seems to describe Jan's works from the '80s – both thematically and colouristically – is "cinematic". His compositions normally include no more than one person, in a few cases like for instance *Magus*, two, or (even rarer) a crowd as in *Veronicon*; *Suspended Transition*; and *Rehearsal in a Quarry*. As is so often the case with the composition of film stills, the depicted persons in Jan's

works are given a central place in the canvas, – the beholder's eye automatically goes to the human being in the scenery first, before it starts strolling around in the picture, trying to figure out the setting.

The interiors in Jan's paintings are clearly modern; bare concrete walls and floors, sparsely decorated with simple pieces of furniture – maybe a mattress, a bed or a stool – and empty cardboard boxes, almost a trademark of his. We could be anywhere in the world: Europe, Asia, America... The only thing certain is that we are in the modern world. There is nothing cozy or warm about these rooms. On the contrary, a strong feeling of estrangement and hostility emanates from the surroundings. The austere raw architecture and the cardboard boxes communicate a sense of something ephemeral, something unstable, on the move: A nomadic existence. It is as if the protagonists were captives or fugitives of some sort. The scenes and people he depicts have an eerie feeling about them. Do they belong in this world?

This nomadic aspect is ever present in Jan's work. He deals with the painful themes of exile and uncertainty.⁶⁶ His is a Gnostic world view, and the Gnostic myths can perhaps shed some light on the meaning of these works. The main notion (or knowledge, as the word *gnosis* means "knowledge" in the sense of insight) of the Gnostics, is that the world in itself is not good, it is not a creation of God. The physical world we live in was created by the Demiurge, some places described as a power-hungry semi-god, other places as the shadow-side of Jehovah. Man, on the other side, is the offspring of *Epinovia*⁶⁷ (insight, reflection, intuition) and a spiritual being.

Jan's personas often look straight at the beholder. His worlds are strangely disconcerting and foreign. His beautiful women are often terrifying, self-assured, with an air about them like the strong, proud Athenas of the Greek classical period.

Some 30 paintings and material works belong to the series Jan refers to as *Gnostic Journey*. Several are published on his web site, grouped together under this heading.⁶⁸ Some of the earliest works in the series include: *Anathema*; *Exile*. *Suspended Transition*; *Limbo*; *Mani*; and *Magus*. Most of these works do not refer to some specific Gnostic/Christian story, myth or person, but convey Gnostic themes and world views, such as *emptying*, *exile*, a *nomadic existence*, being in the presence of (or containing in oneself) something divine, – a *divine spark*.

I sense that Jan in his art seeks to articulate something about the sacred that from time to time shines through and appears in the world, of the divine that surrounds us.⁶⁹ In his paintings strange light sources light up the rooms otherwise covered in dark dramatic shadows. The divine is immanent, to be found as traces of the sublime in our urban, everyday life. To Jan art is closely connected with our spiritual dimension. Trying to fuse the internal with the

external is an important goal. As he explains in an interview: "To me, spirituality is a change, a clarity that emerges after a process of reconciliation."⁷⁰

In an article about his solo exhibition at the Bijan Bihar Gallery on Rodeo Drive, Los Angeles' exclusive parade street, in 1984, Kaja Korsvold gives the following interpretation of the essence of Jan's work: "Many of Saether's works seem to be about this, to soar from the dark, unknown, and into the light."⁷¹ In this show he exhibited both *Imago*, which Korsvold describes as a painting filled with a "sensual, almost fluorescent beauty, where a woman emerges up from a hole in the floor with a bundle of papers filled with notes in her mouth,"⁷² as well as *Anathema*; *Muse and Museum*; and *Epiphany*.

The entry on Jan in the Norwegian artists' encyclopedia mentions the surrealist aspects of his art in the 1980s: "The human being is still the focus, but the paintings now are marked by symbolic and surrealist features."⁷³

In his 1986 catalogue essay for Dassin Gallery, Charles Cameron writes:

...as we peep deeper, we sense a curious quality: Saether's work does not bring us the easy, settled feel that we associate with the old, but a disturbing hint of drama, of the unexpected. It is as though one of the old masters had rejoined us in this latter part of the twentieth century, and after studying and absorbing all that the great moderns from Kandinsky to Francis Bacon had to offer, has turned his mind and heart to the stormy times in which we live, and out of that thunderous darkness has generated lightning. ... In Saether's work ... we find a portrayal of our humanity that contains both glory and shadow.⁷⁴

In 1994 Los Angeles Times' critic William Wilson pointed out: "Saether's skillful paintings intend to evoke the great dualities of good and evil, the light and the dark. Their style, however, is a combination of 19th-Century academic romanticism and modern illusionism that lends them a distracting self-consciousness. The work feels bottled-up and uncomfortable with itself, as if its means are out of tune with its intentions."⁷⁵ To me, this "bottled-up" and "uncomfortable" feeling is essential to the understanding: Unless you *know*, – if you expect a pleasant experience looking at Jan's art, – well, then "bottled-up" and "uncomfortable" is exactly what you might get. His works are *not* comfortable and pleasant. They are not pictures painted to please the bourgeoisie, made to decorate comfortable living rooms. They are not about putting up wallpapers in hell. They are about the opposite! Jan's art project, the way I see it, is about *disclosing*, uncovering, waking you up. His works are *Gnostic* in their core.

A review in *Dagbladet* of Jan's solo exhibition at Galleri Asur in 1997, his first solo exhibition in Norway for more than 20 years, sums up much of the mystery

in his paintings. Harald Flor explores the painting *Humaniora*, emphasizing the light metaphor based on an interview with Jan made in the same newspaper one year earlier, where he told he was a Gnostic.⁷⁶ Flor interprets the light in *Humaniora* as an attempt to “channel a transcendental character through the sunbeam. The light is certainly not a realistic unveiling feature, but rather a soothing element to the misery of our times.” At the same time the painting emanates a strange, wondering glow – reflecting how all the misery in this world still has not managed to strip young people of all hope.⁷⁷

Conclusion

[A]ny serious artist is already half a Gnostic. – Stephan Hoeller⁷⁸

If it is Simon from Gitta we see in the *Magus* painting, Jan is presenting us with a brand new Simon iconography. We see a *Simon Pantocrator*, a *Simon Helios*, a *Simon Shepherd-Christ*. A triumphant power. “He Who Has Stood, Stands and Will Stand.”⁷⁹ As the poem *Triptych*’s first and last verse also point to – a strong, positive power. Nothing like the defeated conjurer of cheap tricks that European churches have been filled with through the ages.

As I have shown, the picture can also be read as a representation of the Gnostic idea of the Bridal Chamber, where soul and spirit unite, resulting in Gnosis.

Whether one chooses to interpret *Magus* as a pictorial representation of one of the most charismatic and enigmatic characters of the first century AD, the father of Gnosticism and of all heresies, or to see the painting as the depiction of an unspecified magician, some more ways of reading it can be suggested: The painting seems to be about a powerful source. It invites the viewer into a contemplative, empty, desolate environment – one that perhaps opens up possibilities for emptying – or *kenosis*. The barren modern room with its cheap cardboard boxes and the modestly dressed protagonists speak of a nomadic, modern exile.

I choose to end this article with two quotes from Jan, summing up both his artistic and his spiritual position:

[T. Faltin:] – *We live in a modern time. What do we need the figurative painting for?*

[Jan:] – *We need it to renew and embellish. If it is to have any value at all, it has to be as an expansion of our concept of pictures today. As an escape from our own time, it is quite uninteresting.*⁸⁰

[Jan:] – *Gnosticism is without dogmas, but has myths and is polyphonic.*⁸¹

NOTES

¹ Weisberg, "Jan Valentin Saether: The Light Divided", 13-15.

² The Gnostic god Abraxas is often shown as a snakefooted hybrid. His magical name with the numeric value 365, encompasses the universe, which, according to the Gnostic Basilide (c. AD 130), consists of as many heavens as there are days in the year. (Roob, *Alchemy & Mysticism*, 423). – Abraxas was a tyrant angel turned from the evil of the chief ruler Yaldabaoth, and returned to the service of the light. He was the brother of Yaldabaoth, and he is named Sabaoth and also Abraxas. This spirit renounced the works of his blind and evil brother and submitted to its mother Sophia, who appointed him the ruler of the seventh heaven, from whence he ever calls after the fashion of a celestial chanticleer to all beings, so that they might awaken and renounce the works of darkness (Hoeller, *Jung and the Lost Gospels*, 145-146).

³ Justin, Irenaeus, Hippolytus and Epiphanius. (Haar, *Simon Magus*, 4).

⁴ *Apocrypha* 7, 1996.

⁵ Harris, Lynda. *The Secret Heresy of Hieronymus Bosch*. Edinburgh: Floris Books, 1995.

⁶ So called because it first appeared in Camille Flammarion's 1888 book *Latmosphère: Météorologie populaire*.

⁷ In the nineteenth century some ancient texts were discovered: The *Pistis Sophia*, *The Book of IEOU*, and some fragments of the *Gospel of Thomas*.

⁸ A virtual flood of research is currently coming out, and has for years.

⁹ www.gnosis.org – a web site Terje Dahl Bergersen, one of the other authors in this Festschrift, has been a major contributor to.

¹⁰ Oxford: Blackwell 1990.

¹¹ Los Gatos, Ca: The Academy for Future Science, 1988.

¹² Wheaton, Ill; Quest Books, 2009.

¹³ *Pleroma* (Greek: 'fullness') is the divine realm of the aeons – the spiritual world beyond the created material world. (A Dictionary of Gnosticism, First Quest Ed., s.v. "Pleroma".)

¹⁴ Filoramo, *A History of Gnosticism*, xvii.

¹⁵ *Aeon*. Originally "age," in the sense of a long period of time; then used of space, or the spiritual being governing a vast space either in the *Pleroma* above or here below. (Hurtak, *Gnosticism*, 89.)

¹⁶ *Demiurge* (*Yaldabaoth*, "Son of Chaos"). The creator and maker of this universe; subordinate and or opposed to the Highest God. (Ibid, 89.)

¹⁷ A Dictionary of Gnosticism, First Quest Ed., s.v. "Sophia".

¹⁸ Unfinished manuscript for a doctoral dissertation on Early Christianity and Gnosticism. [1994], 102.

¹⁹ A Dictionary of Gnosticism, First Quest Ed., 203-204.

²⁰ PseudClemRec, Book II, Chapter 7.

²¹ Conner, "The Great Declaration by Simon Magus."

²² See for instance: Lüdemann, Gerd. *Untersuchungen zur Simonianischen Gnosis*. Göttinger Theologische Arbeiten. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1975 ; Beyschlag, Karlmann. *Simon Magus und die Christliche Gnosis*. Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament. Tübingen: Mohr, 1974.; Haar, Stephen. *Simon Magus: The First Gnostic?* Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der Älteren Kirche. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2003.

²³ Mead, G.R.S. *Simon Magus. An Essay on the Founder of Simonianism Based on the Ancient Sources with a Re-Evaluation of His Philosophy and Teachings*. Chicago: Ares Publishers, 1985. London: Theosophical publishing society, 1892.

²⁴ *The Holy Bible, Containing the Old and New Testaments*. Chicago: Gideons, 1958.

²⁵ Panarion means "medicine chest".

²⁶ Price, *The Pre-Nicene New Testament*, 38-46.

²⁷ Helen, or Selene, means moon. She is the female, Moon – while Simon is the male, Sun.

²⁸ Syzygy. (Or yoke-mate.) Either or both of a "couple" or "pair" of Aeons. (Hurtak, *Gnosticism*, 91).

²⁹ All citations from the *Great Declaration* are taken from Robert Price's translation (Ibid., 44-45). It can also be read in its entirety online, see: Conner, "The Great Declaration by Simon Magus."

³⁰ Ferreiro, "Simon Magus", 148.

³¹ According to a Wikipedia article, the *Acts of Peter and Paul* is thought to date from after the fourth century. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Acts_of_Peter_and_Paul.

³² Wikipedia, s.v. *Acts of Peter*. July 16, 2014. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Acts_of_Peter.

³³ The stories are reprinted in Mead, *Simon Magus*, 1985 (1892). The entire book is also available in digital format via the *Gnosis Archive*, www.gnosis.org.

³⁴ A Dictionary of Gnosticism, First Quest Ed., s.v. "Simon Magus".

³⁵ Pseudo-Clementine literature are late Christian-Jewish romances written in

the voice of Clement I (Bishop of Rome 92-99 AD), in which the apostle Peter is a major figure (A Dictionary of Gnosticism, First Quest Ed., s.v. "Pseudo-Clementine literature").

³⁶ Smith, *Jesus the Magician*, 81.

³⁷ Ibid., 84.

³⁸ Ibid., 85.

³⁹ Wikipedia, s.v. "Canonization". July 16, 2014. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Canonization>.

⁴⁰ Fett, "Simon Magus i Nes Bygdekirke".

⁴¹ "Simoni Deo Sancto". (Mead, *Simon Magus*, 1985 (1892), 8.)

⁴² A Dictionary of Gnosticism, First Quest Ed., s.v. "Simon Magus".

⁴³ As Ferreiro points out in his 1996 article on the patristic-medieval traditions regarding Simon, seven major traditions are clearly identifiable. The most illustrated one by far is Simon's aerial flight, but a handful depictions of Helen and of the dog stories are also to be found. (Ferreiro, "Simon Magus", 147-65.)

⁴⁴ As late as in 1755 Pompeo Battoni's altarpiece painting of the subject was installed in the Vatican. However it was removed only two years later.

⁴⁵ A collection of texts attributed to Hermes Trismegistus, compiled in Greek between the sixth and ninth centuries, but originated in the third, or perhaps second century AD (Filoramo 1990, 8).

⁴⁶ Filoramo, *A History of Gnosticism*, 8.

⁴⁷ Fett, "Simon Magus i Nes Bygdekirke".

⁴⁸ "The Standing One" seems to have been some sort of title given to the leader of certain religious communities. E.g. John the Baptist – Docitheus – Simon. See Price, *The Pre-Nicene New Testament*, 25.

⁴⁹ Wikipedia, s.v. "Kenosis". July 16, 2014. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kenosis>.

⁵⁰ A Dictionary of Gnosticism, First Quest Ed., s.v. "Bridal chamber". The bridal chamber was one of the five sacraments celebrated by the Gnostic group called the Valentinians. (Ibid.)

⁵¹ Symbolleksikon. 1st. Ed., s.v. "Hund".

⁵² Wallace Nichols' novel *Simon Magus* from 1946 draws heavily upon these two texts, especially on the *Acts of Peter*.

⁵³ The common Greek word for "magician" in Jesus' time (plural *goetes*). It was usually, but not necessarily, abusive. (Smith, *Jesus the Magician*, 69).

⁵⁴ Early Christian Writings, "The Acts of Peter". July 14, 2014. <http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/actspeter.html>.

⁵⁵ More on this, see: Fett, *En bygdekirke*. Kunst og kulturs serie. Oslo: Gyldendal, 1941.

⁵⁶ At the same time in southern France, the Cathar culture was blossoming. As we well know today, this ended with the church launching the Albigensian crusade or Cathar crusade (1209–1229), – a 20-year military campaign initiated by Pope Innocent III and the French crown where a large number of Cathars were murdered in the name of God and the Catholic church. So the church was obviously on the move at this time, strengthening their grip and domination of Europe. For an introduction to the Cathars and their history, see Sean Martin's *The Cathars* (Herts, Pocket Essentials 2005).

⁵⁷ Jung and Shamdasani, *The Red Book*, 359.

⁵⁸ Zanger, "Talking Art, Imagination and Albert Hofmann", 55.

⁵⁹ The large drawing of *Cain and Abel*, shown at the Romantik Realisme exhibition in Oslo Kunstforening one year earlier points in the same direction.

⁶⁰ Harr, "Krystallklart sett".

⁶¹ Michelet, "Gammelt og nytt i unge strøk".

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ See Weisberg, "Jan Valentin Saether: The Light Divided", 13-15, for an analysis of *Anathema* among other works.

⁶⁴ Geelmuyden, "Metafysaken", 81, and Solum, "Gnostisisme, kristen mystikk og erfaringen av det hellige", 5.

⁶⁵ Solum, Ibid., 6.

⁶⁶ See for instance his most recent ongoing series of paintings, *Exile*, where real people and mythic figures are depicted, categorised into different types of exiles (spiritual, political, etc.). Portraits completed so far: Veronica Franco, Luis Buñuel, Julia Kristeva, Ali Djabbar, Mary Magdalene, Jan Valentin Saether, and Aung San Suu Kyi.

⁶⁷ Epinoia was sent by the Mother-Father to help Adam. (A Dictionary of Gnosticism, First Quest Ed., s.v. "Epinoia").

⁶⁸ Jan Valentin Saether's web site: www.janvalentinsaether.com

⁶⁹ The article "Kritikk av den politiske fornuft" by T.K. Kvaal and Jan Isak Sæther, published in *Ergo*, vol. 5, issues 2, 3 and 4, 1974, gives a good introduction to Jan's world view.

⁷⁰ Berggren, "Kunstskole for uvanlige".

⁷¹ Korsvold, ”Norsk kunstner i californisk hete”.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Norsk kunstnerleksikon. Bildende kunstnere, arkitekter, kunsthåndverkere. Vol. 4: Sp-Å, 1986, s.v. ”Sæther, Jan Isak”.

⁷⁴ Cameron, *Jan Isak Saether*, unpag.

⁷⁵ Wilson, ”Christian, Millennial Hopes in ‘Lights’”.

⁷⁶ Faltin, ”Samme hva du heter, spiser du hos Sæther”.

⁷⁷ Flor, ”Sæther i gâtelys”.

⁷⁸ Cited in: Hill, ”Exile in Godville: Profile of a Postmodern Heretic”.

⁷⁹ Price p. 38, 1.9

⁸⁰ Faltin, ”Samme hva du heter, spiser du hos Sæther”.

⁸¹ Larsen, ”Eksilkunstneren”.

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