

Reseñas



ROIG LANZILLOTTA, Lautaro & Jacques VAN DER VLIET, *The Apocalypse of Paul (Visio Pauli) in Sahidic Coptic*. Critical Edition, Translation and Commentary. With an appendix by Jos van Lent. «Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae» 178 (Leiden – Boston: Brill, 2023), x + 522 pp. ISBN: 978-90-04-52646-4

The volume under review contains the reprint, together with the English translation of the ancient Coptic version of the *Visio Pauli*, together with supplementary analytical material to which we will immediately refer. *Visio Pauli* is an interesting work that contains a series of visions of the other world by Paul, which serve to convey ancient conceptions of heaven and hell, along with the rewards and punishments that await human beings. The author was familiar with Jewish apocalyptic literature, as can be seen in many of the *topoi* contained in the narrative.

This Coptic Apocalypse of Paul, an apocryphal work from the 4th century CE, derives from a Greek original of which only fragments have survived, and of which versions and recensions in other languages, e.g. Latin, Syriac and Ethiopic, have survived, as well as the probable influence on other works as far as Dante's *Divine Comedy*.

The volume opens with a preface (pp. VII-VIII), the abbreviations (p. IX), and a list of figures and tables (p. X). This is followed by an introduction (pp. 1-18) in which the authors provide the *status quaestionis* on the research about the text of *Visio Pauli* (pp. 1-16), while describing the contributions of the present work (pp. 17-18). The introduction is followed by the five chapters that make up the study, edition, translation and commentary of the text.

In the first chapter (“The Coptic Manuscript Tradition”, pp. 19-50), which consists of six sections, the authors provide a description of the extant manuscripts, together with other witnesses, as well as a Greek witness from Egypt edited by Kraus.

The second chapter (“The Sahidic Version of the Apocalypse of Paul”, pp. 51-96), consisting of six further sections, serves the authors to describe and analyse various elements of the text: the lost title, the prologue of the work and the epilogue (the Mount of Olives), its compositional structure, the author's intentions and the final stages of Paul's journey: the third heaven, the heavenly paradise and Paul's throne. The chapter concludes with a recapitulation of the previous analyses and the ensuing conclusions.

The third chapter (“The Apocalypse of Paul in Christian Egypt”, pp. 97-151) consists of three sections in which the text of the *Visio Pauli* is contextualised within the Egyptian apocalyptic tradition (pp. 97-120), complemented by the influences on the Coptic monastic milieu from the Pacomian tradition (pp. 120-150). This third chapter closes with the conclusions.

Chapter four (“The Apocalypse of Paul: Time and Place”, pp. 152-164) contains two sections in which the authors discuss respectively the questions of the date and place of provenance of the text (pp. 152-155), and the transmission experienced by the work in the

form of recensions and other narrative developments (pp. 156-163) before the conclusions on this chapter (pp. 163-164).

The fifth chapter contains the reprint of the Sahidic text and the English translation (“Text and Translation”, pp. 169-223), preceded by a note on the edition, together with the signs, sigla and abbreviations used (“A Note to the Edition”, pp. 163-167), and followed by a rich commentary on the text (“Commentary”, pp. 224-407) in which the authors have made a great analytical effort to identify theological and literary sources and motifs in the biblical and apocryphal apocalyptic tradition.

The volume contains two appendices: the first is a reproduction of the Sahidic version of the *Apocalypse of Athanasius*, together with its English translation (pp. 408-410); and the second, by Jos van Lent, contains the reprint of the Arabic *Apocalypse of (Ps.-)Athanasius*, together with an annotated English translation, preceded by a brief introduction (pp. 411-457).

The volume concludes with the bibliography (pp. 458-487) followed by three indexes: an index of Coptic texts (pp. 488-489) with the following indexed information: proper names (pp. 488-489), place names and ethnic affiliations (p. 489), Coptic terms of Egyptian origin (pp. 489-502), Coptic loanwords (pp. 502-506), terms of grammatical or lexical interest (pp. 506-507) and vocabulary (pp. 507-508); a second index of ancient sources: classical authors (p. 509), biblical books (pp. 510-512), early Christian literature (pp. 513-520); and the third index of modern authors (pp. 521-522).

The authors have fulfilled one of the aims of their work: namely, to demonstrate that the Sahidic text is the best available version of the lost original of Paul’s Apocalypse. Certainly, the contribution made in this volume by its two authors, Professors Roig Lanzillotta and van der Vliet, is of praiseworthy scientific value. The careful reprinting of the texts is accompanied by an accurate English translation, but above all by a monumental commentary, which represents a very important advance in the knowledge of the text thanks to the identification and affiliation of motifs with ancient works. All of the above is rounded off by the first four chapters summarised above, which precede the reprint, translation and commentary of the text.

This is an important work that makes an accurate contribution to the knowledge of the apocalyptic stele and its tradition in the heart of Christianity in the Egyptian soil. Congratulations to the authors, who with knowledge and diligence have been able to bring to a successful conclusion a research that demanded effort and knowledge.

Juan Pedro Monferrer-Sala
University of Córdoba