

From Christianity to Gnosis  
and  
From Gnosis to Christianity

by  
Jean Magne

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**From Christianity to Gnosis  
and  
From Gnosis to Christianity**

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**FROM CHRISTIANITY TO GNOSIS  
AND  
FROM GNOSIS TO CHRISTIANITY**  
**An Itinerary through the Texts  
to and from the Tree of Paradise**

by  
**JEAN MAGNE**

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*To all men of good will*

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

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## FOREWORD

This work is the outcome of an entire lifetime devoted to research and is the result of a choice. The physiomy of Christianity that emerges from this book is novel. Things set up for two thousand years have been uncommonly upset, yet not out of sheer caprice or whim. In no way does the author speculate or indulge in esoterism. Jean Magne is light years away from the latter. His manner of writing is not easy but the representations used to construct the rituals and organize the narratives are arranged from beginning to end with great clarity. What seems a surprising, disconcerting book, initially, is consistently sound in the method applied, even laborious in its enumeration of the stages covered. No one before Jean Magne had thought of reading Emmaus through Genesis, i.e., of explaining the eucharistic and baptismal liturgies as exegetical pieces of a vast body of interpretations ranging from biblical accounts of origins to gnostic expositions and evangelical narratives. The undeniable merit of the author is to have shown that the exegetical pieces, without exception, provide all the categories which were used for their appearance and interpretative surcharge. It does indeed constitute the disclosure of a logic underlying the production of dogma examined through ritual practices, prayers and formulas. To sum up, one is taught to open one's eyes and this learning process is conducted at the expense of an attempt at analysing the documents critically, very rare today. The nature of the texts assembled with a view to determining the categories is complex. They had to be translated, grouped together, analyzed, some elements being retained and others discarded as inconsistent with the author's goal. And this explains why the book cannot be closed even if it irritates, contradicts or exasperates. It should be read from beginning to end with the same care that the author has displayed in his comparisons and analyses. An examination of the argumentation not only enables one to nuance what might seem abrupt or absolute in the thesis, but furthermore and above all, provides a renewed thinking about our knowledge of the origins of Christianity. The key is operative, even if the lock grates.

Michel Tardieu  
Professor at the Collège de France, Paris



## PROBLEM AND DEONTOLOGY

... "Tell me, what is Jesus ?"

[...]

"Concerning Jesus, I replied, it is easy to believe but hard to know".

"As it is for Buddha", he said in the low tone of a thoughtful, educated man who has weighed up the secular faith.

[...]

I write for you, faraway hermit and for you, whoever you may be, who consent to examine this great question without bias, without passion, without partiality and with seriousness, courage and sincerity.

You must not tackle this great question until you have put yourself to the test. I wish every student of religion would take a sort of Hippocratic oath, like the future doctor at Montpellier in times gone by:

*I swear, whatever my belief or lack of belief, not to let it influence my investigations.*

*I swear to be disinterested and seek neither controversy nor propaganda.*

*I swear to be loyal, to omit nor add anything to what I shall discover, nor attenuate or exaggerate anything.*

*I swear to be respectful and not to trifle with any beliefs whether past or present.*

*I swear to be courageous and fearlessly hold my opinion against all armed belief which does not tolerate it.*

*I swear to renounce it the very instant I find a solid reason or it is brought to my attention.*

(Paul-Louis Couchoud, *Le mystère de Jésus*, Paris, 1924, p. 12)



## INTRODUCTION

Jesus said :

He who seeks shall have no respite until he finds.

And having found, he will be troubled.

Troubled, he will be filled with wonder.

Filled with wonder, he will reign over the Whole.

Reigning, he will have rest. (*Gosp. Thomas, 2*)

The following pages set out the results of my investigations which started in 1945 soon after my return from captivity in Germany. The starting point was some grammatical remarks made by one of my two uncles, both priests, Father Pierre Magne (1895-1957), who taught Latin and Greek at a secondary school. He would often say to me : "The Latin of the canon of the Roman mass is said to be poor because it dates back to the fourth century, and in the missal it is translated not according to what it says but what it should say. But Latin is Latin! The writers of the 4th and 5th centuries wrote correct Latin. The rules of grammar must be respected. It is incorrect to translate *in primis quae tibi offerimus pro Ecclesia tua sancta* as "(daign to receive these gifts) we offer you *first* for your holy Church" by reversing the order of the words as if *quae in primis* were written and as if *pro* always means "for the benefit of". It should be translated "(daign to receive these gifts) *first of all those which* we offer you *in the name of* your holy Church". This implies that other gifts will be offered on a personal basis, as testified by the *Memento* and the *Supra quae-jube haec*. Similarly, the participle *Communicantes* cannot stand alone. Originally, it must have been related to a verb in the finite mood. We must look for this verb. *Digneris* is a subjunctive. It is translated as if it was an imperative". Once again we must look for the verb to which it is related rather than invent a grammatical rule whereby in the fourth century the subjunctive would have been substituted for the imperative". These were the kind of remarks my uncle used to make. I admit that, initially, I paid little attention. I remember telling him that my piety — was it not rather a form of laziness? — was satisfied with the traditional translation rather than worry about grammatical purity. However, on each of the fairly infrequent visits my brother François (1917-1971), an excellent Latinist, and I paid him, my uncle always brought the conversation around to the topic. We often used to discuss the subject and in the end I was forced to admit that there was a problem.

Following our exchange of viewpoints, Father Pierre Magne wrote an article, fifteen typed pages, entitled 'Sur le canon de la messe. Remarques de syntaxe'. In

September 1949, during the congress of the *Centre de pastorale liturgique*, he handed a copy to Dom Thierry Maertens of Sint Pieterabdij in Bruges for an eventual publication in the journal *Paroisse et Liturgie*. Dom Maertens returned the article two weeks later (27 September 1949) for two reasons. The first one was valid : the overscholarly tone of the article for a journal whose readership was comprised of priests and curates more concerned with apostolacy than research. The second was clearly wrong but revealing : "Syntax is of less importance than History! As a result, rather than rely on syntax to reveal theories that cannot be historically observed, greater emphasis should be given to historical conclusions". Dom Maerten's criticism highlighted the difference which exists between the historical method based on authentic, dated documents and the critical method which, like an archeologist when he excavates, has to distinguish between the various redactional layers in biblical or liturgical documents. Errors of syntax are one of the means of reconstructing the prehistory of a text in order to attain History. The historian's shortcoming lies in his frequent inability to distinguish between two literary genres : works that have an author and works of living literature where each generation has added its contribution. As a matter of fact, Pierre Magne's article was a mixture of scholarly remarks on grammar and edifying reflections which did not always interrelate. Endowed with a curiosity that made him interested in everything, a sense of observation, a shrewdness which enabled him to perceive what no one else saw, my beloved uncle was neither methodical, disciplined or persevering enough — nor perhaps able to relinquish all considerations other than scientific ones — to follow his investigations through to their logical conclusion.

Following his disappointment, he apparently abandoned his search. I was taken with an overwhelming desire to resume the subject. As my previous interests had centered on biblical studies, especially strophics of the psalms<sup>1</sup>, I knew little about the liturgy, a subject considered minor in the seminary and whose teaching was practical rather than critical and historical. So I set about making serious study of the historical works of Duchesne, Batiffol, Lietzmann, Jungmann, Dix, Botte, Mohrmann and others, and above all resumed textual analysis based on the method of biblical criticism, a novel, unheard-of approach for liturgists, first and foremost historians and paleographers, who (in principle) pride themselves on taking texts at face value. The outcome of my reading and thinking was that, on Sunday 14 February 1954 — I noted the date — it was clear to me that the correct translation of the phrase *ut ipsis mysteriis viam futuris precibus aperiamus* in Innocent I's letter to Decentius, bishop of Gubbio, dated 19 March 416, "so that by the mysteries themselves we prepare the way for the prayers that follow", which respects the text and grammar and does not twist them to make them

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1. See Appendix, Author's bibliography, Psalms, 1947, 1958, 1961.

say the opposite of what they mean as liturgists do<sup>2</sup>, is proof, for the place of the *Memenuo* and the *Fermentum* rite, of a state of the canon which corresponds to the reconstitution reached by textual analysis<sup>3</sup>.

In possession of this concordance between an analysis of the prayers and the letter, between internal criticism and external evidence, between grammar and History, I in turn wrote a paper, aware of its limitations, entitled *Argument d'un travail à paraître sur les origines de la messe. Première partie : des liturgies actuelles à leur texte ou à leur teneur primitive*<sup>4</sup>. I circulated it widely among the liturgists I knew. Some months later when I wrote to my uncle from Rome where I had been relegated, that Rev. A. Raes, s.j., professor of liturgy at the Pontifical Oriental Institute (subsequently Prefect of the Vatican Library), had favourably judged my reconstitution as a contribution towards linking the liturgies to the New Testament and that Rev. H. Schmidt, s.j., professor of liturgy at the Gregorian University, had chosen the chapter on the protocols of the preface as the theme of one of his classes, he sent a reply both enthusiastic and disillusioned at the same time : "Consider it quite exceptional that there are two people to subscribe to your view point". They were in fact almost the only ones to do so. The Right Reverend Abbot of Solesmes had his secretary write to me that he disagreed with my conclusions and method. The supervisors of the *Centre de pastorale liturgique* were shocked, especially Canon A.-G. Martimort and Father H. Journel, future members of the Post-conciliar Liturgical Commission; and in particular, Dom Bernard Botte of the abbey of Mount Cesar in Leuven, the author of a critical edition of the canon with translation and commentary, even went so far as to write to my superiors to ban me from ever publishing again. From their point of view as theologians and pastors, they were right. My conclusions clashed with official doctrine. My departure from the Church had become imperative, a painful and humiliating decision at the time both for myself and my family who were devout believers, especially for my other uncle, Canon Marcel Magne — Father Pierre Magne having passed away in December 1957. So in January 1959 at 48 I made a leap into the unknown. The investigations I had undertaken out of faith on the outskirts of my involvement with the JAC (Jeunesse Agricole Catholique) missal had forced me into disbelief.

After spending two years in unstable jobs in industry, I had the incredible good fortune to be recruited by Professor André Dupont-Sommer (my Hebrew teacher at the seminary at Issy for one year) as librarian at the Institute of Semitic

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2. I.e., P. BATTIFOL, *Leçons sur la messe*, Paris, 1920, p. 219 note 1; J.A. JUNG-MANN, *Missarum Solemnia*, Paris, 1951, I, p. 84, note 16 and the authors cited : N. MAURICE-DENIS and R. BOULET, *Euchariste*, Paris, 1953, p. 330 and note 84.

3. See J. Magne, *Argument*, pp. 1-17; *Logique des Sacrements*, pp. 24, 26; and *infra*, Author's Bibliography, Liturgy, 1975.

4. Paris, November 1955, offset print *pro manuscripto*, 70 p., 150 copies.

Studies at the Sorbonne University which he wanted to develop. In this way he gave me the opportunity to resume my studies in March 1961. What would have become of me if I had not been given this second chance?

The title of my *Argument* implied a sequel : 'Du texte primitif des liturgies à Jésus'. Only gradually and laboriously did I reach a clear insight into the relationship between the texts and the rites in the New Testament era. And even before reaching a satisfactory analysis of the Last Supper and Feeding narratives, I made a fundamental discovery that revealed itself the key of the origins of Christianity. On Friday 22 November 1968, as I was preparing a paper entitled 'L'épisode évangélique de la multiplication des pains dans l'exégèse depuis D.F. Strauss'<sup>5</sup>, requested by André Caquot who had just succeeded André Dupont-Sommer as secretary of the Société Ernest-Renan, I started to reflect on how the Breaking of bread had opened the eyes of the two disciples at Emmaus. And suddenly, the parallel between the opening of their eyes by the eucharistic bread which made them recognize Jesus and the opening of the eyes of Adam and Eve through the fruit of the tree of knowledge which made them aware of their nakedness, dawned on me. Lk 24.30-31 should be interpreted through Gen 3.6-7 and vice versa.

For a long time I had been seeking the relationship between the eucharistic bread and the tree of life. And now the Emmaus episode assimilated it with the fruit of the tree of knowledge, the tree of Gnosis. When one has in mind that Christianity is based on the traditional conception whereby Adam and Eve lost themselves and mankind with them by eating the forbidden fruit and that Jesus, the Son of God, had to die on the cross in atonement for their sin, it is difficult to conceive that the first idea of a religious movement which would become Christianity was that they saved themselves by disobeying their creator at the instigation of the serpent. That I was even capable of imagining the non impossibility of this 'upside-down world' at a time when, under the influence of Professor Dupont-Sommer, I was attempting to justify Renan's often cited phrase, "Christianity is an Essenism that succeeded on the whole", was because when the Nag Hammadi gnostic manuscripts were discovered, Leisegang's earlier book, *La Gnose*, which I had read so as to not appear too ignorant, had given me a sufficient idea of the position of the Gnostics towards the God of the Old Testament. Whereas the Essenes aimed at the strictest observance of his Law, the Gnostics, like Marcion, rejected both this God and his Law; the Christians would recuperate him by assimilating him with the Father while still continuing to reject his Law.

My knowledge of gnosticism was as slight as my knowledge of the liturgy had been twenty years earlier. So from December to July 1969 I devoted all my spare time to studying the Nag Hammadi gnostic texts which had begun to ap-

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5. See Author's Bibliography, New Testament, 1969.

pear in print, especially the *Hypostasis of the Archons*, the untitled writing *On the Origin of the World*, the *Apocryphon of John*, the *Testimony of Truth*. Though relatively late in comparison with the supposed dates of Jesus' public life, and despite unquestionable Christian allusions, these treatises provided evidence about pre-Christian doctrines and myths. They elucidated many hitherto obscure allusions in the New Testament, for instance, who is the prince of this world mentioned in the gospel of John, who are the archons, the principalities and powers absent in the Old Testament and Jewish writings though mentioned in the Pauline letters.

To clarify the results I had reached, in 1969 I spent my summer holidays writing a rough draft thirty pages long which I entitled quite naturally, 'Le pain d'Emmaus'. When term started I asked a few friends and colleagues to read it and tell me what they thought. Their reactions ranged from a contemptuous refusal to even take a look to a full-hearted approval via varying degrees of assent, reservation or rejection. I am grateful to all those who were kind enough to give me their opinion, especially Professor Antoine Guillaumont, the late professors Henri-Charles Puech and Valentin Nikiprowetsky.

During the same summer, at the *Fourth International Congress on New Testament Studies* in Oxford, within the framework of the *master theme* 'New Testament and Gnosis', I presented a paper entitled 'La fraction du pain des épisodes de la multiplication des pains et des disciples d'Emmaus comme preuve de l'origine gnostique des sacrements, de l'Eglise et du Sauveur'<sup>6</sup>. The twenty-five participants who included R. McL. Wilson, G.C. Stead, A.R.C. Leaney, U. Bianchi, W. Eborowicz, P. Hendrix, J. Ries, A.M. Denis, P. Lebeau, A. Jaubert, J.E. Ménard, apparently expressed the surprise one feels when confronted with a day-dream which apparently unfolds in a completely logical way to which no objections can be found though one refuses to believe in it.

One year later, at the *XIIIth Congress of the International Association for the History of Religion (IAHR)* in Stockholm, 16-20 August 1970, where the theme was 'The supreme God and the secondary gods', my paper was entitled 'L'exégèse de Gn 3,5-7 attestée par Lc 24,30-31 à l'origine du rabaissement dans le gnosticisme du dieu de l'Ancien Testament au rang de démiurge mauvais'<sup>7</sup>. It so happened that I spoke after a Japanese colleague who had just proved that the God of the Old Testament was not the God of the New Testament. I was asked for some explanations and details, but no objections were raised. I even received a formal and justified approval. One participant, whose name I failed to discover, observed that the origin of Shiism had also remained mysterious until it was proved that this Islamic sect quite simply derived from a particular exegesis of one verse of the Koran (III, 54) and he added that it would therefore be quite natural if

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6. *Idem*, *Gnosis and Christianity*, 1969.

7. *Idem*, *id.*, 1970.

gnosticism also arose from a deviant exegesis of the first chapter of Genesis, an exegesis widely testified to by the Gnostics and their opponents.

I shall conclude this account of my investigations with the two papers of 1969 and 1970 since they set forth the main discoveries and their initial consequences. What follows is but a development and an exposition. The Author's Bibliography in the appendix gives a list of published and unpublished articles on Gnosticism and other topics. As their conclusions usually disagree with religious orthodoxy, several were rejected by the journals, others were accepted sometimes contrary to all expectation, one only, on the Last Supper narratives, raised a response<sup>8</sup>.

The present book comprises a partial translation of *Logique des Sacrements* and the full text of *Logique des Dogmes*.

Part One, *From Christianity to Gnosis*, examines the Eucharist. It corresponds to the first part of my investigations but omits the study of the Roman canon and the other Latin, Greek and Oriental liturgies of less interest to a mainly non-Catholic English-speaking audience and starts immediately with its point of arrival, the reference to the Breaking of bread in the Acts, and works backwards with an analysis of the Feeding and Last Supper narratives to the Emmaus episode. Although it no longer starts with current practice today, it follows a regressive approach, starting with what is known and working backwards to what is less known or unknown.

The turning point between Part One and Part Two is, of course, the exegesis of the Emmaus episode through the Paradise narrative and vice versa.

Part Two, *From Gnosis to Christianity*, shows how this exegesis is indeed what the gnostic writings and the heresiologists revealed. Then how, under the influence of Jewish apologetics, this exegesis was turned upside down into Christian exegesis and how the Gnostic movement evolved into the Christian religious movement through a gradual rejudaization.

I would like to reiterate my respectful thanks to Professor Michel Tardieu for his benevolent Foreword and express my heartfelt gratitude to Professor Jacob Neusner who prompted this publication, writing to me on February 19, 1990: "I found your thesis entirely plausible. If you can get the book translated into English, I can get it published in a series I edit", and again on April 23: "I thought your book showed how first-rate scholarship could produce a compelling and important thesis. This is why I wanted it in English".

I also wish to thank my former colleague Angela Armstrong, a librarian assistant at the Collège de France, who kindly accepted the arduous task of translation, and Professor Ernest S. Frerichs, Chairman of the Editorial Board, for his editorial assistance and advice.

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8. *Idem*, New Testament, 1988.

**I**  
**FROM CHRISTIANITY TO GNOSIS**



# Chapter 1

## THE EUCHARISTIC RITUAL AND THE FEEDING NARRATIVES

The ritual was fixed and the myth was variable...  
The conclusion is, that in the study of ancient religions, we must begin, not with the myth, but with ritual and traditional usage. (W. Robertson Smith, *Readings on the Religion of the Semites*, p. 18)

An analysis of the Latin, Greek and Eastern liturgies has enabled me to establish that they are all derived from a primitive celebration consisting of the four actions enumerated in Acts 2.42 : "They devoted themselves to the teaching of the Apostles, the *koinônia* (community of goods), the fraction or Breaking of bread, and the prayers". Only the order of the last three actions varies in the liturgies.

1) 'The teaching of the apostles' has survived until now in the so-called 'liturgy of the word', comprising readings from the Old Testament, the Letters of the Apostles, the Gospels, and a homily or sermon.

2) The *koinônia* survives in the offertory of money or gifts by the congregation or, for practical reasons, as the 'collection' . The prayer asking God to receive these gifts, as he "had regard" for Abel's offering (Gen 4.4), would be mistakenly understood as referring to the elements of the eucharist. In the Roman canon it gave rise to prayers offering the bread and wine before and after they become the body and blood of Christ and, in the Eastern liturgies, it became the epiclesis asking God to send his Holy Spirit to effect the consecration.

3) To the 'prayers' correspond the intercessions : the *mementos* for the donors, the living and the dead; the 'prayers of the faithful' enumerating various general or specific intentions.

4) The 'fraction or breaking of bread' includes the thanksgiving pronounced over the bread, the fraction proper, and its distribution to the congregation or 'communion'. In the liturgies, the cup of the Lord's Last Supper was introduced alongside the bread under the same thanksgiving. But it is the 'fraction of bread' that is celebrated not the Last Supper, except in some liturgies arising from the Reformation which broke with tradition alleging a return to the supposed origins.

What we must now examine in more detail is the problem of the discrepancy between the 'fraction of bread' in the Acts of the Apostles, the feeding of the

crowds, and the Lord's Supper in the Letter to the Corinthians and the synoptic gospels.

To my knowledge, no one until now, whether ancient heretic or modern critic, has questioned that the eucharist was instituted at the Last Supper. However, since childhood I have been struck by the discrepancy between what the priest does at mass and what Jesus is said to have done at the Last Supper.

At the Last Supper, according to what the priest says, Jesus took bread, gave thanks, broke it and gave it to the Apostles who immediately ate, then he took a cup, gave thanks again and handed it to the Apostles who drank it immediately, with the words, at least according to Lk and 1 Co, "Do this in remembrance of me". But this is not exactly what the priest 'does' : at the offertory he 'takes' the bread and the cup, pronounces one thanksgiving over the bread and the cup, breaks the bread, and distributes either the bread and the cup together or the bread alone at communion.

In his classic work, *The Shape of the Liturgy* (p. 48), Dom Gregory Dix wondered how the seven-action scheme of the Last Supper (four for the bread and three for the cup) evolved into the four-action scheme of the liturgies — the offertory, the eucharistic prayer, the fraction, and the communion —, all of which concern bread as if the cup was slipped in alongside surreptitiously.

G. Dix's piety prevented him from even envisaging that the Last Supper narratives might not be authentic. He was therefore reduced to supposing that the first disciples, or even earlier, that the Apostles themselves, were deliberately unfaithful to Christ's command "Do this in memory of me". In his opinion, the transformation of the ritual could have occurred when the meal the synoptic narratives assume was suppressed, the meal which was inserted between the bread at the beginning and the cup at the end, as is asserted in 1 Co 11.25. But "this liturgical tradition (of our liturgies) must have been very solidly established everywhere as the invariable practice before the first gospels or 1 Co began to circulate with authority" (p. 49).

This is an admission that the liturgical practice which still survives today is more primitive than the Last Supper narratives, and that the Last Supper narratives, circulated by the Letter to the Corinthians and the gospels, were powerless to change it whereas, according to Dom Dix and received opinion, this change would have been merely a reversion to the original practice.

#### "THE RITUAL WAS FIXED BUT THE MYTH WAS VARIABLE"

The ritual is the liturgical practice of the fraction of bread which has remained fundamentally unchanged since its first celebration; the myth comprises the four Last Supper narratives, the six Feeding narratives, the story of the Emmaus pilgrims.

The ritual, that is also the fundamental prayers : the thanksgiving (Greek: *eucharistia*), the prayer offering the gifts; the myth, that is the rewriting of the

prayers which reinterpret their original content in varied and sometimes fanciful ways, the new prayers added to them, and the theological elucubrations.

In addition to the discrepancy between liturgical practice and the Last Supper narratives another anomaly exists. While the expression 'to eat the Last Supper of the Lord' only occurs in the New Testament in the first complete description of the Last Supper in 1 Co 11.20, the eucharist is designated, moreover, by the expressions 'fraction of bread' and 'to break bread' (Lk 24.35; Acts 2.42,46; 20.7; 21.11, 1 Co 10.16). These expressions could not have arisen out of the seven actions of the Last Supper, but only out of the four actions of the liturgy which concerns bread. And if one wonders what is the origin of the liturgy and the appellation of the fraction of bread, one must immediately think of the Feeding narratives where 'the fraction of bread' is the means by which Jesus multiplied them, and whereby he accomplished the four actions which the priest still performs in the liturgy.

The following hypothesis can be drawn from these facts : the Feeding narratives are the narratives of the institution of the eucharist under the species of bread, and the Last Supper narratives are those of the institution of the cup which was added to the bread.

### THE FEEDING NARRATIVES

The significance attached to the Feeding narratives in the early Church results from the fact that, unlike the Last Supper which Jn ignored, it was related by the four evangelists and two of them, Mt and Mk, even related it twice. We are therefore confronted with six different narratives : four long narratives, where Jesus multiplies five loaves of bread for five thousand people with twelve baskets of excess bread, and two short narratives, inserted after the long narratives in the gospels, with seven loaves and four thousand guests, and seven baskets of excess bread. We shall call the long narratives 'the narratives of the Twelve' and the short narratives 'the narratives of the Seven'.

The first task must be, of course, to set out the texts of the six narratives in facing columns so as to compare all the details exactly and reconstitute the history of the text. I shall spare the reader the lengthy and fastidious work of analysis and only present the results. (See the author's bibliography, N.T., 1988, forthcoming in 1992).

The second task is to discover the religious meaning and liturgical significance of each narrative.

These two problems, the history of the texts and their religious meaning, are to be resolved at the same time. Here are the solutions I have reached.

### THE PRIMITIVE FEEDING NARRATIVE

Whereas the four long narratives (Mt, Mk, Lk and Jn) are indissolubly connected with the end or beginning of the narratives that precede or follow them: the return of the Apostles from their mission, on the one hand, and the walking on the water, on the other, the two short narratives (Mt, Mk) can be taken out of their context. The Markan narrative is only linked with one word, *palin* ('once again'), clearly redactional. Therefore, contrary to what most exegetes believe, the short Markan narrative (Mk 8.1-19) has a greater chance of being the earlier.

But the short Markan narrative already contain interpolations. They can be eliminated by rejecting all words or ideas alien to the solution of the problem posed by Jesus: not to send the crowd away fasting because they would faint on the way. So Jesus feeds them and then dismisses them.

Mk 8<sup>1</sup> In those days,  
 as there was a great crowd  
 without anything to eat,  
 he called the disciples  
 and said to them  
<sup>2</sup> "I have compassion for the crowd  
 because they have nothing to eat,  
<sup>3</sup> and if I send them away fasting,  
 they will faint on the way".  
<sup>4</sup> His disciples replied  
 "How can they be satisfied?"  
<sup>5</sup> He asked them: "How many loaves do you have?"  
 They said: "Seven".  
<sup>6</sup> He took the seven loaves,  
 and after saying the thanksgiving,  
 he broke them,  
 and gave them to his disciples to distribute  
 and they distributed them to the crowd.  
<sup>8</sup> They ate and were satisfied,  
<sup>9</sup> and he sent them away.

First of all, let us admire the literary beauty of the passage in its rediscovered simplicity and unity.

Some old-fashioned exegetes still sometimes wonder whether the two narratives we read successively in Mt and Mk correspond to two different miracles as the gospels themselves affirm (Mk 8.19-20; Mt 16.9-10), or whether they are two more or less interdependent narratives of one and the same miracle. In actual fact, the glosses we omitted in the earliest narrative, and the modifications this narrative were subjected to in the long narratives, prove that their authors re-

garded them as purely fictitious and symbolical, merely aiming to justify and interpret the ritual of the 'fraction of bread', determine its origin and clarify the meaning which each one wanted it to be attributed with. It is up to us to decipher the symbols. This is not very difficult.

The traditional symbolical meaning of bread is the key to the narrative : in the literal sense, bread is food for the body *par excellence*, in the symbolical sense, food for the soul *par excellence*. A single loaf would have been sufficient to satisfy the crowd for Jesus' divine power. So why were there seven loaves? Because seven is a perfect number. The seven loaves represent, therefore, the perfect doctrine which Jesus brought, the doctrine that leads to salvation. The hungry crowd needs and craves for this doctrine and if they are not fed and satisfied, they would certainly faint *en route*, and would not attain salvation, the celestial homeland from whence they came and to which they must return. The disciples already possessed the knowledge which Jesus brought into the world, since the seven loaves are in their possession, but it is through them that it will reach the entire world. From disciples they must become apostles. Jesus therefore pronounced the liturgical thanksgiving and 'broke the bread'; the disciples distributed the pieces, and when the crowd was symbolically satisfied, Jesus dismissed them. They would not faint *in via*, they would attain salvation.

#### THE FOUR THOUSAND GUESTS AND THE EXCESS BREAD GATHERED UP

Nothing is missing in the narrative as just set out. It was advisable, however, to clarify its universal significance both in space and time.

Firstly, in space, by adding the phrase "now they were four thousand in number" (Mk 8.9). One thousand represents a totality and four corresponds to the 'four winds' or cardinal points. Therefore 'four thousand' represents the population of the entire universe. This meaning is already implicit in the expression "a great crowd".

Secondly, in time, by adding the phrase, "they took up the excess fragments: seven baskets full" (Mk 8.8). The addition is betrayed by the double change of subject: "They (the people) ate and they (the disciples) took away, now they (the people) were four thousand in number". It is not to magnify the import of the miracle that the excess fragments (*perisseumata*) are mentioned; they are not "leftover" left by the satisfied crowd, which must be "taken away so that nothing should be lost" as the author of the Johannine narrative (6.12-13) will understand. Filling seven baskets — as many as there were loaves — they were intentionally broken by Jesus and were "taken away" by the seven disciples (Jn 21.2) — as many as there are baskets — "for the expectation of the peoples" as the Sibyl will say (359), that is to nourish the generations that will follow one another until the end of time. Each distribution of the eucharistic bread draws and will draw from the inexhaustible baskets.

## THE LITURGY OF THE MASS CORRESPONDS TO THE NARRATIVE

Liturgical and canonical practice, in discontinuity with the narratives of the Last Supper is, on the contrary, in perfect continuity with this narrative.

To the bread, 'knowledge leading to salvation', correspond the teaching, readings and homily, which have always preceded the eucharistic celebration everywhere since Acts 2.42.

To the fasting crowd corresponds the obligation of eucharistic fasting in force in all the Churches, despite the conviction that the eucharist was instituted during a meal; it was maintained by the reforms resulting from Vatican II, though much reduced to encourage communion at evening mass.

To Jesus' fear that the crowd will faint on the way, *in via*, corresponds the rule to give communion to the dying *in viaticum*, i.e., as provisions for the journey of the soul towards its celestial homeland.

To the absence of the cup correspond the celebrations without the cup in the narratives of Emmaus and Paul's shipwreck (Acts 27.35), those of the apocryphal Acts which at least attest to a tradition, and at mass itself, the absence, unlike the Last Supper, of a special thanksgiving for the cup.

To the excess pieces taken away corresponds the custom of preserving the eucharist under the species of bread — and bread alone — and also that of adding the reserved bread, the '*sancta*', to the bread consecrated on the day in order to establish a link with the excess pieces of the first celebration by Jesus.

To the symbolism of the bread, 'the knowledge of salvation', corresponds the custom of exchanging the eucharist between Churches as a sign of communion in faith, agreement on beliefs, and deny it to heretics who are thus 'excommunicated'.

To the dismissal of the satisfied crowd corresponds the solemn dismissal concluding the celebration in all the liturgies, and which, in the West, has given the name of 'mass' to the celebration itself "*Ite, missa est*", "Go, it is the dismissal".

### THE FIRST JUDAIZATION: THE FEEDING MIRACLE ASSIMILATED WITH THE MIRACLES IN EXODUS AND JESUS WITH A PROPHET LIKE MOSES

For the Jews, the only 'knowledge of salvation' is the Law, in accordance with Deut 8.3 : "(YHWH) humbled you by letting you hunger, then by feeding you with manna (...) in order to make you understand that man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of YHWH".

The primitive narrative could be understood in this way without alteration and all the more easily since the passage from Deuteronomy was put into Jesus' mouth in answer to Satan who incited him to change stones into bread to appease his hunger after forty days of fasting (Mt 4.2-4; Mk 4.2-4). But to impose this

interpretation, the bread must be clearly assimilated with manna. This was achieved by adding verse Mk 8.7 : "They (the disciples) had also a few small fishes; and after blessing them, he ordered that these should also be distributed".

That this is indeed an addition is confirmed by the fact that, on rewriting the narrative, Mt will logically mention the small fishes with the seven loaves of the disciples and make them eucharistized, broken and distributed together.

That this addition is Jewish in flavour emerges from the fact that instead of a thanksgiving ("We thank you, O Father, for..."), Jesus is said to have pronounced a blessing ("Blessed are you, YHWH our God, who created...").

How do the little fishes assimilate the loaves with manna? When the Israelites in the wilderness became weary of only eating manna and nothing else, they started to complain and said : "Who will give us meat to eat? We remember the fish we used to eat in Egypt..." Then YHWH sent a strong wind from the sea and it brought quails (Num 11.5,6,22,31). The quails were sent as a substitute for fish, they are meat of the sea, much more, according to Wis 19.11-12, flesh born from the sea.

The assimilation of quails with the fishes therefore entails the assimilation of loaves of bread with manna, makes the fraction of bread a renewal of the Exodus miracles, locates the episode in the desert, hence the addition of this word in Mk 8.4 (Mt 15.32) and identifies Jesus with a prophet like Moses, promised in Deut 18.18 : "I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their own people, says YHWH to Moses; I will put my words in the mouth of the prophet, who shall speak to them everything that I command".

From being universal, intemporal and unlocalized, the narrative has become Jewish.

### THE SECOND JUDAIZATION: THE CHANGING OF NUMBERS AND THE FEEDING MIRACLE ASSIMILATED WITH THE ESCHATOLOGICAL MEAL AND JESUS WITH THE MESSIAH

The addition of small fishes suppressed nothing that still enables exegetes today to regard the narrative of the Seven as universalist. To make it completely Jewish the symbolical numbers had to be changed. Bread signifying the knowledge of salvation which Jesus brought having become manna, manna signifying the word of God, the word of God *par excellence* being the Torah, the Torah comprising the five books of the Law of Moses, the seven loaves were therefore reduced to five; the four thousand guests became five thousand men representing Israel alone, and the seven baskets of excess pieces became twelve bags which correspond to the twelve tribes of Israel and the twelve Apostles.

But what does the change of small fishes into two fishes, added to the five loaves to make the number seven, mean? The two fishes undoubtedly represent Behemoth and Leviathan, the amphibian monsters of the Book of Job (40.10-

41.26), the hippopotamus and the crocodile, which have become mythical animals in the Jewish imagination. Probably fantasizing on Ps 74.14, of which the last word is mysterious: "You shattered the heads of Leviathan and you gave him as food to the *tsiyyim*", the author of II Baruch (29.36-8) makes YHWH say: "As soon as the Messiah will begin to reveal himself, Behemoth will also reveal himself from his place and Leviathan will rise out of the sea, and these two mighty sea monsters I created on the fifth day, and kept in reserve for that day, will be the food for those who remain (...) And in those days, supplies of manna will fall from the sky and they will feed for one year because they will live to the end of time".

The same doctrine is to be found in IV Esdras 6.47,49; Enoch 60.24 (Parables); *Targum of Pseudo-Jonathan* to Gen 1.21; see other quotations in L. Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews*, I p. 27; IV, p. 249; V, p. 43-44.48.

The transformation of the small fishes into two big fishes makes the fraction of bread into an anticipation and a pledge of the eschatological feast of the elect and identifies Jesus with the Messiah, with Christ.

The numbers were changed when the narrative was completely rewritten. The narrative is no longer situated nowhere, nor in the wilderness, but in the land of Israel. Jesus teaches the crowds — an accurate interpretation of bread 'the word of God' —, and heals the sick — according to his thaumaturgical function, indissociable from the first. Then, a supreme failure to understand ascribed to the disciples, they urge Jesus to dismiss the crowds so they can buy elsewhere the food which is their mission to distribute: "Give them to eat yourselves", says Jesus. Before pronouncing not the thanksgiving but a Jewish blessing — as in the gloss of the little fishes —, Jesus lifted his eyes up to heaven, a sign that divine power was denied him and he was forced to act as the Messiah through God's power.

## THE TWO REWRITINGS OF THE NARRATIVE OF THE TWELVE

In accordance with the 'new solution' of the synoptic problem proposed to explain the Mt-Lk concordances against Mk and the conflated lessons of Mk by Philippe Rolland in three articles in the *Revue biblique* (1982 and 1983) and his book, *Les premiers évangiles*, we must assume that, between the first narrative of the Twelve and the three synoptic gospels, a rewriting of the narrative of the Twelve in a source common to Mt and Mk and another rewriting in a source common to Mk and Lk took place.

In the source common to Mt and Mk, Jesus' compassion is reintroduced: its object is no longer that the crowds have nothing to eat but that they are like sheep without a shepherd: this is the Jewish theme of the "lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Mt 10.6; 15.24; Jer 23.1; Ez 34.2). Like the sheep in Ps 22 (23), the crowd of five thousand men — Mt will specify "without women and children" — lies down on the grass — which Mk will qualify as "green".

In the source common to **Mk** and **Lk**, the disciples naively contemplate buying the necessary food themselves, which **Mk** evaluates at over 200 *denarii*. The crowd is divided into groups of one hundred and fifty like the people in the wilderness (Ex 18.21; Deut 1.15) and the eschatological batallions of Qumran (I Qumran IV.1-5).

### OVERTURE TO THE GENTILES

The narrative of the Seven in **Mk** contains two phrases to which the narrative of the Twelve makes no allusion. They must not have been there when the narrative of the Twelve was written. They are the phrases: "they have been with me now three days" and "some of them have come a long way (omitted by Mt)".

The unliklihood of three days requires a symbolical explanation. As F.W. Danker (1963, p. 115-116) and B. Van Iersel (1964, p. 167-194) have shown, both phrases refer to Is 60.1-4 as do Eph 2.23, Acts 2.34 and 22.21, and beyond, to Jos 9.6,9,16, namely the subterfuge used by the Gabaonites when Palestine was conquered by Israel. To escape *herem*, total extermination ordered by YHWH and experienced by the inhabitants of Ai all killed by the sword, the Gabaonites pretended that they "had come from far away", showing crumbs of dry bread as proof, and they obtained a covenant agreement from Jesus-Joshua. When "three days" had elapsed, their subterfuge was discovered. The Gabaonites were allowed to live because of the oath pronounced but were reduced to slavery in the service of the Temple.

In reaction against the exclusion of the Gentiles pronounced by the narrative of the Twelve in accordance with the words attributed to Jesus in Mt 15.24 : "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel", the author of this interpolation accepts that, besides the Jews who belong to the Church by right (Acts 13.24), non-Jews can be admitted as second-class citizens. The Canaanite woman only extorted the healing of her child from Jesus in the same way as the dogs are allowed to eat the crumbs from their master's table (**Mk** 7.28; Mt 15.27).

### THE COMBINATION OF THE TWO NARRATIVES

In the source common to Mt and **Mk**, the narratives of the Twelve and of the Seven are inserted in a series of pericopes which also deal with the respective positions of Jews and Christians in the Church (the journey to Tyr, Sidon and in the Decapolis, the episode of the Canaanite woman) and, beyond, with the Jewish or non-Jewish, even anti-Jewish origin of the Christian movement and of Jesus (a rejection not only of the tradition of the Fathers, but of the distinction made by the Law between pure and impure; Herod's uncertainty about Jesus and Peter's confession at Caesarea). The succession, the narrative of the Twelve followed by the narrative of the Seven, indicates a determination to prevent certain Christian-

Jews from monopolizing the new religious movement and break down their exclusiveness.

### THE LUKAN REWRITING

As the overture to the pagans expressed in these pericopes and in the narrative of the Seven corresponds to that of Lk in his gospel (2.32) and in Acts (13.46), it is impossible to believe that he deliberately omitted them ('the great omission'). They did not therefore appear in the source on which he drew with Mk.

Lk rewrote the narrative of the Twelve as a historian. He substitutes "the Twelve" for "the disciples" (Lk 9.12) and is the only one to do so and only once. He anticipates the mention of five thousand men in order to emphasize the difficulty of an eventual purchase by the disciples. He omits the mention of the one hundred in the dividing of the crowd as fifty is half. For him this division only serves to facilitate the distribution and the counting of the guests. He omits the dismissal of the crowd because he considers it insignificant. There is no doubt, however, that in his mind, the miracle he relates constitutes the institution of a ritual he calls exclusively the "fraction of bread" (24.25; Acts 2.42) or "to break the bread" (Acts 2.46; 20.7,11) — we shall see later that all he knows about the Last Supper is the eschatological cup.

### THE MATTHEWAN REWRITING

Mt closely follows the source he draws on with Mk. He ignores or omits the Apostles' return from their mission. He anticipates the phrase on Jesus' compassion for the shepherdless sheep by setting it in different circumstances (9.31), but retains the mention of grass, which is linked to it. He adds Jesus' command, "Bring them (the loaves) to me" (14.18), relativizes the number five thousand by "around" and specifies that "men" means without women and children.

In the narrative of the Seven, Mt makes Jesus climb up the mountain and sit down (15.24), an indication that he gives the second Feeding narrative the same importance as the famous speech on the mountain (5.1); he inserts the little fishes into the disciples answer, when they said they have seven loaves, and transfers the mention of the crowd's dismissal to the beginning of the next episode in a participial incision of circumstance, an indication that he misunderstands the meaning of it in the order of salvation.

### THE MARKAN REWRITING

In the narrative of the Twelve, Mk combines Mt's source with Lk's, he also drew on the narrative of the Seven (6.38 = 8.5; 6.41d = 8.7) and adds something of his own making: he dramatizes the Apostles' tiredness on their return from their mission and adds that the crowd did not even give them time to eat, which he had alleged earlier in 3.20; he estimates the cost of the purchase of bread at 200 *denarii*, qualifies the grass as green, reckons the excess fish in the twelve bags.

In the narrative of the Seven, he contemplates sending the people away "to their homes", and adds "around" before "four thousand".

Without withdrawing the symbolical values of the numbers and objects, the synoptic gospels have historicised the narratives.

### THE JOHANNINE REWRITING

The Johannine narrative (6.1-15) is a compromise between the synoptic narratives which he knows, and the discourse on the bread of life (Jn 6.22-51a). On the one hand, as for instance in the narrative of the Seven in Mt, Jesus sits down on the mountain and, as in the narrative of the Twelve in Mk, the purchase of 200 *denarii* worth of bread is contemplated.

On the other, as in the discourse on the bread of life, manna and Moses are repudiated: "Do not labour for the food which perishes" (= the Jewish Law symbolized by manna which had to be collected in the morning before melting in the sun, and consumed before sunset because it goes bad at night), "but the food which endures to eternal life" (6.27), for "it is not Moses (i.e. YHWH) who gave you the bread from heaven (your fathers ate manna and died *'in via'*, *en route* for the promised land); but my Father gives you the true bread from heaven" (6.32), "that a man may eat of and not die" (6.50).

The true bread from heaven is Jesus himself, for eternal life is to know the Father, the one true God — and not YHWH — and Jesus whom he sent (Jn 17.3).

The discourse on the bread of life is therefore a protest against the judaization of the primitive narrative of the Seven, a judaization which turned the bread into manna, and a commentary on bread, "the knowledge of salvation brought by Jesus", and more simply, as for the Emmaus pilgrims, knowledge of Jesus himself.

To eliminate manna, the author of Jn's narrative substitutes the grandiose miracles of Moses by the less spectacular miracle of Elisha feeding 200 people with 20 loaves of barley and fresh ears of grain (2 Kings 4.42-44). The five loaves are therefore loaves of barley and the fishes become *opsaria* which the dictionary defines as "anything that is eaten with something else". These provisions are no longer in the hands of the disciples but held by a little boy who plays the role of

Elisha's servant. Elisha multiplied twenty by five, Jesus multiplies five by one thousand. The bread, the fish and the numbers have lost all symbolical meaning. As in the synoptic gospels earlier the narrative relates a historical fact, a real miracle. Its author makes the crowd express in plain words the meaning he wants us to give to this 'sign': "Actually, he is the prophet *who comes* into the world", and he adds that the crowd is willing to make him King. Prophet and King are the two titles by which he shall make the crowds acclaim Jesus on entering Jerusalem: "Blessed is the one *who comes* in the name of the Lord, the king of Israel" (Jn 12.13). The author of the narrative therefore after a detour by Elisha reverts to attributing Jesus with Jewish titles against which the author of the discourse protested. But at the same time he makes Jesus flee to the mountain because, like the author of the Emmaus story as well, he wants these titles to receive a different meaning to the one given by the Jews. Jesus will claim before Pilate that he is truly the King of the Jews (Jn 18.33); but his kingdom is not from this world (Jn 18.36-37). Jesus is not from this world, whereas the Jews are from this world. He is from above, whereas they are from below (Jn 8.23). He is the divine saviour sent by the Father, but for the Jews he must be the human messiah promised by YHWH (Lk 24.13-21). The Father is not YHWH, but since both are alleged to be the one and only God, they will be confused. This is the price paid for the zeal of detaching the Jews from their god and his Law, and the inherent contradiction in the partial judaization of the message of salvation brought by Jesus.

### THE TEACHING OF THE TEXTS

We have discovered twelve interpolations or rewritings of the primitive Feeding narrative:

1) The addition of four thousand guests and seven baskets of excess fragments which explicits the universal significance of the narrative in space and time.

2) The addition of little fishes representing quails, assimilates the fragments with manna and Jesus with the prophet like Moses.

3) The addition of "three days" and "some came from a long way" which assimilates the Gentiles with the Gabaonites.

4) and 5) The recensions of the narrative of the Seven by Mk and Mt.

6) The complete rewriting of the narrative in a totally Jewish perspective by changing the symbolical numbers which makes the multiplication of loaves the anticipation and pledge of the eschatological feast and assimilates Jesus with the messiah.

7) and 8) The recensions in a source common to Mt and Mk and a source common to Mk and Lk, where the symbolical meaning is blurred if not completely neglected.

9), 10), 11) The three synoptic narratives of Mt, Mk and Lk, where the multiplication of loaves becomes a historical miracle, and even, for Mt and Mk, two successive miracles (Mt 16.9-10; Mk 8.19-20).

12) The Johannine narrative which refuses to assimilate the bread with manna, substitutes Elisha's miracle for the miracles in Exodus, and defines Jesus as the prophet who comes and the king of Israel, but gives these titles another meaning than the one held by Jews.

The myth varies but the ritual remains unchanged.

Even today the celebrant takes the bread, pronounces a thanksgiving, breaks and distributes it and dismisses the congregation, as Jesus was said to have done formerly. But to the bread a cup was added. This is what we must now examine.



## Chapter 2

# THE FEEDING NARRATIVE AND THE LAST SUPPER: THE CELEBRATION OF THE BREAKING OF BREAD IN JEWISH MEALS

Apart from archeological evidence, the only facts we can attain are the texts. We must therefore reason about the texts that relate facts, not about the facts related by the texts.

The problem is to explain how the Last Supper narratives arose though the ritual of the Breaking of Bread was practiced and the Feeding narratives claimed to give its origin and dictated how to celebrate and understand it.

### THE CUP/BREAD SEQUENCE

The Last Supper narratives, like the Feeding narratives, were preceded by a ritual whose institution they claimed to relate. This ritual was simply the celebration of the Breaking of Bread within the context of Jewish ceremonial meals, where a benediction over bread is pronounced after a benediction over the cup. Such a ritual was first attested in the *Didache* :

IX Concerning the eucharist, eucharistise (give thanks) thus (accordingly) :

<sup>2</sup> First for the cup : We give thanks unto thee, O Father, for the holy vine of David which you made known to us through Jesus your servant.

<sup>3</sup> Then for the broken bread : We give thanks unto thee, O Father, for the life and knowledge which you made known to us through Jesus your servant (...)

X When you have satisfied your hunger, render thanks accordingly :

<sup>2</sup> We render thanks unto thee, O holy Father, for your holy Name which you made dwell in our hearts, for the knowledge, faith and immortality which you made known to us through Jesus your servant.

A second attestation has been preserved in the *Diataxeis* or *Statutes of the Holy Apostles* (Pseudo-Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytus). In chapter 25 'Of the bringing in of the lamps at the supper of the congregation', after the prayer for the lamp (compare with the Byzantine *Phôs hilaron*), the passage reads as follows :

And afterwards the bishop having offered the cup as is proper for the cup, he shall say the Psalm 'Halleljah'... And likewise when the Psalm is completed, he shall give thanks over the cup (*sic: read* bread), and give of the fragments to all of the faithful. (G. Dix, p. 51-52; B. Botte, SC 11 bis, p. 103)

### THE BREAD/CUP SEQUENCE

In Christian celebrations the bread/cup sequence supplanted the cup/bread sequence of Jewish meals very early on. One of the functions of the narrative in 1 Co is precisely to impose the bread/cup sequence: "Likewise, with the cup after the meal". Two reasons may perhaps explain this alteration : firstly that, in the synoptic narratives, the words over the cup "I will drink no more..." were said at the end of the meal when Jesus had drunk for the last time; and secondly, there was perhaps a desire to align Judeo-Christian celebrations of the last supper with Greek-Christian celebrations of the Breaking of Bread, into which the Jewish cup had been introduced earlier after the bread.

Two passages in the *Diataxeis* attest that the liturgical practice recommended in 1 Co 11.20-24, before completely disappearing, like the earlier practice in the *Didache* moreover, was maintained for some time, though downgraded it is true, as the phrase put in square brackets will show. The passage from chapter 26 immediately follows the passage from chapter 25 cited above as evidence of the cup/bread sequence; a proof that the *Diataxeis*, far from being an original composition by Hippolytus, is an unbiased compilation of heterogeneous elements.

And they shall take from the hand of the bishop one piece (*klasma*) of bread before each takes his own bread.

[For this is 'blessed bread'; but it is not the eucharist as is the Body of the Lord.]

And before they drink let each of those (of you) who are present take a cup and give thanks and drink, and so take your meal being purified in this way. But to the catechumens let exorcized bread be given; and they shall each offer a cup. (G. Dix, p. 45; B. Botte, SC 11 bis, p. 103-105)

The purpose of the explanatory incision, which explains nothing, is to downgrade a celebration which no longer corresponded to the liturgies directly derived from the Feeding narratives. That this is the eucharist is confirmed by the fact that another piece of bread was given to the catechumens and by the word 'eucharist' used for the cup, as we read in the following passage chapter 38 of the *Diataxeis* :

For having blessed the cup in the Name of God thou didst receive it as the anti-type of the Blood of Christ. Wherefore spill not from it, that no alien spirit lick it up, because thou didst despise it, and become guilty of the Blood (of Christ) as one who despises the price which he has been bought. (G. Dix, p. 59; B. Botte, SC 11bis, p. 121)

Two points directly refer to 1 Co :

— the first "You will become guilty of the blood (of Christ)" recalls the phrase "Whoever eats the bread and drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner, will be guilty of the body and blood of Christ" (1 Co 11.27).

— the second concerns the prescription for everyone to eucharistize his own cup. This is precisely what the order of renewal over the cup prescribes: "Do this, as often as you drink, in remembrance of me" (1 Co 11.25). The prescription put in Jesus' mouth conforms to Jewish customs described in the *Mishnah*:

If they sat down to eat (ordinary meals), each one recites the blessing for himself. If they reclined (ceremonial meals), one recites the blessing for all. If wine came to them in the midst of the meal, each recites the blessing for himself. If wine came after the meal, one recites the blessing for all. (*Berakhoth* 6,6)

#### WHO PRONOUNCED THE THANKSGIVING? THE PRESIDENT FOR ALL OR EVERYONE FOR HIMSELF?

According to the *Diataxeis*, therefore, everyone says the thanksgiving (the Christian term) or the benediction (the Jewish term) over the cup 'for himself', i.e. on his own behalf. As this is not specified for the bread, it might be accepted that, imitating Jesus in the Feeding narrative, the bishop or president pronounces the blessing 'for all'. This induction is however uncertain, because the difference between the bread and the cup is that the bread is only blessed once, whereas the cup is blessed each time it is drunk, so logically, in 1 Co, if the order of renewal over the cup is addressed to each individual, so should the order of renewal over the bread. And how could the Corinthians have been accused of not waiting for each other (11.21 and 33) if the president pronounced the blessing 'for all'? Si-

ilarly, the prescriptions in the *Didache* : "Concerning the eucharist, eucharistize thus", apparently address each believer. And this is one of the reasons why — in the absence of the words of consecration! — despite the obvious meaning of the words, it was upheld that in the *Didache* it is not the eucharist but private prayers to be recited during the 'agapes', the charitable suppers mentioned in Act 6.1-2, as if these charitable suppers given by Christians for Christians excluded that the eucharist was celebrated then, whereas it was accepted that it was celebrated during a meal.

The order of renewal over the cup, "As often as you drink", loses all meaning when the cup is transferred after the bread in non-Jewish celebrations outside the meal. The words still embarrass translators and commentators who think they can allievate the difficulty by adding the pronoun 'it': "Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me"; yet 'it' can only designate the eucharistized cup in remembrance of Jesus, i.e. the same thing as 'this'. Nor is the tautology avoided either by the liturgies which have replaced 'to drink' by repeating 'to do' and modified the construction of the sentence: "As often as you do this, you will do (it) in remembrance of me". In 1969 the canonical reformers avoided the difficulty by making the renewal order for the bread apply to the cup : 'Do this in remembrance of me'.

### THE TEACHING OF THE TEXTS

The celebration of the Breaking of Bread in Jewish meals led quite naturally to the substitution of the traditional Jewish blessing by a benediction or thanksgiving in accordance with new expectations brought by Jesus (*Didache*). Sacralized in the Last Supper narratives, the Jewish cup is introduced into non-Jewish celebrations after the bread under a single thanksgiving. The cup/bread sequence in Jewish meals is replaced by the bread/cup sequence in the liturgies and the thanksgiving by one for all prevailed over the blessing of each for himself.

## Chapter 3

# THE DEFINITIONS OF THE BREAD AND THE CUP IN THE LAST SUPPER NARRATIVES

Two expressions considered equal to a third are never co-equal.

If the eucharistic celebration in the *Didache* is truly the celebration of the Breaking of Bread transposed into the framework of Jewish communal meals, the thanksgiving to be said over bread it prescribes is perhaps the authentic or barely glossed thanksgiving of the first celebration of the Breaking of Bread outside this framework, and the thanksgiving prescribed over the cup the first thanksgiving ever said over the cup.

We must now first examine the thanksgivings in the *Didache*. According to the above hypothesis, the thanksgiving over bread should correspond to the symbolic meaning of the bread in the Feeding narratives, and the thanksgiving over the cup should be dependent on the thanksgiving over bread and the customary Jewish blessings over the cup.

### THE THANKSGIVING OVER THE BREAD IN THE DIDACHE

The object of the thanksgiving over bread : "the life and knowledge that (*hês*) the Father made known to us through Jesus", is consistent with the discourse on the bread of life in Jn 6.33-35a and Jn 6.47-51a for the mention of life and, for the mention of knowledge with the meaning of bread as "the doctrine of salvation", which we recognized as its own in the Feeding narrative. The singular relative pronoun *hês* proves that one of the terms, 'life' or 'knowledge', is superfluous; the duplication "the *knowledge* which you made *known* to us" proves that the mention of life was not primitive and the specification that this knowledge was brought by Jesus assures us that it is not the knowledge of the five books of the Law advocated by the glossed and rewritten Feeding narratives, but the perfect and new doctrine of the gospel symbolized by the seven loaves in the primitive narrative.

The thanksgiving over the bread in the *Didache* is, therefore, except for one word 'life', the primitive thanksgiving in celebrations of the Breaking of Bread,

of which the earlier Feeding narrative is a transposition into an aetiological and normative legend.

### THE THANKSGIVING OVER THE CUP IN THE DIDACHE

The thanksgiving over the cup: "We give thanks unto thee, O Father, for the holy vine of David which you made known to us through Jesus your servant" is an exact copy of the thanksgiving over bread, but here "the vine of David" is substituted for "knowledge". "The vine of David" also replaces "the fruit of the vine" in the customary Jewish blessing: "Blessed (are) you, YHWH, our God, King of the world, who created the fruit of the vine". The Jewish formula "Blessed (are) you" has been replaced by the Christian formula, "We give thanks to you", and the address "YHWH, our God, King of the world" has been replaced by the Christian address "O our Father". The fruit of the vine, a material substance created by YHWH, king of the (material) world, has been replaced by a spiritual entity symbolized by the vine. Since Osias' poem 10.1 : "Israel was a luxuriant vine...", and especially since the 'Song of the vine' at Is 5.1-7, the vine symbolizes "the house of Israel". But this comparison only occurs when YHWH has reason to complain about its unfaithfulness and predict its punishment (Jer 2.21; 5.10; 6.9; 12.10; Ez 15.1-8; 17.3-10; 19.10-14) or restoration (Ps 80.9-19; Is 27.2-5). This is verified in the parable of the Wicked Husbandmen in Mt 21.33-43; Mk 12.1-11; Lk 20.9-18. The vine of David which the Father made known through Jesus cannot be that vine. Since it stems "from David" it represents the messianic kingdom, the Church, the true Israel scattered among the mountains (1 Kings 22.17; Ez 34.1-3; Jn 23.1-4; Deut 30.2); other prayers preserved in the *Didache* call for its gathering together. The thanksgiving is addressed to the Father for an evangelic entity expressed in terms of Jewish expectations.

### THE PROBLEM OF THE VARIOUS DEFINITIONS OF THE BREAD AND THE CUP

The relationship between the bread defined as knowledge and the cup as the Church and their definitions as the body and blood of Christ is not evident. How did one evolve from the other? As the Feeding narratives are not involved, we must examine the Last Supper narratives.

### WHAT WAS JESUS' LAST SUPPER? THE "LAST SUPPER" OR THE MEAL AT BETHANY?

The passion of Jesus, crucified by the archons (1 Co 2.8), though presented as the messiah crucified by the Romans to the Jews who expected him to deliver them from their yoke, was very shocking for the Jews (1 Co 1.23). To make the Jews accept this, one of the apologetic themes employed was Jesus' fore-knowledge: he surrendered himself to death as a voluntary sacrificial victim. On three occasions Jesus predicts his passion and resurrection with details which the subsequent narratives display; before entering Jerusalem he sends two disciples to fetch a donkey in a place he knows they will find it; he predicts the downfall of Jerusalem and the Temple; he sends two disciples to meet a man bearing a pitcher, in preparation for the Passover feast; at the Last Supper he denounces Judas' betrayal and designates him as a traitor; he predicts the scattering of the Apostles, his resurrection and Peter's denial; he suffers agony on the Mount of Olives, and walks towards Judas who has come to arrest him...

We shall start with two other predictions he made concerning his approaching death, one pronounced during the meal at Bethany and the other over the cup at the Last Supper.

As they were eating in the house of Simon the leper (Mk 14.3-4) in Bethany on the Mount of Olives facing Jerusalem, a woman broke open a flask of perfume and poured the contents over Jesus' head. Those present protested against such waste and suggested that selling the perfume might have succoured the poor. Jesus took the woman's side; she had in fact made a prophetic gesture: "You always have the poor with you to help, he said, but you will not always have me", this was a prediction of his death though vague and imprecise as to when it would occur. Furthermore, the phrase about concern for the poor does not come from the primitive text; it is one of the interpolations reflecting the financial worries of the Jerusalem community for whom Paul would take a collection later. In the primitive text, Jesus had said quite simply: "Why do you reproach her? It is a pious work that she has just performed for me: she has anticipated the anointing of my corpse for burial in the tomb". The pious work performed over Jesus is therefore the burial of the dead (Tob 1.20; 2.8; 12.12), and the words about the anticipated anointing of his body only make sense if, when Jesus is buried, his body is still impregnated with this unction. This is an assumption that the passion would follow immediately, that Jesus would be arrested the same night, crucified the following day and placed in the tomb without further embalment on the same evening, less than twenty-four hours after his prediction.

The changes Jn's gospel makes on Mk's text confirm this interpretation. The event is brought forward six days before Passover; the flask of perfume is replaced by a greater quantity of perfume, one ounce, and the woman only uses a small amount because, in answer to Judas' concern for the poor, Jesus makes this rather contradictory reply: "Let her keep it for the day of my burial" (Jn 12.1-8).

But it is Nicodemus who would bury Jesus with approximately one hundred ounces of myrrh and aloes (Jn 19.39).

Yet Mk and Mt inserted a day of preparation for the Passover feast and the Last Supper between the meal at Bethany and Jesus' arrest which should have followed. It ends with Jesus words over the cup : "Truly, I say to you, I shall not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God". The passion narrative follows immediately : "And having said hymns, they went out to the Mount of Olives" (Mk 14.25-26).

The phrases, "She has anticipated the anointing..." and "I shall not drink again", imply that Jesus' arrest is imminent. They were therefore written to be pronounced one after the other in identical circumstances. As the episode of the perfume and the words "she has anticipated my anointing" cannot be transferred to the Last Supper, the words "I shall not drink again" must be transferred to the meal at Bethany and we must assume that the passion followed immediately. The narrative of the meal at Bethany ought therefore have been substantially as follows :

Mk 14<sup>3</sup> While (Jesus) was at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, as he sat at the table, a woman came with a flask of very expensive perfume, she broke the flask and poured the ointment over his head". <sup>4</sup> There were some who were indignant : "What is the point of such waste!". <sup>6</sup> And Jesus said, "Why do you reproach her. This is a pious work she has performed for me. <sup>8</sup> She has anointed my body beforehand for its burial. <sup>9</sup> Truly, I say to you, wherever the gospel is proclaimed, what she has done will be told in reminiscence of her". 18,<sup>22</sup> And as they were eating, he took a cup and said "Truly, I say to you, I shall not drink again the fruit of the vine until I drink it new in the kingdom of God". <sup>26</sup> And they went out to the Mount of Olives.

### THE CHRONOLOGY OF THE PASSION

Recognition of the inauthenticity of the Last Supper narrative and its preparation indirectly solves the otherwise insoluble problem of the chronology of the passion. The manducation of Passover by Jesus implies that his arrest and judgement by the Sanhedrin and Pilate, his crucifixion and burial all take place on the same day at the Passover feast. It would be like imagining that a heretic is arrested on leaving midnight mass, brought to trial by the Inquisition tribunal, handed over to the secular courts and then burnt all on Christmas Day. To evade such improbabilities the apologists imagine that Jesus must have anticipated the Passover meal by one day or used another calendar than the one in official use, in this case the Qumran calendar, yet nothing in the texts points to either supposition. The problem is suppressed by transferring the eschatological words over the cup to the meal at Bethany : Jesus suffers on the eve of Passover, he is 'sacrificed'

on the cross as the lambs were being sacrificed in the Temple, following the symbolism that made him a true paschal lamb of which that of the feast was merely a figuration: "Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (Jn 1.29-36); "For Christ, our paschal lamb, has been sacrificed" (1 Co 5.7); "They did not break his legs..." so that the Scripture is fulfilled "You will not break any of its (the paschal lamb) bones" (Jn 19.33-36; Ex 12.46); etc. The tradition earlier than the one used by Mt or Mk's source is therefore consistent with the one preserved by Jn and, in another place, by Mk himself (Mk 15.42; Jn 19.31). According to this tradition Jesus suffers on the day of the Preparation and is buried before sunset, i.e., before the beginning of the feast which begins with the paschal meal.

But if this was the case, how and why were the narratives of the preparation for the Passover and the Last Supper invented? This is the question we must now tackle.

#### THE COMPOSITION OF THE NARRATIVE OF THE LAST SUPPER AND ITS PREPARATION

My conclusion that the Last Supper did not take place, rather let us say that the Last Supper narrative does not belong to the primitive tradition hardly goes beyond that of S. Dockx, a Belgian Dominican at the International Academy of Religious Sciences, who asserts that "when Lk used Mk's text, it did not include the words of the institution", i.e. the sacramental words. This conclusion to a study published in *Biblica* (1965, p. 445-453), the journal of the Pontifical Institute in Rome, was approved by L. Ligier s.j. and M.E. Boismard o.p. and X. Léon-Dufour s.j. according to n. 1, p. 207 in *Chronologies néotestamentaires* (1976) which reprints the article from *Biblica* with supplements. S. Dockx's demonstration is not entirely without reproach — I prefer mine in the papers 'Les paroles sur la coupe' (1981) and 'Les récits de la cène et la date de la passion' (1991) — though his conclusion is correct. Initially, the Last Supper narrative only included the words called eschatological over the cup. "I shall not drink again... until...". How and why were these words taken from the meal at Bethany and inserted into a narrative which was apparently invented expressly for that purpose?

We have seen that the celebration of the Breaking of Bread within the framework of Jewish communal meals gave rise, for the cup, to the formulation of a thanksgiving parallel to the one pronounced over bread and which in some way sacralized it: from now on the sacrament will include the bread and the cup. Now the bread had its institutional narrative in the Feeding narrative: an institutional narrative was required for the cup and, rather than invent one out of nothing, it was easier to start with the known sayings of Jesus. The words "I shall not drink again of the fruit of the vine until I shall drink it new in the kingdom of

heaven" evoke, for the cup, the eschatological feast promised by the bread in the Feeding narratives of the Twelve and the kingdom of God for which the *Didache* gives thanks by the image of holy vine of David. But Jesus' words only concern himself; to make the cup become the prefiguration and pledge of the kingdom, it has to be shared by Jesus and the Apostles. The Apostles had to drink from the same cup as Jesus, according to the words addressed to the sons of Zebedee : "Are you able to drink the cup that I shall drink?... You will drink..." (Mk 10.38-39).

The meal of unction at Bethany, of which another version recorded by Lk (7.36-50), depicting the woman as a sinner, was consequently unsuitable for situating the institution of the cup. Another meal was needed and since the meal at Bethany took place one day before the eve of the day of Preparation, the new meal had to take place on the eve of the day of Preparation, i.e. the paschal meal. Moreover, the paschal meal contains all the solemnity requisite for such an institution. There was no need to describe the rites — it was perhaps preferable not to do so — hence the narrative of the preparations for the paschal meal, imitating the narrative of the preparations for Jesus' entry into Jerusalem, where he once again reveals his omniscience.

The first narrative of the Last Supper was therefore as follows :

Mk 14<sup>17</sup> And when it was evening he came with the Twelve. <sup>18</sup> And as they were at table and as they were eating, <sup>23</sup> he took a cup, gave thanks, gave it to them and all drank from it <sup>24</sup> and he said to them: <sup>25</sup> "Truly, I say to you, I shall not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God". <sup>26</sup> And when they had sung hymns, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

What is missing in the narrative to make it fully consistent and comply with its author's intentions is "with you" which Mt was able to add later : "until that day when I drink it new with you in the kingdom of God" (Mt 26.29). The terms should in fact be inverted : "... until that day when you will drink it with me...".

When Lk wrote his gospel, the account of the paschal meal taken from the source he shares with Mk, which only contains the eschatological words over the cup, seemed to him rather empty. He did not think of duplicating the word over the cup by a word over the bread, which is logical as elsewhere he only mentions the Breaking of Bread and apparently ignores the cup of Jewish-Christian celebrations; he duplicated the word over the cup by a word on the Passover and, furthermore, he transformed its eschatological significance. Jesus would not drink new wine in the kingdom, he would not eat the Passover again, but eat it for the last time at the Last Supper before it was fulfilled; it will be fulfilled by his death on the cross. And he drank for the last time before the advent of the kingdom of God through his death. This is an affirmation that Jesus fulfils the figuration of the paschal lamb and this is all the more remarkable since this sym-

bolism no longer corresponds to Mk's chronology which Lk was obliged to follow : Jesus could not eat the paschal lamb and be sacrificed to fulfil its figuration at one and same time.

### THE INSTITUTION OF THE BREAD AND THE CUP COMBINED IN THE LAST SUPPER

The author of 1 Co 11.20-33 would do what Lk had not thought of doing. The narrative of the sharing of the eschatological cup between Jesus and the Apostles makes the cup of Jewish celebrations into something more than a duplicate of bread for Christians; the cup is also instituted by Christ and this obliges non-Jewish Christians to include it in their celebrations. But between the Jewish Christian practice of the cup and the narrative of its institution there is a discrepancy : it is the first cup which is eucharistized in the celebration, and the words "I shall not drink until" can only refer to the last cup. On the other hand, in non-Jewish celebrations, which has to accept the cup in accordance with the Last Supper narrative, this cup, the last cup of the paschal meal, had been placed after the bread under the same thanksgiving. Lastly, it seemed less normal that the bread and the cup now combined in Jewish and non-Jewish celebrations and each one requiring the other like food calls for drink, should have been instituted by Jesus on two different occasions separate in time and unrelated. As the institution of the cup cannot be transferred to the Feeding narrative, the institution of the bread is transferred to the Last Supper. The bread could only be placed before the cup as in non-Jewish celebrations because of the words "I shall not drink". Jewish celebrations will therefore have to modify their practice : of the two texts from the *Diataxeis* cited above in the beginning of chapter 2 (*supra*, p. 24-25), the first still places the cup before the bread while the second places it after.

To make these changes acceptable, the interpolator of 1 Co 11.23-26 put forward an alleged agreement between what the Saviour would have revealed to him and what he had taught earlier. Current practice among the Corinthians was therefore a deviation from tradition, though only in part, because the interpolator had to base his narrative on some truth in order to make the falsehood he wanted to impose acceptable. Here is his text :

1 Co 11<sup>23</sup> For I received from the Lord what I also transmitted to you, namely that on the night he was delivered, he took bread <sup>24</sup> and gave thanks and broke it saying "This is my body, the one for you. Do this in remembrance of me". <sup>25</sup> In the same way also the cup, after supper, saying : "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink, in remembrance of me! <sup>26</sup> For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes".

### THE CUP AS THE NEW COVENANT IN THE BLOOD OF CHRIST

The last sentence in the above passage, "As often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes", is untrue for the bread, unrelated to Christ's death — but it must be related — and true for the cup, since "to proclaim the Lord's death until he comes" corresponds exactly to the words "I shall not drink... until that day...", the eschatological feast being conceived in the Jewish fashion as in the rewriting of the Feeding narrative, i.e. as taking place on earth at Christ's return.

The purpose of this reminder concerning the cup is to justify the definition of the cup : "This cup is the new covenant in my blood", and it does justify it, as the formulation merely explains and expresses in theological terms what Mk's narrative expresses in concrete terms : "This cup which I make you drink with me on the eve of my bloody sacrifice on the cross is a promise and a pledge that you will drink with me the new wine in the kingdom of God. By the sharing and the significance my words give it, I seal a pact with you : this is the new covenant in my blood". The new covenant replaces both the covenant of Sinai sealed in the blood of bulls which Moses sprinkled over his people saying : "Behold the blood of the covenant which the Lord has made with you in accordance with all these words (of the Law)" (Ex 24.8) and the earlier covenant of the departure from Egypt sealed in the blood of the Passover lamb, according to Jeremiah's prophecy (31.31) cited in Heb 8.7-13 : "The days will come, says YHWH, when I will establish a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah; not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand out of the land of Egypt...".

### FROM THE CUP OF THE NEW COVENANT TO THE BREAD AS THE BODY OF CHRIST

To the parallelism bread/cup, food/drink is added, in the Greek and the Hebrew, the parallelism or opposition, flesh/blood, so that the mention of blood in the definition of the cup should have led to the mention of flesh in the definition of the bread. And this is what the interpolator who added v. 51b-58 to the discourse on the bread of life understood (Jn 6): "... unless you eat my flesh and drink my blood... for my flesh is true food and my blood is true drink". Yet the author of 1 Co 11.24 chose the word 'body' to give a parallel and equivalent definition of the bread to that of the cup "the new covenant in my blood": "This is my body, the one for you". But how does this equivalence appear in the formula? Two interpretations are put forward by another author in 10.14-22 of the same Epistle. Are they both equally valid?

In 1 Co chapters 8-10, several authors discuss whether eating the meat sold in the market and sacrificed in pagan temples is permitted or not. Opinion is di-

vided. The authors of 1 Co 8.1-12 and 10.23-31 permit it for those who, like them, possess gnosis, on condition that this does not shock those who do not, i.e. judaisers; but the author of 1 Co 10.14-22, a judaiser, categorically forbids it on the grounds of the common sense of his readers.

In his opinion, meat which is sacrificed in the temple has been offered to demons and those who eat it associate (*koinonia*) with demons and become their partners, as the people of Israel by eating victims sacrificed in the Temple are partners in the altar, i.e. with YHWH, to whom they are offered. Similarly, eating the Saviour's bread and cup participates in the body and blood of the sacrificed Christ. The significance of participation corresponds exactly to the eschatological cup of the Last Supper shared by Jesus and the Apostles, and the cup of covenant derived from it. When it is transferred to the bread, the symbolical significance of the 'doctrine of salvation' which it possesses in the Feeding narratives and the thanksgivings in the *Didache* is lost and replaced with "participating in the passion" by the bread broken and given to eat by Christ on the eve of his death according to the narrative in 1 Co.

A step forward is made in a short clause interpolated in the primitive text of the passage : according to its author, the sharing of bread is not only participating with Christ but participating with one another to make one body, a reference to the developments on Christ's churchly body in 1 Co 12.12-31 and Rom 12.4-5, etc.

In the following text the interpolated clause is indicated in square brackets

1 Co 10<sup>16</sup> the cup of benediction which we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ? [<sup>17</sup> Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread.] <sup>18</sup> Consider the people of Israel; are not those who eat the sacrifices partners in the altar? <sup>19</sup> What do I imply then? That food offered to idols is anything, or that an idol is anything? <sup>20</sup> (No), I imply that what pagans sacrifice they offer to demons and not to God. I do not want you to be partners to demons. <sup>21</sup> You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons. You cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons. <sup>22</sup> Shall we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than he?

Though the bread and the cup are understood as making us partners with Christ and with one another, the two definitions from which this interpretation derives are not expressed in the same words : the reference to blood is *in obliquo* : "This cup is the new covenant in my blood", and the reference to the body *in directo* : "This is my body, the one for you". How can one avoid identifying the bread with the physical body of Christ since, like blood, it is directly related to the passion? A passage from Hebrews invites us to do this :

Heb 10<sup>4</sup> The blood of bulls and goats are powerless to take away sins. <sup>5</sup> Consequently, when Christ came into the world, he said: "Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, but a body you have prepared for me; <sup>6</sup> in burnt offerings and sin offerings you have taken no pleasure. <sup>7</sup> Then I said: "Lo, I have come to do your will, O God, as it is written of me in the book..." <sup>9</sup> Then he (Christ) abolishes the first order to establish the second. <sup>10</sup> And by that will (of God) we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

The meaning of bread as 'the physical body' will be adopted by a later tradition which Jerome expresses in the Vulgate: "This is my body, delivered for you", by borrowing "delivered" from "the night he was delivered". Yet this meaning was not understood by the copyists who added the participle "broken", borrowed from "having broken", or "given" from "he gave them it"; these additions were transferred from the manuscripts into most of the Eastern liturgical narratives; "broken" or "given", it is bread, not the body, which is broken or given: "This, broken and given for you, is my body". The specification "for you" refers to "this" not to "my body".

#### FROM THE BREAD THE BODY OF CHRIST TO WINE THE BLOOD OF CHRIST

As the bread was redefined according to the cup, so the cup had to be redefined according to the bread.

In Lk, the formula, "This, given for you, is my body" gives the parallel for the cup, "This cup poured for you is the new covenant in my blood". The participle *ekchunnomenon* "poured" in the nominative, cannot refer to the word "blood", *aimati* in the dative, but only to *poterion*, "cup". Just as "broken" can only refer to the bread not to the body, if only because of the words "Not a bone of him shall be broken" (Jn 19.36; Ex 12.46). It is therefore the cup which is poured for the assembled Apostles, as the bread is broken for them. On the other hand, "given" may be understood as referring to both the body or the bread: "This is my body given for you".

In the source common to Mt and Mk, the two formulas in 1 Co on the bread and the cup will be combined for the cup in a rather different way: "This is my blood of the covenant poured for many". "This cup" has become "this" as for bread: the contents, wine and water, replace the container, the cup. According to the definition of the bread, "the new covenant in my blood" gives, inverting the terms: "my blood of the covenant", with blood determined twice — if this were a semitism as has been alleged, it should be translated by "the blood of my covenant". "(The cup) poured" becomes "(my blood) poured" and "for you" is expanded in "for many".

Mt would add a justifying "for" at the beginning of the formula, as if it were necessary to drink Christ's blood and, at the end, add "for the remission of sins" thus attributing the passion to have merited what the other evangelists regard as the fruit of John's baptism (Mk 1.4; Lk 3.2).

The parallelism bread/cup, flesh/blood must have been so powerful and the Jews in the Church so few that words like "Take, drink, for this is my blood" or "My flesh is true food and my blood is true drink..." could have entered the gospels, even though flesh is in the form of bread and blood in the form of wine, when one remembers that it was not possible to force the Jerusalem Council (Act 15.20) not to impose on non-Jews the interdiction to eat flesh with blood, an interdiction signified to Noah in Gen 9.4.

### THE READJUSTMENT OF THE LAST SUPPER NARRATIVES

When the Last Supper narrative of 1 Co came into existence, the earlier narratives were no longer up to date. They lacked the bread part entirely and the new definitions of the bread and the cup whose filiation from 1 Co we have just shown.

### THE READJUSTMENT OF THE LUKAN NARRATIVE

Eight different versions of the Lukan narrative of the Last Supper have survived; they fall into four categories depending, on the one hand, where the 'bread' was inserted, and, on the other, on the presence (long text) or absence (short text) of the cup of covenant.

The 'bread' part (v. 19a in the received text) was initially inscribed in the margin of the original text (v. 15,16,17,18) and later reinserted in a different place in the two copies from which the source for the other texts are derived.

1. The 'bread' part was inserted after the word on the Passover (v. 15-16) and before the eschatological cup (v. 17-18), in accordance with the bread/cup sequence, in the copy from which the following witnesses are derived :

a) the short texts in MSS b and e of the Old Latin version and the so-called Cureton Syriac version (v. 15, 16, 19a, 17, 18);

b) the long texts : 1) the Syriac version of Sinai where, as in Mk, the bloody word is inserted between the action over the cup and the eschatological word (v. 15, 16, 19ab, 17, 20b, 18); 2) and 3) the Peshitta Syriac version (v. 15, 16, 19, 20) and Marcion (v. 15, 19, 20), where the eschatological cup was eliminated and replaced by the covenant cup. Furthermore, Marcion eliminated the second part of the words on the Passover (v. 16) because, in his opinion, the Passover of the creator cannot be fulfilled in the kingdom of the Father.

In all these texts v. 19, whether or not completed by 19b, follows v. 16 (or v. 15 in Marcion).

2. The 'bread' part was inserted after the eschatological cup (v. 18), i.e. at the end of the primitive text :

a) in the short text in MSS D, a, d, ff<sup>2</sup>, i, l (v. 15, 16, 17, 18, 19a) usually called the 'short text' as if the others did not exist.

b) in the long text called the 'received' text, extended after v. 19a "This is my body", with the addition of the text from 1 Co 11.24b-25, glossed for bread by the word "given", and for the cup by the words "poured for you", but otherwise an exact copy : "given for you. Do this in remembrance of me. And likewise with the cup, after supper, saying, This cup (is) the new covenant in my blood, poured for you". The received text therefore comprises two cups, the eschatological cup and the covenant cup, whereas the other texts only have one, either by ignoring the covenant cup, or by suppressing the eschatological cup (Peshitta and Marcion), or combining the bloody word with the eschatological word under the same cup (Syrsin).

#### THE READJUSTMENT OF THE SOURCE COMMON TO MT AND MK

The readjustment of the source common to Mt and Mk involves no variants. The 'bread' part was inserted before the 'cup' part, and the bloody word before the eschatological word. With the denunciation of Judas at the beginning of the narrative we are confronted with three successive interpolations, of which the first two are typical interpolations with repetition of the words. "...as they were eating" and "taking": the glosses are italicized and set in square brackets:

Mk 14<sup>17</sup> And when it was evening he came with the Twelve, <sup>18</sup> And as they were at table and eating,

[*Jesus said : "Truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me... It would have been better for that man if he had not been born".* <sup>22</sup> And as they were eating,]

taking

[*bread he said the benediction, broke it, and gave it to them and said : "Take, this is my body".* <sup>23</sup> And taking]

a cup, he said the thanksgiving, gave it to them, and they all drank of it. <sup>24</sup> And he said to them

"[*This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many.*]

<sup>25</sup> Truly, I say to you, I shall not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God." <sup>26</sup> And when they had sung hymns, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

The narrative includes a number of anomalies.

— Why does Jesus say a benediction over the bread and a thanksgiving over the cup? — Because the interpolator who sacramentalized the cup was inspired by the more primitive short Feeding narrative whereas the interpolator who adds the bread part copied the judaised long text of the Feeding narrative.

— Why does the cup part repeat "taking..., he said..., he gave..." instead of "in the same way also the cup" as in 1 Co 11.25? — Because the cup part was in the text before the insertion of the bread part.

— Why, in a Passover meal, which forbids fermented bread replaced by azymes, was Jesus said to have taken bread? — Because the evangelist who invented the paschal meal in order to sacramentalise the cup, could not have foreseen that the institution of the bread would be added.

— Why is it written "he gave it to them and they all drank" as if Jesus had not drunk from the cup, whereas the word "I shall not drink again" only makes sense if he did drink, and whereas the cup only possesses a sacramental value if the Apostles did drink from the same cup as Jesus?

— Why did Jesus say "This is my blood..." over a cup whose contents had been drunk? Why, if Jesus drank from the cup, did he drink his own blood?

— After making the Apostles drink, why did Jesus say an eschatological word in Mk which does not concern them? Mt understands that "with you" should be added.

These anomalies confirm that the Last Supper narrative is merely composed of reutilised portions.

## THE TEACHING OF THE TEXTS

The meal at Bethany, two days before Passover, includes three sayings of Jesus announcing his imminent death : "You will not always have me"; "she has anticipated the anointing of my body for its burial"; "I shall not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God". Jesus died when the paschal lamb was being sacrificed.

To make Jesus institute the eucharistic cup introduced parallel to the bread in Jewish celebrations, the author of the source common to Mt, Mk and Lk (S-MML) imagined a Passover meal where Jesus shares the cup with his Apostles in pledge of their future reunion in the kingdom of God.

The interpolator of 1 Co adds the institution of bread to the institution of the cup at the Last Supper, and makes the sharing of the cup on the eve of the Passion signify a covenant in the blood of Christ and the manducation of the broken bread signify uniting with his spiritual or mystic body, the Church.

Lastly, in Lk and the source common to Mt and Mk, the evangelical narratives are aligned differently with the narrative in 1 Co .



## Chapter 4

# THE EMMAUS DISCIPLES AND ADAM AND EVE IN PARADISE

Your eyes will open (Gen 3.5)  
Then their eyes opened (Lk 24.31)

We have to examine the last eucharistic narrative in the Gospels, the Walk to Emmaus. This narrative has only been preserved by Lk who presents it as an account of the first appearance of Jesus after his resurrection. However, he was merely reusing in a new perspective a narrative he found in one of his sources. He adapted it to prove the resurrection by adding all that was necessary to make it take place on Easter morning, and link it, on the one hand, to the visit of the women to the tomb, and on the other, to the ensuing appearances to the Apostles. Critics generally agree that these passages are additions; they will be indicated hereafter in square brackets and italics, which do not eliminate certain details which fit less well into the new context. Stripped of these additions, the narrative is set outside time, like the original Feeding narrative.

Lk 24<sup>13</sup> Now [*on that same day*] two of them were going to a village called Emmaus about sixty stadion from Jerusalem. <sup>14</sup> Their conversation turned on all these things that had happened. <sup>15</sup> Now while they were talking and discussing with each other, Jesus himself came near and went with them, <sup>16</sup> but their eyes were stopped from recognizing him. <sup>17</sup> And he said to them, "What are you discussing with each other while you walk along that makes you sad?" <sup>18</sup> Then one of them whose name was Cleopas, answered him, [*"Are you the only inhabitant in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have taken place in these days!"* <sup>19</sup> He asked them, "What things?" They replied], "The things about Jesus of Nazareth who was a mighty prophet in deeds and words before God and all the people, <sup>20</sup> and how our chief priests and archons handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him. <sup>21</sup> But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel."

[*And besides all this, it is now the third day since these things took place.* <sup>22</sup> Moreover, some women of our group have left us in confusion, they were at the tomb early this morning <sup>23</sup> and did not find his body; they came back and said

*they had indeed seen angels who said he was alive. 24 Some of our group went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but they did not see him."]*

25 Then he said to them, "O weak spirited (*anoêtoi*, without *noûs*) and slow to understand and believe all that the prophets said. 26 Was it not necessary that Christ suffered these things so as to enter into his glory!" Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them all the things about himself in the Scriptures.

28 As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on 29 but they urged him strongly, saying, "Stay with us (*emmanu*), because it is almost nightfall and the day is nearly over." So he went in to stay with them (*emmahem*) 30 and when he was at table with them, taking the bread, he said the blessing (*eulogêsen*) and after breaking it, gave it to them, 31 then their eyes opened and they recognized him, but he had vanished from their sight.

32 They said to each other, "Was our understanding not burning (*kaiomenê*, read : *kammunenê* or *katamunenê*, blinded) within us, while he was talking to us on the way, while he was opening the Scriptures to us!"

33 [*And they got up immediately and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the Eleven and their companions gathered together, 34 saying that the Lord was indeed risen and had appeared to Simon. 35 Then they related what had happened on the road and how they had recognized him in the Breaking of bread.*

36 *While they were talking he stood among them and said, "Peace be with you"...*]

The Evangelist himself seems to have perfectly apprehended the essential point of the story when he says that the two disciples related "how they had recognized Jesus in the Breaking of Bread". This delayed recognition is clearly the problem to solve, but before one asks how the Breaking of Bread enabled them to recognize Jesus, one needs to understand why the two disciples did not recognize him at first sight.

### WHY DO THE TWO DISCIPLES FAIL TO RECOGNIZE JESUS?

The author of the final part of the Gospel of Mk, who briefly summarized the narrative (16.12-13), said that Jesus appeared 'in another form'. Yet nothing in the account itself suggests such an interpretation, and why Jesus would have assumed such a disguise, if in the end he wanted to be recognized. The text gives another reason, "their eyes were stopped from recognizing him". What stopped their eyes from recognizing Jesus?

The text again enables us to answer without hesitation : what prevented the disciples from recognizing Jesus was the (false) idea they had of the Messiah which did not correspond to the (true) Messiah who stood before them.

They saw Jesus as a mighty prophet in deeds and words and hoped he would free Israel from the Roman yoke. Instead, he had been crucified by the Romans! As such, their hopes were shattered. He who succeeds in "restoring the kingdom of Israel" (Acts 1.6) will be recognized as the Messiah; he who fails is not the Messiah. Gamaliel's discourse was based on the same principle: "... Theudas rose up, claiming to be somebody... He was killed... After him Judas the Galilean rose up... he also perished... If this is the work of men, it will be destroyed, but if it comes from God, you can never destroy it" (Acts 5.36-39). Rabbi Aquiba was to believe that Bar Kozba was the Messiah on the basis of his initial success until his ultimate failure proved him wrong.

Now, according to the author of the narrative, this way of conceiving the Messiah is incorrect: "The Messiah had to suffer so as to enter into his glory", and he entrusted Jesus himself with proving it through the Scriptures. Effectively, no other valid proof can exist. Regrettably, the author failed to enumerate all those *testimonia*, the evidence from the Scriptures proving that Christ had to suffer; but they are to be found scattered throughout the New Testament and the early Fathers and, in any case, the author clearly intended to be taken at his word. The function of the narrative is therefore to make the Jews accept a new definition of the Messiah which would allow them to accept as the Messiah they were awaiting Jesus crucified by the archons according to 1 Co 2.8, portrayed as crucified by their 'high-priests' and 'archons' (Lk 24.20). To make the proof convincing to the reader, the two disciples have to recognize Christ in Jesus in the end.

The narrative does not therefore involve that natural kind of recognition which the Larousse dictionary defines as "To remember a person or thing as known earlier : to recognize somebody by his voice, his way of walking", as if the two disciples had seen and known Jesus before. It involves a kind of recognition which consists of "recognizing someone or something which one has never seen before by a sign or token : he knew she was a goddess by her gait..." (*Larousse du XXe siècle*). In this manner Jupiter is recognized by his thunderbolt, Hermes by his rod, Mercury by his caduceus, St Peter by his keys, St Lawrence by his gridiron, etc. To recognize as the Messiah someone who appears with his feet and hands pierced, one must first prove that the Messiah should have his feet and hands pierced.

As Jesus develops his scriptural argument about the allegedly predicted sufferings of the Messiah, the idea and image that the two disciples have of the Messiah gradually draw closer to the reality of Jesus and when he has finished speaking, a perfect concordance should have been reached, the portrait perfectly resembling its model, the two disciples should have recognized Jesus. They failed to do so: recognition requires the Breaking of Bread.

### WHY DID THE BREAKING OF BREAD BRING ABOUT THE RECOGNITION OF JESUS?

Jesus did not have "his own way of breaking bread", as exegetes trapped in ideas of natural recognition have been forced to conjecture. As if, throughout their journey and the scriptural proof, the disciples had been unable to glimpse a gesture or way of speaking 'recognizably his own'?

Why was the Breaking of Bread necessary to open their eyes and make them 'recognize' Jesus? To find the answer we need only to look up the words 'to open', 'eye' or 'to know' in an Old Testament concordance. The first two references are to Gen 3.5 and Gen 3.7, i.e. to the words of the serpent : "... when you will eat of it, your *eyes* will *open* and you will be like the gods, *knowing* good and evil" (Gen 3.5), and to what the author notes after Adam and Eve have eaten the fruit, "and the *eyes* of both *opened* and they *knew* that they were naked". Both passages give 'knowledge' as a result of the 'opening of eyes', and furthermore they also give the opening of eyes as a result of manducation. Assuredly, it is not stated that the Emmaus disciples ate the bread over which Jesus had said the thanksgiving, but let us quote M.-J. Lagrange: "It would be inconceivable that Jesus consecrated and gave the bread to the disciples without their eating it. It was even through the work of the special grace of the Eucharist that their eyes opened". Unfortunately, Lagrange, stopped short though he was on the right track. Like the two disciples, he was constrained by his apologetic purpose, and came to the conclusion that "it is enough to assume that Jesus had his own way of breaking bread after blessing it, a way which his own followers recognized" (*Evangile selon s. Luc*, p. 608-609).

But when Lk writes that the disciples recognized Jesus in the Breaking of Bread, what he means is not how Jesus broke bread, but what he calls in the Acts the 'Breaking of Bread', that is the celebration of the Eucharist of which the only institutional account he knows is the multiplication or breaking of loaves of bread when feeding the crowds, since the 'bread' part and the 'bloody' cup of the Last Supper in his narrative are, as we have seen, an interpolation taken from 1 Co 11.23 sqq. On this point Lk interprets correctly the author of his source, for the words, "taking the bread, he said the blessing and, when he had broken it, gave it to them" are taken from the Feeding narrative. The role of the manducation of bread in recognition is further confirmed by a variant of D, "And when they had received the bread, their eyes opened.." (24.31D). When the narrative was written was it necessary to lay particular stress on the fact that the disciples had eaten it? This is not said of the Apostles in the Last Supper narratives either.

So the author of Lk's source introduces the bread as a determining cause of the recognition of Jesus as the (redefined) awaited Messiah because the eucharistic bread was, for him and the Church whose faith he bore witness to, a substitute instituted by Jesus for the fruit of the tree of gnosis, which possesses the

same virtue of opening eyes and infusing the knowledge for salvation as the tree of life had of giving life and immortality. The 'virtue' of the eucharistic bread of infusing knowledge would, in practice, prove to be more theoretical and symbolic. In the Emmaus narrative itself this virtue is merely the spark which suddenly brings out the understanding of an earlier teaching which had remained misunderstood until then.

Before showing the parallels between the Walk to Emmaus and the Paradise narratives, it would be best, although common knowledge, to reproduce the Septuagint version of the Genesis text, since we shall often refer to it in the following pages.

### THE NARRATIVE OF ADAM AND EVE IN PARADISE

Gen 2<sup>4</sup> This is the book of the generation (*genesis*) of heaven and earth, when they were made, in the day in which God (*ho theos*) made the heaven and the earth, <sup>5</sup> and every herb of the field before it was on the earth, and all the grass of the field before it sprang up, for God had not rained on the earth, and there was not a man to cultivate it. <sup>6</sup> But there rose a fountain out of the earth, and watered the whole face of the earth.

<sup>7</sup> And Lord God (*kuriōs ho theos*) moulded (*plassein*) the man of dust of the earth, and breathed upon his face the breath of life, and man became a living soul (*psychē*).

<sup>8</sup> And Lord God planted a paradise in Eden, and placed there man whom he had formed.

<sup>9</sup> And God made to spring up also out of the earth every tree (*xulos*) pleasant (*hōraios*) to the eye and good for food, and the tree of life in the midst of paradise, and the tree of the knowledge (*eidenai gnōston*) of good and evil

<sup>10</sup> And a river proceeds out of Eden to water paradise, thence it divides itself into four heads (...)

<sup>15</sup> Then Lord God took the man he had moulded and put him in Paradise to till it and keep it.

<sup>16</sup> And Lord God gave a charge to Adam, saying, "Of every tree which is in the garden you may freely eat, <sup>17</sup> but of the tree to know (*gignōskein*) good and evil, of it you shall not eat, but the day you should eat of it, die, you shall die".

<sup>18</sup> And Lord God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone, let us make for him a help (*boēthos*) suitable to him".

<sup>19</sup> And God formed yet farther out of the earth all the wild beasts of the field, and all the birds of the sky, and he brought them to Adam, to see what he would call them, and whatsoever Adam called any living creature, that was the name of it. <sup>20</sup> And Adam gave names to all the cattle and to all the birds of the sky, and to

all the wild beasts of the field, but for Adam there was not found a help like to himself.

<sup>21</sup> And God brought a trance (*ekstasis*) upon Adam, and he slept (*hupnein*), and he took one of his ribs, and filled up the flesh instead thereof. <sup>22</sup> And God formed the rib which he took from Adam into a woman, and brought her to Adam. <sup>23</sup> And Adam said, "This now is bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called woman (*gunê*, Heb. *ishshâh*), because she was taken out of her husband (*anêr*, Heb. *îsh*)". <sup>24</sup> Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother and shall cleave to his wife, and they two shall be one flesh.

<sup>31</sup> And the two were naked, both Adam and his wife, and were not ashamed.

<sup>2</sup> Now the serpent was the most judicious (*phronimotatos*) of all the animals on the earth, which Lord God made, and the serpent said to the woman, Wherefore has God said, "Eat not of every tree of the garden"? <sup>3</sup> And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden, <sup>4</sup> but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God said, You shall not eat of it, neither shall you touch it, lest you die. <sup>5</sup> And the serpent said to the woman, "Die, ye shall not die. <sup>6</sup> For God knows that in the day you should eat of it, your eyes will open, and you will be as gods, knowing good and evil".

<sup>7</sup> And the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant (*arestos*) to the eyes to look upon and suitable (*hôraios*) for learning, and having taken (*labousa*) of its fruits she ate, and she gave (*edôken*) to her husband also with her, and they ate. <sup>8</sup> And the eyes of both opened, and they knew that they were naked, and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves aprons to go round them.

<sup>9</sup> And they heard the voice of Lord God walking in the garden in the afternoon; and both Adam and his wife hid themselves from the face of Lord God in the midst of the trees of the garden. <sup>10</sup> And Lord God called Adam and said to him, "Adam where are you?" <sup>11</sup> And he said to him, "I heard your voice as you walked in the garden, and I feared because I was naked and I hid myself". <sup>12</sup> And God said to him, "Who told you that you were naked, unless you have eaten of the tree (*xulon*) concerning which I charged you of it alone not to eat?" <sup>13</sup> And Adam said, "The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree and I ate". <sup>14</sup> And Lord God said to the woman, "Why have you done this?" And the woman said, "The serpent deceived me and I ate".

<sup>15</sup> And Lord God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this you are cursed among (*apo*) all cattle and all the animals of the earth, on your breast and belly you shall go, and you shall eat earth all the days of your life. <sup>16</sup> And I will put enmity (*ekthra*) between you and the woman and between your seed (*sperma*) and her seed, he shall watch (*terein*) against your head, and you shall watch against his heel".

<sup>17</sup> And to the woman he said, "I will greatly multiply your pains (*lupê*) and your groanings (*stenagmos*); in pain you shall bring forth children, and your submission (*apostrophê*) shall be to your husband, and he shall rule over you".

<sup>18</sup> And to Adam he said, "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and eaten of the tree concerning which I charged you of it only not to eat, cursed is the ground in your labours, in pain (*lupē*) shall you eat of it all the days of your life. <sup>19</sup> Thorns and thistles shall it bring forth to you, and you shall eat the herb (*khorton*) of the field. <sup>20</sup> In the sweat of your face shall you eat your bread until you return to the earth out of which you were taken, for earth you are and to earth you shall return".

<sup>21</sup> And Adam called the name of his wife Life (*Zoe* = Eve), because she was the mother of all living.

<sup>22</sup> And Lord God made for Adam and his wife garments (*khiton*) of skin, and clothed them.

<sup>23</sup> And God said, "Behold, Adam is become as one of us, to know good and evil, and now less at any time he stretch forth his hand and take of the tree of life and eat, and so he should live for ever" (*eis ton aiona*). <sup>24</sup> So Lord God sent him forth out of the garden of delight (*truphē*) to cultivate the ground out of which he was taken. <sup>25</sup> And he cast out Adam and caused him to dwell over against paradise, and stationed the cherubs and the fiery sword that turns about to keep the way (*hodos*) of the tree of life.

Contrary to what we had to do and did do for the New Testament narratives, we do not need to distinguish between original documents and redactional elements in the paradise narrative. We must take the text as it stands and as it already was in the New Testament period, and consider it as it was then considered, i.e. as the work of Moses and the word of YHWH. We must finally strive to discover not what the authors of the various parts or the last writer wanted to say, but what contemporary readers rightly or wrongly understood, without being surprised by exegeses that might appear to contradict the obvious meaning of the text.

Our problem is to understand how the author of the Emmaus narrative understood the paradise narrative and how his understanding of the paradise narrative enables us to comprehend the Emmaus narrative.

The first step is to compare the two narratives. Their relationship is not solely confined to the verbal correspondances set out above. While each develops according to its own logic they both reproduce an identical pattern, as will be seen when we set them out opposite one another.

## COMPARISON OF THE EMMAUS AND PARADISE NARRATIVES

## The Emmaus narrative

## The Paradise narrative

## Exposition of the situation

Lk 24<sup>13</sup> And on the same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus about seven miles from Jerusalem. <sup>14</sup> They were talking about all the events that had just happened.

Gen 2<sup>15</sup> : And Lord God took the man he had just moulded and set him in paradise... <sup>16</sup> And he forbade Adam, saying, "... but of the tree of knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat. The day that you will eat of it you shall die"... <sup>24</sup> And God sent a trance (*ekstasis*) on Adam and he slept (*hupnein*), and he took one of his ribs... and made the rib he had taken from Adam into a woman...

## Blindness before obviousness

<sup>15</sup> While they were talking and discussing together, it happened that Jesus came near and went with them, <sup>16</sup> but their eyes were stopped from recognizing him.

<sup>25</sup> And Adam and his wife were both naked,  
  
but they were not ashamed.

## The instructor's question

<sup>17</sup> He said to them : "What are you discussing with each other that makes you sad?"

<sup>31</sup> The serpent said to the woman, Did God say : "You shall not eat from any of the trees of Paradise?"

## The answer of the blinded

<sup>18</sup> Answering, one of them called Cleopas said : "... About Jesus of Nazareth, who was a mighty prophet in deeds and words... How our chief priests and archons handed him over... to be crucified. <sup>21</sup> But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel".

<sup>2</sup> And the woman said to the serpent : "Of the fruit of the trees of paradise we may eat, <sup>3</sup> but of the fruit of the tree that is in the middle of paradise God said : "You shall not eat of it, nor shall you touch it, or you will die".

### The instructor undeceives

25 And he said to them : "Poor in spirit  
(*anoêtoi*, without nous) and slow to  
understand what the prophets said!  
26 Was it not necessary that Christ had  
to suffer these things to enter into his  
glory?"

4 And the serpent said to the woman :  
"Die, you will not die,

### The instructor justifies his answer

Then beginning with Moses and all the  
prophets, he interpreted to them all the  
things about himself in all the Scrip-  
tures.

for God knows when you eat of it,  
your eyes will open and you will be  
like gods, knowing good and evil".

### A positive assessment of undeceivment

28 And as they approached the vil-  
lage... 29 they urged him saying, "Stay  
with us...". So he went inside to stay  
with them.

6 And the woman saw that the tree was  
good to eat and it was pleasant to the  
eyes and suitable for learning.

### The opening of eyes and recognition

30 And when he was at table with  
them,  
taking the bread

And

taking the fruit she ate it

he blessed it  
and having broken it,  
he gave it to them

and gave it to her husband beside her  
and they ate it

31 and their eyes opened  
and they recognized him.

7 and their eyes opened  
and they recognized that they were na-  
ked.

### The disappearance of the object of knowledge

But he had vanished from their sight.

and they sewed fig leaves together and  
made loin cloths for themselves.

## THE INTERPRETATION OF THE PARADISE NARRATIVE IN THE LIGHT OF THE EMMAUS NARRATIVE

The parallel between the two narratives and the correspondence of the eucharistic bread to the fruit of paradise supposes that the paradise episode was understood in a positive way, contrary to its subsequent negative Christian interpretation.

Since the two disciples set themselves on the path to salvation by recognizing the Messiah in the crucified Jesus through the sacramental efficiency of the eucharistic bread, Adam and Eve, far from losing themselves through disobedience by acquiring the knowledge of good and evil by virtue of the forbidden fruit, are, on the contrary, saved from the tyranny of the Genesis god.

Since Jesus undeceives the two disciples and gives them the bread which opens eyes, the serpent, who undeceives Adam and Eve by making them eat the fruit which procures gnosis, is not a tempter who encourages evil, but on the contrary, like Jesus, an instructor, a revealer of the truth.

On the other hand, the biblical god who maliciously forbids touching the tree that symbolizes and magically procures the knowledge that saves, and expels Adam and Eve after cursing them, to stop them from eating the tree of life and become immortal, is undoubtedly a negative, envious and evil being.

This is precisely the reading of the text that the heresiarchs reproached the Gnostics and which the Gnostic texts discovered at Nag Hammadi confirm. They will be quoted later in chapter 7.

### THE TEACHING OF THE TEXTS

The interpretation of the two narratives by relating them to each other results in the following comparisons.

The two disciples correspond to Adam and Eve through their blindness when confronted with the obvious.

Jesus plays a three-fold role, that of :

— the snake as instructor;

— Eve, the mediator of Adam's salvation, as the giver of the fruit;

— nakedness as an object of the knowledge necessary for salvation. When the Emmaus narrative was written, gnosis no longer consisted solely of self-knowledge, that is, knowing who one is : a divine element, naked and divested of perfection by imprisonment in a body of mud; where one comes from : the world above; to where one will return : into the same world above beside the Father (*Extracts from Theodotus*, 78). One must also believe in Jesus, the saviour from the world above, who is not the Jewish messiah, but who must be presented to the Jews as if he were to give them the possibility of believing in him.

As regards the eucharistic bread, the blessing addressed to the Father in the form preserved in the *Didache* IX,3 and X,2, "We give thanks to you, Our Father, for the knowledge you have let us know through Jesus your servant", endows it with the sacramental virtue of the tree of knowledge. The Breaking of Bread, makes it accessible to men of all times and all places.

Our study of the Eucharist based on the permanence of the rite of the eating of bread to establish the succession of myths which reinterpreted it through the ages, has led us to the discovery of the origin of the rite, a myth set in action. The founder of the Eucharist, the initiator of a religious movement which would lead to Christianity, is therefore the unknown person who had the idea of giving thanks to the Father over a piece of bread for gnosis, the knowledge of salvation procured for Adam and Eve by the fruit of Paradise, a knowledge he thought he had rediscovered and which he taught to his disciples.



## Chapter 5

### THE HISTORY OF THE EUCHARIST

This cup poured for you is the new covenant in my blood (Lk 14.24; 1 Co 11.25)

This is my blood of the covenant poured for many (Mt 26.28; Mk 14.24)

At the completion of our study of the Eucharist, it would be worthwhile, as a revision and check, to attempt one of those "enumerations so thorough" and "review so general" which Descartes wanted to impose on himself to "ensure that nothing was omitted".

#### THE INITIAL MYTH : GEN 3.4-7

The fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil which Adam and Eve eat at the instigation of the serpent, though forbidden by the jealous creator god, opens their eyes, magically or sacramentally, and procures for them the knowledge of good and evil, gnosis, makes them aware they are naked and understand "who they are, whence they have come, and where they are going". Without this knowledge to return to the true God, the Father in the world above, is obviously impossible.

#### THE INITIAL RITE : THE DIDACHE AND THE WALK TO EMMAUS

The words "We give thanks to thee, Our Father, for the knowledge you have made known to us through Jesus, your servant" in the *Didache*, pronounced over a piece of bread make it a substitute for the fruit of Paradise, and symbolize and enact the opening of eyes and the acquisition of gnosis, the knowledge of the salvation preached by Jesus on behalf of God the Father.

In the Emmaus narrative Jesus is identified, on the one hand, with the serpent of Paradise, the instructor sent by the Father to incite Adam and Eve "to eat knowledge" and, on the other, with the (revised and corrected) messiah awaited by the Jews.

## THE RITE APPLIED IN NON-JEWISH AND JEWISH CIRCLES : ACTS 2.42-47

Depending on whether it is practised in non-Jewish (or anti-Jewish) or observant Jewish circles, the rite takes shape in two different rituals :

## In non-Jewish circles : Acts 2.42-45

<sup>24</sup> They devoted themselves to the teaching of the Apostles and the "*koinônia*" (community of goods), the breaking of bread and prayers. <sup>44</sup> And all who believed were together and had all things in common. <sup>45</sup> And they sold their possessions and goods and distributed to all, as any had need.

## In Jewish circles : Acts 2.46-47

<sup>46</sup> And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they partook of food with glad and generous hearts, <sup>47</sup> praising God and having favour with all the people.

The four elements of the non-Jewish ritual are perpetuated in all the liturgies. 'The teaching of the Apostles' on the knowledge of salvation, the gospel brought by Jesus, will survive in the readings and the homily. '*Koinônia*', the sharing of goods — whose origin must be sought — will subsist in the offering of gifts (the collection) and, misinterpreted, will lead to the offering of the body and blood of Christ. To the "Breaking of bread" the Jewish cup will be added. The 'prayers' will become the more or less detailed 'intercessions' for the living and the dead.

In Jewish circles, the thanksgiving over bread will entail a parallel thanksgiving over the first cup of the meal (*Didache*) and the following cups (1 Co 11.25). The cup/bread sequence will be conserved, as evidenced in the *Diataxeis* (25), or will become the bread/cup sequence following the normative narrative in 1 Co 11.23-26 and the prescription in *Diataxeis* (26). This mode of celebration will disappear with Jewish Christianity.

## THE INSTITUTIONAL AND EXPLANATORY MYTHS

## I. THE ETIOLOGICAL NARRATIVE OF THE INSTITUTION OF BREAD

1. *The primitive narrative of the Fraction or Breaking of Bread (the Feeding narrative)*. The seven loaves symbolize gnosis, the knowledge of salvation brought by Jesus. When Jesus breaks the loaves for the crowd, he commissions

his disciples to broadcast this knowledge until the end of time to the entire world which has nothing to eat. Jesus is acting as the envoy of the Father.

2. *The glossed narrative of the Breaking of Bread (Mk 8.1-9)*. The small fishes representing quails make the bread symbolize the manna of the Exodus, symbolizing 'God's word' which is *par excellence* the Torah, the Mosaic Law. Salvation is monopolized by the Jews. And Jesus becomes a prophet like Moses.

3. *The rewritten narrative of the Breaking of Bread (Mk 6.30-41)*. The loaves reduced to five with two (big) fishes representing Behemoth and Leviathan, symbolize the five books of the Torah and the manna and flesh of the eschatological meal. They are distributed by the twelve Apostles to the twelve tribes of Israel. The manducation of the broken bread is a pledge of future participation in this feast from which non-observants will be excluded. Jesus is identified with the Messiah.

4. *The glossed narrative of the Breaking of Bread interpolated a second time (Mk 8.2-3)*. Non-Jews are tolerated in the Church out of condescension, like the Gabaonites in earlier times were allowed to live in the midst of Israel. Jesus becomes another Joshua (= Jesus).

5. *The Johannine narrative 6.1-15*. The five loaves of barley and the supplement of small fishes make Jesus renew Elijah's miracle on an incomparably larger scale. The crowd sees him as "the prophet who comes" and the Davidic Messiah-King.

## II. THE ETIOLOGICAL NARRATIVES OF THE INSTITUTION OF THE CUP

1. *The narrative of the Meal at Bethany (Mk 14.3-9; Mt 26.6-13)*. After receiving the unction in anticipation of his burial Jesus, taking the cup, confirms "In truth, I say to you, I shall not drink again of the fruit of the vine until I drink it new in the kingdom of God". The passion takes place on the eve of the Passover; Jesus dies as the lambs are being sacrificed.

2. *The Last Supper narrative in the source common to the three synoptics*. To provide the cup of Jewish celebrations of the Breaking of bread with the institutional narrative it requires, the eschatological cup at the meal at Bethany is transferred to the paschal meal invented for this specific purpose. The sharing of the cup between Jesus and the twelve Apostles signifies and establishes a bond between their destiny and his, and gives them, like the bread in the Feeding narrative of the Twelve, a pledge of their future participation in the messianic banquet. The passion is set one day later and takes place on the day of the feast, which is unlikely.

3. *The Last Supper narrative in Lk 22.14-18*. To fill in the emptiness of the paschal meal Lk makes Jesus' eschatological word over the cup be preceded by a symmetrical word over the Passover.

4. *The Last Supper narrative in 1 Co 11.23-26.* To combine the institution of the bread and the cup into one event, and impose the bread/cup sequence of non-Jewish celebrations on Jewish celebrations, the interpolator of the passage defers the institution of the bread from the Feeding narrative at the Last Supper. He interprets the sharing of the eschatological cup with a theologically equivalent formula, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood" and symmetrically places the bread in relation to Christ's churchly body : "This is my body, the one for you".

5. *The first completion of the Lukan Last Supper narrative.* The institution of the bread was first introduced into the Lukan Last Supper narrative in the margin, and later inserted in the text by copyists in two different places, before or after the eschatological cup. The so-called 'short' Lukan narratives remain at this stage.

6. *The second completion of the Lukan Last Supper narrative.*

Some of the short narratives of the two above mentioned categories were completed by copying 1 Co 11.24b-27, and adding "broken" or "given for you" for the bread, and "poured for you" for the cup. The so-called 'long' narratives include the received text.

7. *The Last Supper narrative in the source common to Mt and Mk.* To modify the original Last Supper narrative to conform to the interpolation in 1 Co, the 'bread' part, borrowed from the Feeding narrative with the addition of "This is my body" is inserted after the word "taking" introducing the cup. And before the eschatological word over the cup, another word derived from 1 Co by inverting "the covenant in my blood" with "my blood of the covenant" is inserted.

8. *The Last Supper narratives in Mt 26.26-29 and Mk 14.22-25.* The text of their common source is faithfully reproduced in Mk and Mt with some stylistic improvements in Mt.

9. *Justin's Last Supper narrative (1 Apology 66).* The word over the cup is reduced to conform to Mk's word over bread — "This is my body" — "This is my blood". This simplification will provide the basis for the theology of the real presence and transubstantiation.

## II

### FROM GNOSIS TO CHRISTIANITY



## Chapter 6

### GNOSIS AND ITS REJUDAIZATION

Jesus said,

"The Pharisees and the scribes have taken the keys of gnosis and hidden them. They themselves have not entered, nor have they allowed to enter those who wish to. You, however, be as wise as serpents and as innocent as doves". (*Gosp. Thomas* 39 = Mt 23.13; Lk 11.52+Mt 10.16)

A positive interpretation of the Paradise narrative compelled by the Emmaus narrative contrary to the ulterior negative Christian interpretation suggests the following double hypothesis.

Firstly, the gnostic movement based on gnosis, the knowledge of the path towards salvation, and on a disparagement of the biblical god would have sprung directly from the exegesis of the Paradise narrative revealed by the Emmaus narrative; an exegesis drawn quite simply from ideas of Greek philosophy about God and the soul, ideas which were current at the time, and shared moreover at least by a part of Judaism then unconsciously Hellenized.

Secondly, the Christian movement would have sprung from the gnostic movement through the rejudaizing process which we have seen at work in the successive redefinitions of the eucharistic bread and of Jesus himself in the rewritings of the Feeding narrative (see *supra*, ch. 1).

This is the double hypothesis to which the comparison and the reciprocal interpretation of the Emmaus and Paradise narratives have led us, a comparison and interpretation which seem to constitute the key of the origins of gnosticism and Christianity.

#### I. Gnostic Exegesis of the Paradise Narrative

Before reading the exegesis of the Paradise narrative in the gnostic texts themselves, it would be useful, owing to the late date of this evidence and the diverging interpretations that resulted on numerous details, to deduce their exegesis in a theoretical sort of way using the key that is constituted by the points of similarity between both narratives.

### THE CREATOR

The god who is revealed in the Paradise narrative and the rest of the Bible, the Jewish god, far from corresponding to the elevated idea that philosophical reflection and true piety requires of the supreme divinity appears as an inferior and evil god. When he forbids the tree of knowledge, he acts out of envy, "God knows that, when you will eat of it..., you will become like the gods, knowing good and evil", the serpent denounces (Gen 3.5). The serpent's accusation is confirmed by the Genesis god himself when he says, "And now man has become like one of us!" and he expels him from Paradise "afraid that he might also eat of the tree of life and become immortal" (Gen 3.22-23). The words "like one of us" show, moreover, that this god is not God, but one god among many. Furthermore, his interdiction is also motivated by a lie, "The day you will eat of it, you will surely die, that is without remission", he says to Adam (Gen 3.17), yet Adam will live for nine hundred and thirty years" (Gen 5.5). When he asks, "Adam where are you?" (Gen 3.9), he admits his ignorance. By not foreseeing the intervention of the serpent, he reveals his lack of foresight. He is evil because he stoops to avenge himself by cursing Adam, Eve, the serpent and the world itself. Elsewhere in the Bible he is depicted with many other flaws or defects which the gnostics will point out; he is indecisive, inconsistent and repents; he is unjust, bloodthirsty, loves incense and the smoke of sacrifices; he leads into temptation and hardens hearts so he has grounds for punishing; he orders the most ferocious of massacres, etc. There are twenty-six reproaches of this sort which the Peter of the *Clementine Homilies* (II, 43-44; III, 39 seq.), as a good Jew, attempts to dismiss to maintain this god as supreme god. He does in fact pretend to be God, "I am God and there is no other" (Is 45.22; 46.9, etc.; Deut 4.39, 6.4 (*shema*)), a ridiculous and revolting claim which will be denounced as blasphemous in the gnostic writings on more than twenty occasions. Such a god is undoubtedly the master, the prince of the material world he has created, but his very limits and defects postulate the existence of a higher, perfect, eternal, invisible, good god; the one which the Hermetists, for example, called — and which Christians will call — the Father.

### THE SERPENT

Unlike the envious, lying creator god, the serpent is disinterested and truthful : "No, you shall surely not die", he says (Gen 3.4) and Adam and Eve will not die; "Your eyes will open", "and their eyes opened" (Gen 3.5 and 7). By un-deceiving Adam and Eve he plays the part of a revealer and an instructor, and in-asfar as he opposes the creator god of the material world he appears as a messenger from the world above, a celestial being sent by the supreme god to help man free himself from the material world by acquiring gnosis.

## ADAM AND EVE

By thwarting thanks to the serpent the deceitful ruse of the creator who wants to keep them in ignorance in order to dominate them, Adam and Eve save themselves by acquiring the knowledge of good and evil, which is, according to the meaning of the Semitic expression, the knowledge of all things, gnosis or science, which is universal knowledge. They note in particular that they are naked. As if it were natural for man to be clothed, the gnostics, still expressing themselves in images, assume from his nakedness that man has abandoned in the world above from whence he had fallen, the clothes whose absence he notes, clothes obviously luminous, symbols of perfection. He will recover them when, after leaving the world of the creator at death, he is able to return to his homeland. This theme is developed very poetically in the 'Song of the Pearl' in the *Acts of Thomas* (108-113; see also p. 96-102).

And thus, the simple reading of the biblical narrative with the help of the key that constitutes the Emmaus narrative by the identification of Jesus with the serpent and the eucharistic bread with the fruit of Paradise, makes the fundamental themes of gnosticism rise up as if by magic.

## II. THE PRESUPPOSITIONS OF GNOSTIC EXEGESIS

In the above analysis we have endeavoured to confine ourselves to the implications of the biblical text itself. But we have in fact sometimes strayed beyond these limits somewhat. This is because gnostic exegesis is based on a certain number of presuppositions : the ideas that he or those who invented it had in their mind. These ideas were, broadly speaking, those of contemporary Greek philosophy, on which almost all the schools agreed — except the Epicurians and Stoicians — and the mystery-religions. Their contents can be presented as follows :

— a *theology*, comprising a supreme divinity, of which a very elevated conception is made : inaccessible, incomprehensible, invisible..., to whom all imperfection or limitation is denied and to whom by analogy all the qualities and virtues to the highest degree are attributed. Below the supreme god are the gods, the gods of the mythologies of different peoples, who are assimilated with each other when they are similar and organised into pantheons when they prove to be too different;

— a *cosmology*, which contrasts an earthly world with a reputedly divine celestial world and in the celestial world distinguishes between the sphere of fixed stars with a regular circular movement and the seven spheres of the planets or 'wandering' stars on whose movements astrology is based and which command Destiny (*heimarméné*), blind fate from which one seeks to escape;

— an *anthropology*, which opposes the spirit with the body, human reason (*logos*) with the souls of animals, intellect (*noûs*) with reason, ascetism with passion;

— an *eschatology* which believes that when man dies his inner self abandons its material body which held it captive on earth and if he has lived a good life, he returns to take his place among the stars from whence he came.

— let us add a high regard for *knowledge* — which explains the indignation caused by the interdiction of the god of Genesis to eat from the tree of knowledge, gnosis, to use the Greek word, science; not scientific knowledge based on experimentation, reasoning or calculation like the knowledge of technicians, mathematicians or astronomers, but theoretical and moral knowledge conceived philosophically, based on meditation — whose result the religious thinker often sees as a revelation — a meditation based on earlier more or less erroneous convictions, especially on the Scriptures thought to contain a revelation, like the homeric, hermetic, orphitic writings, or the Jewish Bible.

#### THE INTERPRETATION OF THE BIBLE IN THE LIGHT OF THESE IDEAS

The gnostics, especially those who originated the movement, will therefore set themselves the task of understanding biblical revelations in the light of ideas of Greek philosophy which are theirs. This was also the task Philo set himself but in an entirely different frame of mind. Whereas Philo was an unconditional supporter of Judaism and wrote an apologetic work by justifying the biblical god with all the resources of the most extravagant allegorical exegesis, the only one capable of attaining his goal, the gnostics, taking the text literally as a sure though sometimes faked datum, reject the biblical god on the strength of the Bible itself or, more precisely, relegate him to what seems to them to be his proper place, and wanting to produce a 'scientific' work, construct new myths from the myths in the first six chapters of Genesis on the origin of the world and humanity, in order to complete or rectify not justify them.

#### THE JEWISH GOD

The prime necessity is to explain the very existence and nature of the god of Genesis. The supreme god is by definition infinite, invisible, omniscient, immutable, impeccable, self-sufficient, etc.; how from this perfect God could proceed a deficient creator, whose deficiency must stem from a fault for which he is not responsible since, deficient by nature, it preceded him. The solution will be sought in increasingly numerous and complicated emanations of supernatural beings or aeons, personifications of divine attributes, perfections or faculties whose role is to banish from the supreme god the fault that gave birth to the

biblical god. This fault will be attributed to the last aeon of the 'pleroma', Sophia, the hypostasized Wisdom of the speculations of Hellenistic Judaism (Prov 8.22-31); an attribute of the Jewish god when it was regarded as the supreme god, Sophia becomes his mother; her incoercible desire to procreate actualized without waiting for the concourse of her consort (*suzugos*) aeon, only lets her produce an arrogant lionfaced abortion.

### THE ARCHONS

The way in which this abortion sometimes expresses himself in the first person plural, "Let us make mankind..." (Gen 1.26), "See, Adam has become like one of us" (Gen 3.22), "Come, let us go down, and confuse their language" (Gen 11.7); is not interpreted as a royal 'we', but as assuming a plurality. This plurality is understood as that of his powers or faculties (*durameis* or *exousiai*), which are sometimes identical with him and only virtually distinct, sometimes personified as its sons, capable, like Sabaoth, of possessing a converse destiny to his. Each son is given one of the numerous names given to their father in the Bible or a derivative name. As their father is the master of the world and as, according to the Greeks, the world is governed by the stars, the sons will at one time number seven like the planets and, identified with them, they will take the title of archons, governors, leaders, under the authority of the chief archon, their father, included or not in their number; and at other times, though less frequently, number twelve like the signs of the zodiac. The chief archon and his sons will create the great aeons or realms, the celestial spheres which they will people with a multitude of angels to serve them according to the concepts of Jewish angelology.

### MAN

These same words. "Let us make man in our image, according to our likeness" (Gen 1.26) no longer pose problems for the creator but for man. The text clearly expresses the creator's intention to make man in his own image, but the gnostic obviously wants to avoid this unflattering resemblance with Sophia's abortion, and furthermore contrary to his belief that the spiritual part of man emanates from the supreme god, that it preexisted in the world above to which it will return, and was imprisoned in a material body by the creator. Man wants to resemble the supreme god not only spiritually but physically as well, since the creator fashioned his body "in the image of God" as the words assert "So god (the creator) created man in his image; in the image of God (the supreme god) he created him" (Gen 1.27). If man is in the image of God, then God is the model of man, in other words, God is Perfect Man, Anthropos in Greek. But since the su-

preme god is by definition invisible, what must be explained is how the archons knew this model in order to copy it by moulding a body out of mud. An intermediary is devised, "the (visible) image of the invisible God", as the author of Colossians 1.15 wrote. He will be the Son of Man, Second Adam, a direct model for Third Adam, earthly man. The archons would have glimpsed his image reflected in the primordial waters. Other writers, even some of the Early Fathers, would believe that God possesses a spiritual body, and later Jewish mysticism will exert itself to estimating its fantastic dimensions (*Shuir qoma*).

The phrase, "Male and female he created them" (Gen 1.27), will be interpreted as affirming androgyny, hermaphroditism, not only of the two celestial Anthropoi which is self-evident as they are archetypes of the human race which includes men and women — but also earthly Adam before carnal Eve was extracted from his rib, an extraction that created the division of the sexes.

The phrase, "God formed man from the dust (*khoun*) of the earth and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living being (*psychē*)" (Gen 2.7), is the origin of many speculations concerning 'choic' or 'hylic' man, i.e. material, 'psychic' man, i.e. animal, and 'pneumatic' or spiritual man, who possesses '*noûs*', the intellect that alone makes man capable of gnosis. They explain that the breath of life which the creator infuses in Adam does in fact come from his mother, Wisdom, therefore from the pleroma, the world above, and when he transmitted it to Adam, unaware of the consequences of what he was doing, he deprived himself of it.

#### SPIRITUAL EVE OR ZOE, LIFE

Taking the words, "Adam named his wife Eve, because she was the mother of all living" (Gen 3.20) in an absolute sense, it was concluded that Adam himself (earthly Adam) had received life from Eve, and not only Adam but "the gods, the angels, the immortals, the mortals, rational and irrational beings" as the Peratae will say (*Elenchos* V,16). This is obviously not a reference to the Eve drawn from Adam's rib, but spiritual Eve, Zoe, Life, who will be conceived as the daughter of Sophia, and it will be related how she came to give birth to Adam. It is she also who will be used to explain the magical power of the tree of science (knowledge); pursued by the archons she will change herself into a tree and therefore it is she, spiritual Eve, Life or Thought, who will be 'eaten' by Adam and Eve. Others will place her in the serpent because if the vowels in her name in Aramaic are changed it means 'instructor', revealer, a function filled by the serpent.

### THE FORNICATION OF THE JEWISH GOD WITH EVE AND THE THREE RACES OF MAN

From the words of Eve, fleshly Eve this time, in the passage, "Adam knew his wife (sexually) and having conceived, she gave birth to Cain saying 'I have produced a man with (Septuagint, *dia*, by means of) YHWH'; and then she also bore his brother Abel" (Gen 4.1-2), it was assumed that Cain and Abel were not the sons of Adam but of the Jewish god, which is confirmed by the next phrase, "When Adam had lived one hundred and thirty years, he became the father of a son in his own likeness, according to his image, and named him Seth" (Gen 5.3). So Cain and Abel resemble neither Adam nor God, but the chief archon. The gnostics descend from Seth, the psychics from Abel, and the hylics from Cain. Other gnostics, on the contrary, will claim kinship with Cain and other victims of the Old Testament god.

These are the principal verses from Genesis connected with the Paradise narrative which required a coherent explanation. This was clearly an impossible undertaking. The solutions proposed would be diverse and variable because they always proved unsatisfactory. Even more so as at each attempt to synthesize, everyone, depending on his origin, wanted to incorporate and integrate Greek, Egyptian, Syrian or Persian, etc. mythology. The various systems springing from one another, contradicting one aspect and copying another, always using mythical language, will always be judged unadapted to the reality they wished to express or not exactly self-consistent, so that not only within the various sects but in the same sect and the same document one can recognize various and sometimes contradictory interpretations.

### III. GNOSTICS AND JEWS

Through its biblical starting point gnosticism is indissolubly linked to the Bible and Judaism, so that the gnostics would wish to convert the Jews, the Jews convert the gnostics or at least defend their faith against them; the main arena of theological combat will be the Bible.

Gnostic missionary zeal, which was very strong, strived to release the Jews from the yoke of their god of whom they were victims twice over : as human beings, imprisoned by him in a material body according to the laws of generation; as Jews subjected to his Law, the Mosaic Law with its multitude of ridiculous prescriptions impossible to observe, from which Paul too will attempt to extricate them later.

The Jews for their part were, perhaps more than ever, in reaction against the invasion of Greek culture and Roman domination, attached to their faith, their privilege as the chosen race of God, and their eschatological hopes. The religious

and also political movements of the Essenes, Pharisees and Zealots, numerous apocalypses and attempts at Messianic uprisings bear witness to this. Their overwhelming desire in front the gnostics was to maintain their national god as the supreme god.

This dialogue, compulsory from the start, between the gnostics and the Jews will involve an evolution on both sides.

In Judaism there would be at one and the same time a hardening and a contamination. Hardening, a normal self-defensive mechanism, is especially noticeable in changes introduced in the domain of prayer.

If it is true that the gnostic insistence on reproaching the Jewish god for his claim to be the only God resulted not only from the insistence in the chapters in Isaiah which affirm this claim, but also from its constant reminder in the Jewish profession of faith, the *shema*, "Listen, O Israel! YHWH, Our God, YHWH (is) unique", it also appears that — at least according to Abudarham, a medieval author familiar with antique sources — the custom of reciting the *shema* daily morning and evening, which will become a rule, was introduced in protest against the gnostic accusation.

The addition of the *Kedouscha* "Holy are you and holy is your Name" to the third blessing of the *Tefilla* — which had not yet become the *Shemone esre*, the 'eighteen blessings' — was also apparently a response to the partial rehabilitation of the Jewish god under the name of Sabaoth, of which we shall speak later.

Lastly, the curse in the 12th 'blessing' of the *Schemone essere*, formulated at Yabneh according to the Jerusalem Talmud (*Berakhoth* 5a,8a) was aimed, at this date shortly after 70, less towards the '*noçerim*', Christians, whose name may have been added, than towards the '*minim*', the heretics, which included Christians but especially gnostics, and not towards "Jews unsure of their faith", which is usually seen, for it is difficult to imagine that their co-religionists asked God to annihilate rather than convert them.

Besides these transformations in the domain of prayer, aimed especially at preserving the people's faith, one notes a clear penetration of gnostic myths and ideas into Judaism in an obviously defused form and, reciprocally, in gnosticism the penetration of Jewish ideas which will lead to varying degrees of judaization, in particular in the trend that will lead to Christianity, which will become so judaized that it will be thought as stemming directly from Judaism. It is this interweaving rearrangement we shall now tackle.

## THE REVERSAL OF Gnostic EXEGESIS UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF JEWISH APOLOGETICS, AND CHRISTIANITY

The endeavour of Jewish doctors in their discussions with the gnostics to maintain their god as supreme god will entail, with the gradual rehabilitation of

this god, a reversal of the gnostic exegesis of the Paradise narrative and a redefinition of its *dramatis personae*.

### THE GENESIS GOD

An initial and partial rehabilitation will be implemented by the myth of the *Hypostasis of the Archons*, 94,34 sqq. and of *On the Origin of the World*, 103,3 sqq. This myth divides the Jewish god into two figures : one consisting of his negative aspects and the other of his positive aspects. With its negative aspects and because he claimed to be the only God, the Jewish god is seen as thrown into Tartarus under the gnostic names of Yaldabaoth, Saklas and Samael. It is surprising to find the offensive myth of the Jewish god making Eve pregnant with Cain and Abel in the Jewish tradition, represented by the Palestinian Targum (Gen 4.1; 5.3) the *Pirkei of Rabbi Eliezer* (XXI and XXII) and the *Zohar* (*Bereshith* 54-55). This is because the demiurge Samael had in the meantime become the fallen angel Samael, who also entered the serpent to make Eve disobey. The Jewish god flung out of his firmament is usually identified with Satan who was originally only a public prosecutor at his tribunal. Whereas, according to an earlier Jewish tradition, of which the *Book of Enoch* (6-16) is good evidence and still followed by several Fathers, the fall of the angels only took place in Genesis chapter 6 under the leadership of Semiaza with the aim of taking the daughters of men as wives, according to the doctrine originating from the anti-gnostic struggle, well represented by the *Lives of Adam and Eve*, it had taken place under the leadership of Satan and was caused by pride in wanting to equal God or by a refusal to worship Adam who is in the image of God whereas they, the angels, were not. The identification of the Jewish god with Satan enabled one of the authors of the *Gospel of John* to make Jesus say to the Jews that they were sons of the devil (Jn 8.44). And in the thirteenth century the Cathars still professed that the devil had created the world and that humanity descended from the serpent's carnal knowledge of Eve.

Thrust into Tartarus under his gnostic names, the Jewish god can then be reenthroned in the seventh heaven as governor of the world in the person of one of his sons whose name 'Sabaoth' is associated with his own, 'YHWH Sabaoth' in most of the Bible. Here the word 'sabaoth' designates unspecified earthly or celestial 'armies'. The Septuagint sometimes translates the expression "YHWH sabaoth" as *Kurios tôn dunameôn*, "Lord of the powers", sometimes as *Kurios pantokrator*, "Allmighty God", or again transcribes it literally, *Kurios sabaoth*. This is the case in the seraphim song in Isaiah's vision : "Holy, holy, holy, Lord Sabaoth" (Is 6.3). So 'Sabaoth' was also taken as a proper name. Thus Sabaoth, supposed to have accomplished *metanoia*, namely, to have converted, instead of wanting to equal the supreme god, is established by Sophia as master of the

world in the place of his father Yaldabaoth, creator of the world, who has become the devil.

This rehabilitation of the Jewish god below the veil separating the world below from the world above could not satisfy Jewish faith which required the first place for him. To achieve this, he had to be divided in half a second time. As the supreme god is by definition infinite and invisible, the numerous theophanies of the Jewish god had to be attributed to someone else. For a long time Jews had attributed some of his manifestations to his Angel or *Mal'ak*, his Glory or *Cabôd*, his Wisdom or *Hokma*, his Word or *Memra*, his Name or *Shem*, his Presence or *Shekina*, later his Chariot or *Merkaba*. In gnosticism some of these hypostases had entered the pleroma, but in the trend which will lead to Christianity, which excludes the pleroma out of fidelity to Jewish monotheism, the hypostases — insofar as they are compatible — and the theophanies will be inherited by the saviour Jesus whose origin we shall see later. He is *Kyrios*, 'Lord', i.e. YHWH Sabaoth, having received the name above all names; he is superexalted in reward for his humbling as Sabaoth had been for his conversion (Phil 2.5-11). It was his glory (that of Sabaoth) that Isaiah had seen (Jn 12.41); he is Christ, who was tempted by those who perished by snakes in the Sinai Desert (1 Co 10.9); Jesus, who saved his people from Egypt (Jude 5); it was his day that Abraham saw (at the oak of Mambre) (Jn 8.56); he is the Son, to whom God said, "You, Lord, in the beginning you created the earth" (Heb 1.10); the Word, by whom all things were made (Jn 1.1), who walked in Paradise (*Ad Aut.* II,22); the Lord to whom the Lord said, "Sit on my right hand" (Mk 12.36-37). The identification of Jesus with the Jewish god in his theophanies, clearly attested in the New Testament and known to the early Fathers, still subsists today in the liturgy, unnoticed or denied by glosses as the *Sanctus* of the mass shows. It was a stage in the identification of the Jewish creator with the Father, an identification proclaimed by the symbols of faith, "I believe in God the Almighty Father, creator..."

#### THE SERPENT OF PARADISE

But who is the Saviour Jesus now identified with the god revealed in the Old Testament? He is, as the Emmaus narrative suggests, the instructor serpent of Paradise. The saviour serpent is venerated as such and identified with Jesus by the gnostic sects enumerated in Book V of the *Elenchos*, in particular by the Naasenes (from the Hebrew *naas*, serpent). According to the Sethians, the serpent is the perfect Word of the Light from above (= of the supreme god). According to the gnostics of whom Irenaeus wrote, Eve believed what the serpent said as easily as if she had heard the Son of God. Jesus himself in the *Apocryphon of John* (BG 57,20) declared it was he who had incited Eve to eat the fruit. Mani, according to Theodorus Bar Khonai, will say that Jesus the luminous came to Adam and roused him from a deathlike sleep, that Adam knew who he was, enslaved in

the stench of Darkness. The Ophites (from the Greek *ophis*, snake), according to Epiphanius (*Pan.* 37) celebrated the Eucharist by breaking and distributing loaves of bread around which a living serpent was coiled, which makes this Eucharist, like that of Emmaus, into a substitute for the fruit of Paradise. The serpent, the Peratae said, appeared in human form during Herod's reign...

The divine being formerly hidden behind the serpent had to manifest itself as a human being so that he could be attributed with the revelations and saving instructions which his disciples transmitted as *logia* ('Jesus said...'), and with the institution (at the Feeding narrative) of the sacrament of the Eucharist as a substitute for the fruit of Paradise.

To make the Jews accept this saviour, he had to be identified with one of those men mentioned in the Scriptures, whose coming they awaited. Jesus will be a prophet like Moses and the 'messiah' promised to David. And to make the gnostic saviour coincide with the Jewish messiah, both of them had to be redefined : the former will become true man, the latter will become true god. It is towards this conciliation that the Evangelists will work by giving Jesus a simiobiography. The function of the Emmaus narrative, for example, will be to affirm that the heavenly crucifixion of the saviour by the Archons — terminating the reign of astral fatality and alluded to in 1 Co 2.8 —, transposed into a Roman-style crucifixion 'by the archpriests and archons', was predicted of the messiah.

So the serpent effects a double exchange of identity with the Jewish god : firstly, with its negative aspect, as the Jewish god, who has become the devil, is identified with him; secondly, with its positive aspect, as the saviour, who was concealed in the serpent, becomes the Lord Sabaoth. The saviour Jesus is, furthermore, both the Jewish god and his messiah, who has become the messiah of the Father : Christ. He will be called Jesus Christ.

#### ADAM AND EVE

The result of the total or merely partial rehabilitation of the Jewish god is that Adam and Eve, instead of saving themselves by acquiring gnosis, condemn themselves by disobeying the supreme god. Whereas according to gnostic anthropology, the fall and downfall of man is the imprisonment of his spiritual and divine part in a material body, the rehabilitation of the Jewish god involving that of the material world makes this downfall, unknown to the Jews and which Christianity inherited from the gnostics, the consequence of a sin. From being ontological it becomes moral. Consequently, either all men must really have sinned in Adam, as Augustine would have it, or at least all were subjected to the punishment deserved by one as the Epistle to the Romans (5.2 sqq.) teaches, which is the kind of injustice of which Ezekiel (18.1-32) no longer wished his god to be accused. The theologians struggled and still struggle unsuccessfully to find an explanation of original sin and of the necessity of redemption through the

death of the Son of Man on the cross an explanation compatible with the idea that should be made of the supreme divinity.

After much hesitation, I have resolved to quote, despite a hint of disparagement which I disapprove, the following lines of Victor Hugo, which evoke a number of the unsoluble problems — unknown to Judaism — to which the reversal of gnostic exegesis led.

### The Masterpiece

God, you say, would reason thus:  
 In days gone by I set first man and first woman  
 In a charming and delightful place;  
 Disobeying my command a fruit they ate;  
 For which eternal punishment I vow to mankind.  
 Sorrow will be their lot on earth, and unceasing torment in hell  
 Where Satan wallows in the fire.  
 Their souls will burst into flame, their bodies turn to coal.  
 What could be more fitting?  
 Yet, I am benevolent  
 And such torments afflict me.  
 Alas! What can be done?  
 I know, I'll send them my son into Judea.  
 They will kill him. So what, I consent  
 For their odious act will make them innocent.  
 Seeing them commit a crime  
 I will pardon the fault they did not commit.  
 They were righteous, I will make criminals of them.  
 And thus can I my fatherly arms outstretch  
 And in so doing save mankind  
 whose innocence by this crime is washed clean.

(Victor Hugo, *Religions et religion*; transl. A.F.W.A.)

### THE FUSION OF TWO MORAL DOCTRINES AND TWO ESCHATOLOGIES

The reversal of gnostic exegesis also compels the fusion of two moral doctrines and two eschatologies.

Concerning moral doctrines, the gnostic declaring himself alien to this world, sets himself two obligations.

— The first is not to 'procreate children for the archon'. This can be achieved in two ways : either, normally by celibacy or abstinence from sexual intercourse within marriage, which is called ascetism or again encratism; or, on the contrary,

using contraceptive or abortive methods in a life of debauchery which claims its justification by doing the opposite to what the Jewish god prescribes. The obligation not to procreate involves hating one's parents who gave birth to oneself (*Gospel of Thomas*, 55,101; Lk 14.26; Mt 10.37).

— The second obligation for the gnostic is to live in the world as if he were not and therefore renounce all worldly possessions and be content with the basic necessities of life.

The Jew, on the contrary, has received from his god the commandment to 'Increase and multiply', and the promise of worldly possessions in recompense for his fidelity to the Law.

Christianity will start from gnostic ascetism, with compulsory celibacy and poverty for everybody, but will soon transform these ontological obligations into a moral ideal for those who aspire to perfection; for ordinary Christians it will revert to the Jewish standard of large families and material wealth who give themselves a good conscious by almsgiving.

Concerning eschatology, Christianity must also juxtapose without achieving complete fusion, individual gnostic salvation and collective, national Jewish salvation, the ascension of the soul to heaven immediately after death and the expectation of the resurrection of the body to partake in the reign of the messiah on earth, individual judgement which brings everything to an end and general judgement where it begins again, the definitive return of the saviour to heaven once his mission of teaching and salvation is accomplished and the coming down to earth of the messiah at the end of time to implement salvation.

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Confronting the Emmaus and Paradise narratives has enabled us to deduce somewhat *a priori* the exegesis that the first author of the Emmaus episode made of the Paradise account. Next we noted the philosophical presuppositions of this exegesis, reviewed the problems the Genesis text poses for the supporters of these ideas and considered the gnostic contribution to their solution. Lastly, we examined how Jewish protests against these interpretations entailed a reversal of the gnostic exegesis which was to lead to Christianity.

This very general and rapid survey of the fundamental points which I invite my readers to set firmly in mind, by establishing a logical interconnection enables us to 'understand' the key that constitutes the gnostic exegesis of the Paradise narrative and its reversal under the influence of Jewish ideas in Christian exegesis. We must now reexamine the elements of this overview in greater detail with supporting texts without fearing repetition.



## Chapter 7

### THE PARADISE NARRATIVE IN Gnostic WRITINGS

"But it was I who brought about that they ate",  
said Jesus (*Apoc. John*, B 57,20-58,1)

The somewhat general overview in the previous chapter was necessary before examining the texts, for those which have survived are comparatively late in date and later than the evolution from gnosticism to Christianity we described. While reproducing primitive or earlier traditions, their authors did not disregard more recent Christian doctrines; they not only refuted them, but were also influenced by them and even accepted some apparently contradictory aspects in relation to the main exposition. A similar phenomenon of contamination occurred later in the Church when the Counter-Reformation modelled itself on the Reformation.

The Paradise narrative with its interpretation is related extensively in four of the gnostic writings discovered at Nag Hammadi : the *Apocryphon of John*, the *Hypostasis of the Archons*, the untitled treatise *On the Origin of the World*, and the *Testimony of Truth* (or *True Testimony*).

In the *Testimony of Truth*, the Paradise narrative endorses the encratic doctrine professed in the first part of the tractate, but in the three other texts, the *Apocryphon of John*, the *Hypostasis of the Archons* and *On the Origin of the World*, it appears in its usual place in a full exposition of the gnostic myth as seen by the authors or compilers of the tractates, each in a slightly different way. It is therefore preceded by speculations about the supreme god, his emanations in the world above, the creation of the demiurge creator of the world below, the formation and animation of man, in short by an entirely imaginary construction, parallel to and mostly taken from the biblical account, requisite for an introduction to the Paradise story. In the same way, the exposition of the Christian doctrine in our catechisms starts with teachings on God, the angels, the world and man, without which Adam's sin and the need for a saviour would be incomprehensible. In both cases the Paradise story is the fundamental, central core around which and for which everything is organized.

## THE APOCRYPHON OF JOHN

The *Apocryphon* or *Secret Book of Jn* has come down to us in four manuscripts consisting of two recensions : a longer text, represented in the Nag Hammadi writings by Treatise 1 in Codex II and Treatise 1 in Codex IV (NH II, 1 and IV,1) and a shorter version, represented by Treatise 1 in Codex III and Treatise 2 in the Berlin Codex 8502 (NH III,1 and B 2). The two copies of the abridged recension consist of two different Coptic translations of the same Greek text. We are therefore sometimes confronted with three genuine or translated variants.

The *Apocryphon of John* is presented as a revelation of Jesus to Jn, the son of Zebedee. One day when Jn is on his way to pray at the Temple, as in the narrative of the *Acts of the Apostles* 3.1, he resolutely turns back when a remark made by a Pharisee makes him realize that the teaching of his Master Jesus is contrary to the tradition of his fathers, namely Judaism. By this introduction the author protests against the portrayal of the early Christians as good Jews in the Acts of the Apostles and against the Christian judaization of Jesus and gnosis. As Jn was turning away from the Temple, he was granted a vision of Jesus coming to reveal the mysteries concerning the supreme deity, the series of beings of light emanating from it including Christ and Sophia — as if Jn was unacquainted with them — but the author certainly wanted to clarify or correct the reception of earlier doctrines. Sophia had committed the fault of begetting offspring on her own, without the consent of the Spirit, i.e. the supreme god, and without her consort of the Pleroma. This partogenesis produced an abortion, a lionfaced serpent with eyes of fire, Yaldabaoth, the future god of the Jews. She hid him in a cloud outside the world of immortal beings. Ignorant but endowed with great power, he created the material world. Catching a glimpse of the reflection of the image of God in the water, he imitates it by moulding a body out of mud, breathes into it the divine spirit received from his mother depriving himself of it, and then becomes jealous of Adam, his creation now superior to himself. He then makes Adam succumb to a sleep of forgetfulness and ignorance, "but the *Epinovia* (the Thought) of the light which was in Adam, she is the one who was to awaken his thinking" (NH II,21,15; B 55,15) :

And the archons took man and placed him in paradise. And they said to him, "Eat, that is at leasure", for their luxury is bitter and their beauty is deprived. And their luxury is deceptive and their trees are godlessness and their fruit is deadly poison and their promise is death.

And the tree of their life they had placed in the midst of paradise. I (Jesus is speaking) shall teach you what is the mystery of their life, which is the plan which they made together, which is the likeness of their spirit. The root of this tree is bitter and its branches are death, its shadow is hate, and deception is in its leaves, and its blossom is the ointment of evil, and its fruit is death, and desire is its seed,

and it sprouts in the darkness. The dwelling places of those who taste from it is Hades and the darkness is their place of rest.

But what they call the tree of knowledge of good and evil, which is the *Epinoina* (the Thought) of light, they stayed in front of it in order that he (Adam) might not look up to his fulness and recognize the nakedness of his shamefulness. But it was I (Jesus) who brought about that they ate.

And I said to him (Jn said to Jesus), "Lord was it not the serpent that taught Adam to eat?" The saviour smiled and said, "The serpent taught them the wickedness of begetting, lust, and destruction, because that is useful to him...". (B 55,18-58,7)

The tree of life is therefore a tree of death, and the tree of knowledge is the true tree of life. The archon's interdiction aimed to prevent man from acquiring the *Epinoina*, the Thought of light, and gaze towards the world above from whence he came, and realize that he was naked, stripped of the perfection that was his in the world above, a perfection which other gnostics would symbolize by the garments of light. But Jesus "incited them to eat (from the tree)". Thus Jesus therefore asserts that he plays the role of the serpent, yet at the same time, because of John's objection reflecting counter-exegesis, common at the time when the text was written, a counter-exegesis whereby the serpent is the devil, he refuses identification with him. According to counter-exegesis, the serpent-devil taught Adam and Eve procreation, which supposes a second interpretation of nakedness, no longer as an awareness of a lack of perfection, but as an awakening of sexual desire. Procreation, which is said to be useful to the serpent, is in actual fact useful to the creator who said "Increase and multiply", because it maintains the divine spirit which is in man in a physical body and in his power; as a result the serpent-devil is identified with the chief archon, the creator god, the author of the interdiction!

The story of the creation of woman is inserted here, as in the biblical book, between the interdiction made to Adam and its transgression by the woman at the instigation of the Jesus-serpent. The author went to great lengths to interpret, in conformity with the earlier myth of the creation of man, Adam's sleep, the extraction of Eve from his side and Adam's recognition of his image. The story of the saving transgression follows. In Codex II it reads :

And our sister Sophia (Wisdom, the aeon = the immortal, sister or syzygos of Jesus, who attempted to make amends for her fault) came down in innocence in order to rectify her deficiency. Therefore she was called Eve (Life, in Greek *Zoe*), which is the mother of the living (Gen 3.20). By the *Pronoina* (Foreknowledge) of the Sovereignty (the supreme god) and thanks to her (Sophia-Eve-Zoe-Life), Adam and Eve (earthly Eve) tasted (B ate) the perfect gnosis. I appeared in the form of an eagle on the tree of knowledge, which is the *Epinoina* (the Thought) from the *Pronoina* (Foreknowledge) of the pure Light, that I might teach them and

awaken them out of the depth of sleep. For they were both in a fallen state and they recognized their nakedness. The *Epinoia* appeared to them as a light and she awakened their thinking. And when Yaldabaoth noticed that they withdrew from him, he cursed his earth... (NH II, 23,20-35)

In this compilation therefore Jesus can no longer play the role of the instructor serpent in the guise of a serpent because counter-exegesis has in the meantime identified the serpent with the devil. So the author invents an eagle in whose form Jesus would have appeared to incite Adam and Eve to eat from the tree. The eagle is identified with the Thought of Omniscience of Pure Light, in other words, with gnosis. The intervention of Jesus in the guise of an eagle must have appeared so unusual to the author of the abridged recension of the Berlin Codex that he identifies the eagle with Thought, Epinoia, who as a result, loses its normal role which is to be the reality symbolized by the tree, i.e. gnosis, knowledge, the very thought of the supreme god. Nevertheless, the interpretation remains fundamentally the same:

The *Epinoia* taught him knowledge through the tree in the form of an eagle. She taught him to eat knowledge so that he thought of his perfection, for they had both fallen into ignorance. (B 60,18-61,7)

According to the Genesis text, the story of the birth of Cain and Abel follows Yaldabaoth's curses. The *Apocryphon* teaches us how, as was said earlier, "the serpent taught Eve procreation through a desire for defilement and corruption". Yaldabaoth will become enamoured of Eve, sleep with her and father Cain and Abel, who are also called Yahweh and Elohim, each one named with one half of the expression 'YHWH Elohim', the most common designation for the Jewish god in the Bible. This myth is derived from Gen 4.1, as we said earlier (*supra*, p. 65), where the Hebrew particule '*eth*' can be interpreted in two ways: a preposition or a sign of the accusative. This enables to interpret Eve's words in the two following ways: "I acquired (a pun on *Qain*, approximated with *qânâ* 'to acquire') a man by (Septuagint *dia*, 'by means of') YHWH" which makes YHWH the father of Cain, or "I acquired a man (i.e.) YHWH", which gives Cain the name YHWH, and invites to give his twin brother Abel, the name Elohim.

This very offensive exegesis for the Jewish god had already been refuted at a period as early as that of the Palestinian targum. The refutation held that Samael, another gnostic name for the Jewish god, became in the Targum and in Judaism the angel Samael, to be added to the other fallen angels Azazel, Satan, Samazias, Beliar, etc. The targum text reads:

Then Adam knew his wife, who was made pregnant by the angel Samael and she conceived and gave birth to Cain; and he was like the celestial beings, not like the

earthly beings, and she said, "I have acquired a man, the angel of the Lord (the angel of the Lord = YHWH). (*Palestinian targum to Gen 4.1*)

And Adam aged one hundred and thirty, fathered a son in his image, in his likeness, and called him Seth; but Eve had already given birth to Cain who did not resemble Adam. (*Palestinian targum to Gen 5.3*)

In the *Pirkei of Rabbi Eliezer* (8th c.), which assembles many ancient traditions, we read (XXI) : "Riding on the serpent's back, (Samael) came to Eve and she conceived...". In the *Zohar* (8th c.) it is written : "Rabbi Eleazar said, When the serpent injected his impurity, she received it..." (I *Bereshith* 54a). "... This concords with what Rabbi Simeon said in the name of Rabbi Yeba the Elder, that Eve's other sons were fathered in defilement through the intervention of the serpent and his rider Samael..." (I *Bereshith* 54b).

Some gnostics understandably accepted Jewish counter-exegesis, which substitutes the Jewish god by a demon. For instance, according to Epiphanius, the archontics said that "the devil came to Eve, was united with her like a man with a woman, and he fathered Cain and Abel on her" (*Pan.* XL,5,3).

The series of successive identifications, which led to the substitution of one of the antagonistic figures of the Paradise myth with the other, is therefore as follows : the Jewish god = Samael = the angel Samael = the devil = the serpent. And this induces the Jesus of the *Apocryphon of John* to no longer dare to claim he was the serpent, while proclaiming he played his role.

### THE HYPOSTASIS OF THE ARCHONS

Taking an abridged quotation from Eph 2.12, "Our struggle is not against blood and flesh, but against the powers and spirits of malice", a quotation that assures the addressee of the treatise of the existence of the devil and demons, and assures us that this addressee is a disciple of Paul, the author of the *Hypostasis of the Archons* sets out to say who these archons were and what they did.

His exposition consists of two parts. In the first part, after a few lines on the chief archon Samael, who is blind (according to the Aramaic etymology he gives of his name), powerful, ignorant and arrogant, he summarizes the Genesis text up to the flood with his own interpretation. The second part is a revelation from the angel Eleleth to Norea, the undefiled daughter of Eve, the sister of Seth, and therefore, the daughter of Adam not of the chief archon. We shall come back to the second part later which deals with the origin of Samael, his precipitation into Tartarus for claiming to be the only god, the exaltation of his son Sabaoth to the seventh heaven in reward for his conversion, and lastly the ultimate fate of souls and the world.

In the first part, the myths answer standard problems in a rather cursory way how can man, fashioned by the abortion-creator, be in the image of the true god

(Gen 1.26-27), and how can he be a divine spirit, since it was the creator who breathed life into him (Gen 2.7)? The Paradise narrative follows: the interdiction to eat of the tree, Adam's sleep, the creation of spiritual Eve, the archons' attempts to defile her, how she escapes from them by becoming a tree (clearly the tree of gnosis, but the text does not specify this because later on it is spiritual Eve who enters the serpent), and how she abandons her shadow, carnal Eve, to the lewdness of the archons, who impregnate her with their seed from which Cain and Abel will be born. In the meantime the manducation of the fruit is related:

(Then) the female spiritual principle came in the snake, the instructor; and it taught her, saying, "What did he say to you (pl.)? Was it, 'From every tree in the garden shall you eat; yet from the tree of recognizing evil and good do not eat?'" The carnal woman said, "Not only did he say 'Do not eat,' but even 'Do not touch it; for the day you eat from it, with death you are going to die.'" And the snake, the instructor, said, "With death you shall not die; for it was out of envy that he said this to you. Rather your eyes shall open and you shall come to be like gods, recognizing evil and good." And the female instructing principle was taken away from the snake, and she left it behind merely a thing of the earth.

And the carnal woman took from the tree and ate; and she gave to her husband as well as herself; and the psychics ate. And their deficient state opened from their lack of acquaintance; and they recognized that they had been naked of the spiritual element, and took fig leaves and bound them upon their loins. Then the chief ruler came, and he said, "Adam! Where are you?" — for he did not know what had happened. (NH 4,89,31-90,12)

The envy and ignorance of the Genesis god are underlined, but to avoid formally identifying Jesus with the serpent, who has become the devil in counter-exegesis, it is spiritual woman who enters him. This interpretation is later than the one which explains the magical power of the tree of gnosis specifically through the entering of spiritual woman, Epinoia, Thought, as in the *Apocryphon of John*. The instructor role of spiritual woman vis-à-vis carnal woman is a transposition of the role that carnal woman plays vis-à-vis Adam by taking the fruit and giving it to him. Eve's mediatory role in Adam's salvation will be turned against her in counter-exegesis which makes her so responsible for sin as to sometimes completely absolve Adam, but it will reappear in the doctrine of Mary as 'mediator'.

The significant phrase, to be translated literally, "their deficient state (*kakia*) opened (*OUEN*) from their ignorance", is a transposition and a commentary on the biblical phrase "and their eyes opened". There is, therefore, no reason to correct, as the first translators of the text did, the Coptic verb *OUEN* 'to open' by *OUENH* 'to show', to make its meaning conform to counter-exegesis but contrary to the text as a whole: "their imperfection was shown by their ignorance". Despite a clumsy turn of phrase, it is perfectly clear that by eating from the tree of know-

ledge, the knowledge they have eaten has made their ignorance disappear and thereby transformed their deficient state (*kakia*) as psychics into that of spirituals or pneumatics. This is exactly what the following phrase means, providing we take into account the Coptic imperfect of the subordinate clause. The same sequence of tenses can only be expressed in English if the narrative is transposed into the present tense: "And they know (by eating the gnosis) that (before eating it) they were divested of *pneumatikon* (which makes beings spiritual)". On this problem, I refer the reader to my paper read at the 1978 Yale Congress (1980, p. 288-301).

### ON THE ORIGIN OF THE WORLD

The untitled writing *On the Origin of the World*, which follows the *Hypostasis of the Archons* in Codex II, often runs parallel but is more complex and detailed. Both texts, each in its own way, reinterpret the same source, its tenor can largely be reconstructed from their concordances, despite substantial differences. The untitled text contains original developments on the three Adams; light-Adam, psychic Adam and earthly Adam, the garden of Eros and the trees of Paradise, the phoenix and the animals of Egypt, interweaving in this way specifically Greek and Egyptian myths into the framework of the exegesis of the biblical narrative.

Three passages in particular concern our present topic: the description of the trees of Paradise, the myth of the creation of the instructor, and the narrative of the illumination of Adam and Eve.

### THE TREES OF PARADISE

Then Justice created Paradise, being beautiful and being outside the orbit of the moon and the orbit of the sun in the Land of Wantonness, in the East in the midst of the stones. And desire is in the midst of the beautiful, appetizing trees.

And the tree of eternal life is, as it appeared by God's will, to the north of Paradise, so that it might make eternal the souls of the pure, who shall come forth from the modelled forms of poverty at the consummation of the age. Now the colour of the tree of life is like the sun. And its branches are beautiful. Its leaves are like those of the cypress. Its fruit is like a bunch of grapes when it is white. Its height goes as far as heaven.

And next to it is the tree of knowledge (*gnosis*), having the strength of God. Its glory is like the moon when fully radiant. And its branches are beautiful. Its leaves are like fig leaves. Its fruit is like a good appetizing date. And this tree is to the north of Paradise, so that it might arouse the souls from the torpor of the demons, in order that they might approach the tree of life and eat of its fruit and so

condemn the authorities and their angels. The effect of this tree is described in the *Sacred Book*, to wit:

It is you who are the tree of knowledge,  
 which is in Paradise,  
 from which the first man ate  
 and which opened his mind;  
 and he loved his co-likeness (spiritual Eve)  
 and condemned the other, alien likenesses (the archons)  
 and loathed them.

Now after, the olive tree sprouted up, which was to purify the kings and the high priests of righteousness, who were to appear in the last days... (NH II,5,110,2-111,5)

Whereas in the *Apocryphon of John* the tree the archons claimed to be the tree of life is denounced by Jesus as a tree of death, here it is truly a tree of life, to which even the tree of gnosis whose function is to enable souls to attain it, is subservient. This, including the reference to the olive tree which provides the oil for unction, shows how far Judaism has overtaken gnosis — there the Jewish god is also called 'Justice'. Several parallels can be drawn with the *Book of Enoch*, which also describes the trees of Paradise. Apart from numerous differences concerning the description of its branches, leaves and fruit, some convergences are striking: Enoch reaches the garden of Justice (32.3); the tree of life will be given to the saints after the Last Judgement (24.4-5); the tree of knowledge is interpreted positively, in accordance with its name moreover:

I saw the tree of Wisdom standing amidst the trees (...), from which the saints eat and so acquire great wisdom (...) Then I exclaimed: "How beautiful is this tree and what a joy to see!" Then the angel Raphael said to me:

"This is the tree of Wisdom!  
 Your ancient father and mother  
 Ate from it. They knew wisdom  
 Their eyes opened,  
 They saw they were naked  
 And were chased out of Paradise". (En 32, 1-6)

The liturgical hymn cited in *On the Origin of the World* understandably reminds us of Raphael's words in the *Book of Enoch*. Did one text influence the other? And was the passage on the tree of wisdom, forming a doublet in the *Book of Enoch*, though already attested in the Aramaic fragments from Cave IV at Qumran, not influenced by gnostic exegesis? It is difficult to answer such questions.

## THE ORIGIN OF THE INSTRUCTOR

When Primordial Man revealed himself in light to refute the blasphemous affirmation of Yaldabaoth "I am God and there is no other", the archons were filled with wonder and wanted to model man in his image. He will be Third Adam, since Sophia anticipated them by creating Second Adam to instruct and save mankind.

Then the authorities (another name for the Powers or Archons) received the knowledge necessary to create man. Sophia Zoe — she who is with Sabaoth — had anticipated them. She laughed at their decision. For they are blind: against their own interests they ignorantly create him. And they do not realise what they are about to do. The reason she anticipated them and made her own man first, was in order that he might instruct their modelled form how to despise them and thus to escape from them.

Now the production of the Instructor came about as follows. When Sophia let fall a droplet of light, it flowed onto the water, and immediately a man appeared, being androgynous. That droplet she molded first as a female body. Afterwards, using the body she moulded it in the likeness of the mother which had appeared. And she finished it in twelve months. An androgynous man was produced, whom the Greeks call Hermaphrodites; and whose mother the Hebrews call Eve of Life (Eve of Zoe), namely, the female instructor of life. Her son is the offspring who is Lord. Afterwards, the authorities called it 'Beast', in order to lead astray their modelled creatures. The interpretation of 'the beast' is 'the instructor'. For it was found to be the wisest of all beings.

Now, Eve is the first virgin... (NH II,113,10-114,5)

Though it is fairly difficult to have an clear idea of how the Instructor was engendered, a number of points concerning him are quite plain. A whole series of puns underlie the myth. The Hebrew name for Eve, *HaWâH* (*heth, wâw, hé*), is related to the root *HWH* (*HW'* in Aramaic), 'to show, indicate', hence instructress, instructor; and then related to the root *HâYâH*, 'to live', hence *Zoe*, Life. If we add the median vowels *wâw* and *yod*, we obtain *HeWYâ* in Aramaic, the 'snake', which refers to the Greek text of Genesis LXX 3.6 : "The snake was the wisest of all the beasts that are on earth", and the authorities or archons who possess animal form must be included among these beasts.

The words with which we interrupted our citation, "Eve is the first virgin...", introduce an aretology where Eve defines herself as being both something and its opposite. The last words are, "I gave birth to a Man-Lord" and the text continues :

Now these through the (supreme) will ...The souls that were going to enter the modelled forms of the authorities were manifested to Sabaoth and his Christ. And

regarding these the holy voice said, "Multiply and improve! Be lord over all creatures." And it is they who were taken captive, according to their destinies, by the prime parent (archgenitor). And thus they were shut into the prisons of the modelled forms until the consummation of the age. (NH II,5,114,15-24)

This passage supposes the division of the Jewish god into two, a division which we indicated in the previous chapter and to which we shall return later. Sabaoth and his christ (Jesus) are entrusted with the mission to save the souls imprisoned by the chief genitor, the creator, in bodies moulded out of mud. The 'holy voice' which says "Increase and multiply" can only be that of Sabaoth to whom the seraphim continually cry: "Holy, holy, holy, Lord Sabaoth". But the author gives his order to procreate an entirely different connotation from the one usually attributed by the gnostics when they put it in Yaldabaoth's mouth, when they conclude that generation is useful for him because it encloses the soul in a body and places it in his power. Here, on the contrary, the souls from the world above (the good seed in Mt 13.36-43;) must be sufficiently numerous so as to dominate the seed of the authorities (the tares) which the authorities will mix to defile them (*Orig. World*, 124, 23-25).

To conclude, let us recapitulate what this passage, directly or indirectly, tells us about the Instructor: he is the son of the virgin Wisdom-Life (Sophia-Zoe, spiritual Eve), hermaphrodite, i.e. fully man before the division of the sexes, the beast or serpent of Paradise, man-lord, and lastly the christ or messiah of Sabaoth, the partially rehabilitated Jewish God.

### THE PARADISE NARRATIVE

After teaching us the begetting of the Instructor as Second Adam by Eve of Life, the author goes on to expound the formation of Third Adam, the moulding of his body by the authorities, the animation of his body by Eve, the desire of the authorities to defile Eve, who abandons her carnal shadow Eve to them and enters a tree which thus becomes the tree of gnosis:

Then the seven of them (archons) together laid plans. They came up to Adam and Eve timidly: they said to him, "All the trees created for you in Paradise shall be eaten; but as for the tree of knowledge, control yourselves and do not eat from it. If you eat you will die." Having imparted great fear to them they withdrew up to their authorities.

Then came the wisest of all creatures, who was called Beast. And when he saw the likeness (fleshly Eve) of their mother Eve (Eve of Life) he said to her, "What did God say to you? Was it 'Do not eat from the tree of knowledge (*gnosis*)'?" She said, "He said, 'Not only do not eat from it, but do not touch it, lest you die.'" He said to her, "Do not be afraid. In death you shall not die. For he

knows that when you eat from it, your intellect (*noûs*) will become sober (*nephein*, arouse from torpor) and you will come to be like gods, recognizing the difference that obtains between evil men and good ones. Indeed, it was in envy that he said this to you, so that you could not eat from it".

Now Eve had confidence in the words of the instructor. She gazed at the tree and saw that it was beautiful and appetizing, and liked it; she took some of its fruit and ate it; and she gave some also to her husband, and he too ate it.

Then their intellect (*noûs*) opened. For when they had eaten, the light of knowledge illuminated them. Aroused from their torpor, they knew that they were naked of knowledge. When they put on shame, they saw that they were naked and became enamoured of one another. When they saw that the ones who had modelled them had the form of beasts, they loathed them: they were very aware.

Then when the rulers knew that they had broken their commandment... (NH II,5,118,16-120,20)

Here nakedness is interpreted in two ways. The first is spiritual : Adam and Eve were divested of knowledge before eating the fruit, but unaware of this; eating the fruit makes them aware and they lose their nakedness since now they know. The interpretation is almost identical to the one in the *Hypostasis of the Archons* where Adam and Eve, on becoming spiritual, know that they were naked before, deprived of what makes a being spiritual. In both cases the Coptic verb is in the imperfect to indicate that the discovery of spiritual nakedness suppresses it, just as waking up makes one aware that one was dreaming while at the same time it suppresses the dream. "Your intellect will be aroused from its torpor" says the snake, and the text notes "Aroused from their torpor, they knew...". In the *Apocryphon of John*, on the contrary, the discovered spiritual nakedness was the absence of perfection, which will only disappear when they will return to the world above. These diverse interpretations originate from the same basis : the acquisition of gnosis by the manducation of the fruit.

The second interpretation of nakedness is physical : "When they put on shame (an allusion to Gen 2.25, "They were naked but unashamed"), they saw that they were naked and loved each other". Out of this love children will naturally be born in accordance with Sabaoth's commandment "Increase and multiply", mentioned earlier. These children will not come from the seed of the archons, like Cain and Abel and their descendants, but be in the image and likeness of Adam and, therefore, of God, like Seth (Gen 5.1-3) and his sister, Norea, the virgin undefiled by the archons, and their descendants, the Sethians.

The anthropology in *On the Origin of the World* and the *Hypostasis of the Archons* is not exactly identical. In the *Hypostasis of the Archons* Adam and Eve were psychic before eating the fruit ("the psychics ate"), and they became pneumatic by eating gnosis. In the *Origin of the World*, Adam and Eve as well possessing *psychê* (*anima*) also possessed by animals and archons, possessed *noûs* or intellect, a faculty of higher knowledge, sometimes distinct from *logos* or rea-

son, sometimes not, which enables to grasp the things of the world above by connaturality. But their *noûs* was in a torpor, a sleep of forgetfulness, a sort of drunkenness from which it must be disintoxicated (*nephein*); it was this awakening, or disintoxication which the snake promises; it is achieved when, on eating the fruit, their *noûs* "opened" and the light of gnosis illuminated them. In the Emmaus narrative, the two disciples are *anoëtoi*, without *noûs*, i.e. psychics like Adam and Eve in the *Hypostasis of the Archons*, or with a *noûs* in a torpor as in the *Origin of the World* and, like them on eating the fruit, the disciples gain or regain possession of the *noûs* by eating the eucharistic bread, and thus acquire gnosis.

### THE TESTIMONY OF TRUTH (NH IX,3,29,6-74,30)

Relatively late in date, as the names of Valentinus (56,2) and Isidore (57,6) prove, the *Testimony of Truth* is a reactionary writing which polemicizes against gnostic deviations and principally against its judaization. Its attacks are directed toward those who call themselves but are not really Christians, "abandoning themselves to ignorance and human death, not knowing where they are going nor who is Christ, (...) running after the archons and authorities", i.e. returning to Judaism.

I will speak to those who know to hear not with the ears of the body but with the ears of the mind. For many have sought after the truth and have not been able to find it; because there has taken hold of them the old leaven of the Pharisees and the scribes of the Law (1 Co 5.7; Mk 8.15). And the leaven is the errant desire of the angels and the demons and the stars. As for the Pharisees and the scribes, it is they who belong to the archons who have authority over them. For no one who is under the Law will be able to look up to the truth for they will not be able to serve two masters (Mt 6.24). For the defilement of the Law is manifest; but undefilement belongs to the light. The Law commands one to take a husband or to take a wife and to beget, to multiply like the sand of the sea (Gen 1.28; 22.17; 32.13). But passion which is a delight to them constrains the souls of those who are begotten in this place, those who defile and those who are defiled, in order that the Law might be fulfilled through them. And they show that they are assisting the world; and they turn away from the light, who are unable to pass by the archon of darkness until they pay the last penny. But the Son of Man came forth from Impe-  
rishability, being alien to defilement (NH IX,3,29,6-30,20)

So the author of the *Testimony of Truth* polemicizes against marriage. He certainly does not accept the rehabilitation made by the author of the *On the Origin of the World*, nor probably the rehabilitation of the Jewish god under the name of Sabaoth, a rehabilitation that demands that of marriage. He goes on to

polemicize against seeking martyrdom (testimony) with a view to a greater assurance of salvation and carnal resurrection. Resurrection is destruction : salvation is to be received above. With martyrdom (testimony) through which one frees oneself, he contrasts true testimony, in accordance with the truth — which explains the name given to this untitled treatise — a testimony which is the renunciation of all worldly things : "This is, therefore, the true testimony : When man knows himself and God who is above truth, he will be saved, and he will be crowned with the everlasting crown" (NH IX,3,45,1-6).

After the conclusion to the first part, the second part opens with a comparison between the birth of John the Baptist and Jesus. This is followed by the Paradise narrative presented as a confirmation of the 'mystery' contained in the comparison between the two births, without making the relationship between the mystery and the narrative very clear at first sight :

John was begotten by the word (*logos*) through a woman, Elisabeth; and Christ was begotten by the word through a virgin, Mary. What is the meaning of this mystery? John was begotten by means of a womb worn with age, but Christ passed through a virgin's womb. When she had conceived she gave birth to the Saviour. Furthermore she was found to be a virgin again. Why, then, do you err and not seek after these mysteries which were prefigured for our sake?

It is written in the Law concerning this, when God gave a command to Adam, "From every tree you may eat, but from the tree which is in the midst of Paradise do not eat, for on the day that you eat from it you will surely die." But the serpent was wiser than all the animals that were in Paradise, and he persuaded Eve, saying, "On the day when you eat from the tree which is in the midst of Paradise the eyes of your mind will open." And Eve obeyed, and she stretched forth her hand; she took from the tree and ate; she also gave to her husband with her. And immediately they knew that they were naked, and they took some fig leaves and put them on as girdles. But God came at the time of evening walking in the midst of Paradise. When Adam saw him he hid himself. And he said, "Adam, where are you?" He answered and said, "I have come under the fig tree." And at that very moment God knew that he had eaten from the tree of which he had commanded him, "Do not eat of it." And he said to him, "Who is it who has instructed you?" And Adam answered, "The woman whom you have given me." And the woman said, "It is the serpent who instructed me." And he cursed the serpent, and called him 'devil'. and he said, "Behold, Adam has become like one of us, knowing evil and good." Then he said, "Let us cast him out of Paradise lest he take from the tree of life and eat and live for ever".

But of what sort is this god? First he enviously refused Adam from eating of the tree of knowledge. And secondly he said, "Adam, where are you?" This god does not have foreknowledge; otherwise would he not know from the beginning? And afterwards he said, "Let us cast him out of this place, lest he eat of the tree of life and live for ever." Surely he has shown himself to be envious and malicious.

And what kind of a god is this? For great is the blindness of those who read, and did not know him. And he said, "I am the jealous God; I will bring the sins of the fathers upon the children until three and four generations (Dt 5.9)". And he said, "I will make their heart thick, and I will cause their mind to become blind, that they might not know nor comprehend the things that are said (Is 6.9-10; 43.8; Mt 13.14; etc.)". But these things he has said to those who believe in him and serve him!

And in one place Moses writes, "He made the devil a serpent for those whom he has in his generation." Also in the book which is called 'Exodus' it is written thus: "He contended against the [magicians], when the place was full of [serpents] according to their [wickedness; and the rod] which was in the hand of Moses became a serpent, and it swallowed the serpents of the magicians (Ex 7.8-12)". Again it is written, "he made a serpent of bronze and hung it upon a pole (Num 21.9) [*two lines missing*] for the [one who will gaze] upon [this] bronze serpent, none will [destroy him], and the one who will [believe in] this bronze serpent [will be saved]. For this is Christ; [those] who believed in him [have received life]. Those who did not believe [will die]". (NH IX,3,45,23-49,10)

Unfortunately, towards the end of the quotation the gaps increase to such an extent that all reconstitution is impossible.

So after repeating the Paradise narrative, more or less in accordance with the biblical text, the author gives his commentary, confining himself to two antagonistic figures: the Genesis god, against whom he institutes proceedings; and the serpent, whom he vindicates. Regarding the latter, he first reproaches the Genesis god for cursing him and making him into the Devil for those of his generation (of the Genesis god), i.e. those who serve him, the Jews and especially the Christians (2 Co 11.3), who take him to be the supreme god and identify him with the Father. Next the author ventures to show who the serpent really is: he is the same one who transformed Moses' rod to drown the magicians' serpents in Egypt; he is also the same as the bronze serpent Moses set upon a rod and whose sight healed the bites of the desert snakes. Now this bronze serpent, he says, "is Christ", and those who believe in him will be saved. The same identification of the bronze serpent with Christ is found in the *Gospel of John* (3.14), but it is no longer based on the figure of the snake, identical in its three appearances in Paradise, in Egypt and in the desert, it results from its elevation on the pole or cross and from salvation acquired for those who believe. The portrayal of Christ as a bronze serpent in the Christian tradition is no more than a vestige of the identity of the serpent of Paradise with the instructor or saviour.

Now, what is relationship between the identity of the serpent with Jesus and the comparison of his birth with that of John the Baptist? John and Jesus, it is said, were begotten by the word; what we must understand is that their births, announced in *words* to Zacharias and Mary, were miraculous. But although Elizabeth was sterile and too old to bear children, like Sara earlier (Gen 24.11) or

Anne (1 Sam 1.2), John had been begotten according to the laws of generation of the creator, whereas Jesus was born without a father from a virgin still a virgin. This affirmation of Mary's virginity *in partu* is not retained in the canonical Scriptures, but is professed in the Proto-evangelium of James (20), in the Gospel of Pseudo-Mt (13.3), with the beautiful expression "*Virgo concepit, virgo parturit, virgo permansit*", in the *Ascension of Isaiah* (11.9), and the liturgy celebrates it in abundance (verse : *Post partum virgo inviolata permansisti*", motet : *Inviolata, integra et casta es, Maria*, etc.). What does this mean? That when the idea of making Jesus appear on earth as an adult had been abandoned, as Mk and Marcion still continued to do, and a mother and childhood were attributed to him, one nevertheless wanted to affirm that on passing through Mary's womb, as through the doors of the cenacle later when he appeared to the Twelve (John 20.19,26), his body was not made out of clay like ours, but was a simple appearance, as the Epistle to the Philipians asserts "taking the form of a servant, being in the likeness of man; and in appearance, like a man..."(Phil 2.7). Jesus had therefore revealed himself in human form during the reign of Tiberius, but this did not make him a true man, as he had revealed himself earlier in Paradise, in Egypt and in the desert as a snake though this did not make him a real snake. Jesus is a man, but not a man of flesh; he is the true and first Son of Man, that is of God. This is, in my opinion, the meaning of the mystery upon which the author of the *Testimony of Truth* invites his readers to meditate.

#### CONCLUSION : THE TEACHING OF THE TEXTS

The aim of this chapter, by quoting four fully explicit texts, was to show that the gnostic exegesis of the Paradise narrative is indeed what we deduced, as it were theoretically, from the comparison of this narrative with that of the Emmaus pilgrims. Furthermore, it has confirmed that this exegesis is truly the fundamental datum around which all the speculations which accompany it in the quoted texts are organized.



## Chapter 8

# THE PARADISE NARRATIVE BEFORE AND AFTER GNOSTIC EXEGESIS

O Lord, give me back the robe of immortality that  
I lost through the transgression of my first father.  
*(Roman missal, the prayer said by the priest as he  
puts on the stole)*

It must first be shown, contrary to what one would be inclined to believe, that the reversal of the gnostic exegesis from which we say Christianity originated, is not a return to an earlier Jewish exegesis.

None of the books of the Hebraic Bible, whether deuteronomistic, priestly, prophetic, sapiential or apocalyptic in inspiration, either refer to or comment on the Paradise narrative. In the Greek Bible called the Septuagint, only two allusions are found; we shall refer to them later to determine their significance or date. In one of the other Jewish books, the *Book of Enoch*, the only allusion is a rather positive description of the tree of science which we quoted in the preceding chapter (*supra*, p. 80), a description provoked by that of paradise. The *Book of Jubilees* and Flavius Josephus both give banal paraphrases, whereas Pseudo-Philo in his *Biblical Antiquities* ignores it altogether. Philo applies his method of allegorical interpretation to the paradise narrative but attaches no more significance to it than to other texts dealt with in the same way. On the other hand, all of a sudden, the narrative is glossed, expanded and developed in a whole series of more or less interconnected apocrypha : the *Apocalypse of Moses*, the various recensions of the *Life of Adam and Eve*, the *Apocalypse of Abraham*, the *Cavern of Treasures*, etc. Lastly, the Epistles of the New Testament draw theological consequences from it, and it is taken up and commented on by the early Fathers, Theophilus of Antioch, Justin, Tatian, Irenaeus, etc.

These texts can therefore be divided into two groups : 1) those which ignore the gnostic interpretation and which are earlier, if not always chronologically — this must be the case for Philo — at least logically; 2) those which contradict it and which are, therefore, logically and chronologically, later.

Two criteria among others enable to distinguish between the categories : the identity attributed to the serpent on the one hand, and the nakedness or clothing of Adam and Eve before eating the fruit, on the other.

### I. THE SERPENT OR THE DEVIL?

Before gnostic exegesis the serpent was regarded as a mere animal. After gnostic exegesis he became Samael or Sammael or Satan.

In the *Book of Jubilees*, in Josephus and Philo, the serpent is an animal endowed with speech like the other animals at that time; and like him they were deprived of speech by the curse called down on him. And another reason why the serpent who made Eve sin is not identified with Satan is simply that, in the age of paradise, Satan as a bad angel, as the Devil did not yet exist.

### THE FALL OF THE ANGELS

The fall of the angels is not related until Genesis chapter six : "The sons of God saw that the daughters of men were beautiful, and they took some of them as wives" (Gen 6.2). According to the *Book of Enoch* the sons of God are the angels :

And it came to pass, when the sons of men had increased, that in those days there were born to them fair and beautiful daughters. And the angels, the sons of heaven, saw them and desired them. And they said to one another, Come, let us choose for ourselves wives from the children of men, and let us beget for ourselves children. And Semyaza, who was their leader, said to them, I fear that you may not wish this deed to be done, and that I alone will pay for this great sin. And they answered him and said, Let us all swear an oath, and bind one another with curses not to alter this plan, but to carry out this plan effectively. (1 En 6.15)

To this conception of the fall of the angels another is added in the same *Book of Enoch*: here Azael or Azazel is the chief culprit; no longer lust, but the divulgation of celestial mysteries and the teaching of magic, arts and techniques is the initial cause of sin (1 En 7.1 sqq.).

In the *Book of Jubilees*, the angels descended from heaven to teach men the law and justice, but their cohabitation with the daughters of men caused them to be defiled with them (Jub 4.15 and 22).

All these legends locate the fall of the angels at a given moment in the history of mankind; they assume human beings had been righteous and happy before: it was the angels who, on becoming demons, had perverted them. The function of

these myths was to explain the origin of evil. For the Gnostics, evil comes from the fault Sophia committed by giving birth to the Jewish god; for Jewish-Christian counter-exegesis, it comes from Adam's fault.

In the New Testament, the fall of the angels is still attributed to their sexual intercourse with women.

The *Epistle of Jude* — which quotes the *Book of Enoch* at v. 14 — warns against the unrighteous (v. 5-7): "Now I desire to remind you (...) that Jesus who saved his people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed those who did not believe. And the angels that did not keep their own position but left their proper dwelling have been kept by him in eternal chains in the nether gloom until the judgement of the great day; just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding cities which likewise acted immorally and indulged in unnatural lust, serve as an example by undergoing a punishment of eternal fire" (5-7). It is therefore in imitation of the angels that Sodom and Gomorrah sinned through lust.

The author of the *First Epistle of Peter* shows Christ, put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit, "in which also he went and made a proclamation to the spirits in prison, who in former times did not obey, when God waited patiently in the days of Noah, during the building of the ark..." (1 Pet 3.19-20). The spirits "in prison" are those of whom, in the *Book of Enoch*, the Lord said to Michael: "Go, chain up Semyaza and the other with him who have associated with the women to corrupt themselves with them in all their uncleanness (...) until the judgement which is for all eternity is accomplished" (1 En 10.11-13).

The author of the *Second Epistle of Peter* also refers to the same passage from Enoch — what else could he refer to? — when he says that "God did not spare the angels when they sinned, but cast them into the abyss where they are chained to deep darkness to be kept until the judgement" (2 Pet 2.4).

The author of *First Epistle to the Corinthians* explains that a woman must cover her head with a veil in the assembly of the faithful "because of the angels" (1 Co 11.10). In his treatise entitled 'On the veiling of virgins' (*De virginibus velandis*), Tertullian comments on this text as follows: "If the woman ought to have the mark of the power of man upon the head, all the more justly the virgin, to whom pertains the essence of the cause (assigned for this obligation). For if it is on account of the angels — those, to wit, whom we read as having fallen from God and heaven on account of concupiscence after females — who can presume that it was bodies already defiled and relics of human lust, which such angels yearned after, so as not rather to have been inflamed for virgins, whose bloom pleads an excuse for human lust likewise (...) So perilous a face, then, ought to be shaded, which has cast stumbling-stones even so far as heaven..." (*De virginibus velandis*, 7). Cyprian makes the same comment in *De habitu virginum*, 14.

Before Tertullian, the only thing that Justin (2 *Apol* 5,2), Irenaeus (*Adv. H.* IV,16,2; 36,4), and Clement of Alexandria (*Ped.* 3,2; *Stro.* 5,1) know about the

fall of the angels is the episode before the Flood. Justin's text has the advantage of merging the conception of the *Book of Jubilees* with the two conceptions in *Enoch*: "To watch over man and the animals that are beneath heaven God has entrusted the angels whom he placed at their head. But the angels violating his command, sought the commerce of women and begot children whom we call demons. Afterwards they enslaved mankind, by magic or..." (2 *Apol.* 5,2).

### THE FALL OF SATAN

Nowhere in the long lists of rebellious angels of ancient Judaism does Satan's name appear. Satan only really begins to exist with Jewish-Christian counter-exegesis.

The word 'satan' is a common noun in Hebrew, which designates an adversary either in war (1 Sam 29.4; 1 Kings 5.18; 11.14,23,25) or before a tribunal (Ps 109.6). With the article, 'the satan', it designates a supernatural being who plays the role of accuser in God's tribunal. The satan plays this role chiefly in the Book of Job and in Zechariah 3.1; the author of 1 Chronicles 21.1 substitutes 'the satan' for 'YHWH's wrath' who, in 2 Sam 24.1, fulminated against Israel and incited David to take a census of his people to give YHWH a pretext for sending the plague on his chosen people. The Chronicler was rightly scandalized by the divine machiavelism and wanted to transfer YHWH's evil intention to 'the adversary'; for the same reasons, the copyists of the Gospels will substitute 'pity', in Mk 1.41, for Jesus' 'anger', preserved in some mss (D, etc. a reading confirmed by Mk 1.43). But when the Chronicler replaced 'the satan' for 'YHWH's anger', he unwittingly identified YHWH with the future Satan before the counter-exegesis!

In the Bible the cause of the fall of the angels is lust; Satan's post-biblical fall will have two causes, both of which identify him with the Genesis god: envy of Adam, denounced by the serpent, and pride in wanting to equal God.

### THE SIN OF ENVY

The envy of the Genesis god towards Adam is underlined, not only in the paraphrases of the Paradise narrative we quoted, but in many other gnostic texts. A. Orbe, professor at the Gregorian University, has assembled them in his article, 'El pecado de los archontes' (*Estudios eclesiasticos* 43, 1968, p. 345-379).

The accusation of envy is repeated by Irenaeus, but this time against Satan:

This commandment the man kept not, but was disobedient to God, being led astray by the angel who was envious and jealous of man for the great gifts God had given to him and both brought himself to nought and make men sinful, persuading

him to disobey the commandment of God. So the angel, becoming by his falsehood the author and originator of sin, himself was struck down, having offended against God, and man he caused to be cast out from Paradise. And, because through the guidance of his disposition he apostasized and departed from God, he was called Satan, according to the Hebrew word; that is, Rebel: but he is also called Slanderer. Now God cursed the serpent which carried and conveyed the Slanderer; and this malediction came on the beast itself and on the angel hidden and concealed in him, even in Satan; and man he put away from his presence, removing him and making him to dwell on the way to Paradise; because Paradise receiveth not the sinful. (*Dem.* 16; see also *Adv. H.* IV,40,3; V,24,4, etc.)

The same reproach of envy is found in Tertullian:

Therefore I detect the origin of impatience in the devil himself, at that very time when he impatiently bore that the Lord God subjected the universal works which He had made to his own image, that is, to man. For if he had endured that, he would not have grieved; nor would he have envied man if he had not grieved. Accordingly, he deceived him, because he had envied him; but he had envied him because he had grieved; he had grieved because, of course, he had not patiently borne. (*De patientia*, 5)

But why did the angel need to hide himself in the serpent if he was still an angel of light and if he only became a demon through the curse which followed his successful deceit? His fall should therefore have occurred earlier, but it would still be out of jealousy towards Adam. This is how *The Life of Adam and Eve* depicts his fall. The author imagines the following dialogue between Adam expelled from paradise and Satan expelled from heaven:

Adam answered, "What have I done to you, or what can you blame me for? We have done you no harm or injury. Why, then, do you pursue us?". The devil replied, "Adam, what are you saying to me? It was on account of you that I was thrown out of heaven. When you were formed I was expelled from the presence of God and banished from the company of angels. When God breathed into you the breath of life, and your face and likeness was made in the image of God, Michael brought you and made us worship you in the sight of God; and the Lord God said, "He is Adam. I have made him in our image and likeness". And Michael went out and called all the angels, saying, "Worship the image of God as the Lord God has commanded". And Michael himself worshipped first. And then he called me and said, "Worship the image of God". And I answered, "I have no duty to worship Adam". And since Michael kept urging me to worship, I said to him, "Why do you urge me? I will not worship an inferior and a younger being than I am. I am his senior in creation: before he was made I was already made: he ought

to worship me". When the rest of the angels, who were under me, heard this, they too refused to worship him. and Michael said, "Worship the image of God; and, if you will not worship him, you will make the Lord God very angry". And I said, "If he is angry with me, I will set my seat above the stars of heaven and I will be like the Most High" (Is 14.13-14). And the Lord God was angry with me and banished me and my angels from our glory; and on your account we were driven from our dwelling-places into this world and thrown out onto the earth. At this we were overcome with grief, since we had been deprived of our so great glory. And we were pained to see you in such joy and luxury. So I beguiled your wife and caused you to be driven from your joy and luxury through her, just as I was driven from my glory". (*Life of Adam and Eve*, XII-XVI)

### THE SIN OF PRIDE

The above passage from the *Life of Adam and Eve* stresses the transition from envy to pride as the cause of Satan's fall. The latter was a good angel, apparently the first in rank after Michael, but it is not said that the angelical nature, however perfect and blessed, was made in the image of God, and it is therefore like the gnostic demiurge and Sophia's abortion, inferior to man. This contradicts an earlier Jewish conception, expressed, for instance, in the psalm: "What is man that you are mindful of him? (...) You made him a little less than the angels, you have crowned him with glory and magnificence" (Ps 8.5-6).

It is therefore out of envy that Satan made Adam sin and out of pride that he lost himself, but the sin of pride stems from an earlier feeling of envy: his arrogance in wanting to equal the Almighty results from a refusal to worship Adam, the image of God. This is not the gratuitous pride of the Jewish god for which the Gnostics continuously reproached him and which was, for them, the cause of his expulsion below. Counter-exegesis could not make Satan say "I am God and there is no other", it would have been too obvious that Satan was none other than YHWH. So the words Isaiah attributed to the King of Babylon (14.13-14) were put into his mouth, and from henceforth, especially thanks to Origen, this poem will interpret the fall of Satan:

Your glory has come down to Hades... How you are fallen from heaven, sparkling star (*héosphoros*, *lucifer*), son of dawn, how you are cut down to the ground, you who laid the nations low. You said in your heart: I will ascend to heaven, I will raise my throne above the stars of God ... I will ascend to the tops of the cloud; I will make myself like the Almighty... (Is 14.10-14)

Following Origen, in his *Preparatio Evangelica* Eusebius reapplies the words of the King of Babylon to Satan:

The one who, after falling the first, made the others fall (...) is ordinarily called the Dragon, the Serpent (...) The holy books explain the cause of his fall in these terms (...) How did Lucifer fall, he who was raised in the morning (...)? You said in your heart: I will ascend to heaven (...) I will be like the Almighty (...) This teaches us that, adorned in the beginning with divine virtues, he fell by his pride and his revolt against God. (*Pr. Ev.* 7,16)

Amongst the Latin fathers, Ambrose wrote similarly:

It was out of pride that the devil himself lost the grace. For it was on the day that he cried: I will set my throne in the clouds (...) I will be like the Almighty, that he was expelled from the company of angels. (*In Ps.* 118, 7,8)

Augustine will take up the same explanation:

It is solely because of pride that the devil will be punished. He is surely the chief of all sinners (...) he was guilty neither of adultery (Augustine never suspected that Cain and Abel were born out of Eve's adultery with YHWH-Samael-Satan, Gen 4.1-2. See *supra*), nor drunkenness, nor fornication, nor theft; it was only pride that made him fall. (*In Ps.* 58, 3,5).

All the theologians afterwards will take Augustin's word for it.

The transition from the Jewish doctrine of the fall of Semiaza or Azazel, and their angels out of lust, in Genesis chapter 6, to Christian belief in the fall of Satan and his angels out of envy or pride at the creation of man, or even earlier, can only be explained by the reversal of the gnostic exegesis of the paradise narrative and the transfer to Satan of the judgement made by the gnostics on the Genesis god, envious of Adam and arrogant enough to claim to be the one and only true God.

#### COUNTER-EXEGESIS IN THE SEPTUAGINT (Wis 2.23-24)

The non existence of the devil, of his arrogance and envy before gnostic counter-exegesis enables us to include among the texts belonging to the counter-exegesis verses from the Septuagint Bible mentioned at the beginning of this chapter (*supra*, p. 89), and which are usually seen as anticipating the doctrine of original sin. They are verses from the *Book of Wisdom* on the origin of death: "God created man for incorruption, he made him in the image of his own nature

(or eternity); but through the devil's envy death entered the world; and those who belong to his company will experience it" (Wis 2.23-24). The characteristic reference to the devil and his envy distinguishes this text from that of Ben Sira with which it is usually compared, but where responsibility for the introduction of death is not traced from the woman to the serpent: "In a woman was sin's beginning: on her account we all die" (Eccl 25.24). This remark is inscribed in one of the most anti-feminist passages (Eccl 25.13-26) ever written. To compare Adam with Christ, the author of the Epistle to the Romans will pass the woman's responsibility over in silence — another way of being anti-feminist — only to retain that of Adam: "Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, so death came through sin..." (Rom 5. 12), but the author of 1 Timothy will specify: "And Adam was not seduced, but the woman" (1 Tim 2.14), by the devil of course.

## II. WERE ADAM AND EVE NAKED OR CLOTHED IN PARADISE?

The gnostics interpret the nakedness revealed to Adam and Eve by the manucation of the tree as the deprivation of their human perfection, following their imprisonment in the mud models by the creator on the one hand, and their division into two sexes when Eve was extracted from Adam's rib on the other, so that neither the male (*aner*, vir), nor the female (*gunê*, femina), is fully 'man' (*anthropos*, homo), male and female at one and the same time.

### CELESTIAL GARMENTS

According to the image suggested by nakedness, the deprivation of human perfection was symbolized by the divesting of celestial garments, assumed abandoned in the world above, which constitute the other half of each of us, male or female. The famous 'Song of the Pearl' in the *Acts of Thomas* (118) is entirely based on this symbolism: before coming to Egypt, i.e. this world, the young Eastern prince who represents the 'self' of each of us, is divested of his magnificent garments. He will put them on again if the possession of the pearl (i.e. gnosis), guarded by the fire-breathing dragon (the creator of the world who has become the devil and serpent), allows and ensures his return to his home, when he takes off his garment of mud (the body moulded by the creator). The poet gives a touching description of the encounter of the prince with his celestial garment, who comes to greet him, a garment endowed with feelings, the other half of himself who has grown in size with him, his 'angel', who has never ceased to contemplate the face of the Father (Mt 18.10) and who, by merging into him to

form a single person (the mystery of the bridalchamber) reestablishes him in the state of perfection of which he was deprived.

Ancient Judaism has never known celestial garments for the simple reason that it never envisaged the life of the just in heaven. We may therefore conclude that all the writings which mention them are dependent on gnostic exegesis.

This is certainly the case in the *Ascension of Isaiah* which mentions celestial garments ten times. First let us quote the words of the guiding angel to the prophet: "When the angel of the Spirit will have taken you up from your alien body, then you will receive the garment that you will see, and you will also see other garments numbered and stored up there. And then will you become equal to the angels of the seventh heaven" (8.14-15). Let us still quote Isaiah's own words: "And I saw there all the righteous from the time of Adam. And I saw there the holy Abel and all the righteous. And I saw there Enoch and all who were stripped of the garments of flesh; and I saw them in their garments of the world above, and they were like angels, standing there in great glory" (9.7-9).

Certainly later than the gnostic exegesis are the Parables in the *Book of Enoch* (37-71): "And the righteous and chosen will have risen from the earth, and will have ceased to cast down their faces, and will have put on the garments of brightness, which are the garments of life. And this will be a garment of life from the Lord of Spirits; and your garments will not wear out, and your glory will not fail before the Lord of Spirits" (62.19-21). It is therefore not a coincidence that no fragments of the Parables were found in the caves at Qumran.

The Second Epistle to the Corinthians, which employs the metaphor of a tent for the earthly body, a temporary abode, and for the spiritual body that of a home, a permanent dwelling place, does not speak of "living in" but of "being clothed with" these dwelling places: "For we know that if this tent, our earthly dwelling, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. Here indeed we groan, longing to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling (...) because we wish not to be unclothed but to put another garment on top of this garment" (2 Co 5.1-4).

### THE GARMENTS OF PARADISE

Though the biblical text formally asserts that "man and his wife were naked but not ashamed" and that by eating the fruit their eyes opened and they became aware of their nakedness, Jewish-Christian counter-exegesis will claim that they were clothed in a garment of splendour, glory, innocence or immortality, of which the manducation of the fruit had divested them. So, instead of recognizing they were naked, Adam and Eve became naked. In actual fact, counter-exegesis transfers the glory of the gnostic celestial Adam — the Second Adam, the "Man in the image of God" of Gen. 1.26 — to the earthly Adam of paradise of Gen 2.7.

Gnostic Adam lost his glory when he became earthly Adam; the Jewish-Christian earthly Adam inherits his glory from celestial Adam but loses it by eating the fruit.

This transposition would give rise to a long literary, theological, even iconographic, tradition. Brian Murdoch, a Cambridge scholar, has studied this tradition in connection with two German mediaeval poems, the *Wiener Genesis* and the *Aneenge*, in an article entitled 'The Garments of Paradise'. The English scholar divides this tradition, whose origin he obviously did not suspect, into two stages: a legendary stage, which concerns garments strictly speaking, and a symbolical stage, where the garments represent innocence or immortality. We shall only quote a few texts.

The targums are the first or one of the first sources of evidence of the garments of paradise, as they were, as we have seen, the first proofs of the counter-exegesis of the adultery of the Jewish god with Eve. We shall only quote the relevant passages from the *Neofüi* and *Onkelos* targums in one column and from *Pseudo-Jonathan* in the other (words diverging from the Massoretic text are italicized):

*Neofüi - Onkelos*

2<sup>17</sup> But of the tree of knowledge, of which *those who eat its fruits know to distinguish* between good and evil...

for on the day you eat of it you shall surely die...

2<sup>25</sup> And they were both naked, Adam and his wife, *yet they did not experience shame (they did not blush,* Oneklos)

= Massoretic Hebrew

*Ps. Jonathan*

But of the tree of *which those who eat its fruit learn to distinguish* between good and evil...

for on the day that you eat of it you will *condemn yourself* to death...

And they were both *wise*, Adam and his wife, *but they did not remain in their glory.*

3<sup>6</sup> *And the woman saw Sammael, the angel of death, and she was afraid...*

3<sup>7</sup> And the eyes of them both *were illuminated* and they ~~k~~*new* that they were naked,

*stripped of the clothing of splendour with which they had been created, and they saw their shame; and they sewed fig leaves together...*

3<sup>8</sup> And they heard the voice of the *Word (Memra)* of YHWH-Elohim walking in the garden...

3<sup>21</sup> And YHWH-Elohim made for Adam and his wife *garments of glory*

(to be worn) upon the skin of their flesh,  
and he clothed them.

3<sup>21</sup> And YHWH-Elohim made for Adam and his wife *garments of glory from the skin cast off from the serpent on the skin of their flesh, instead of their splendid (garments) of which they had been stripped;*  
and he clothed them.

The transformations which the Pseudo-Jonathan exerted on the Massoretic text are clearly motivated: "You will surely die" is replaced by "you will condemn yourself to death" in order to exempt YHWH-Elohim from a lie as Adam and Eve will not die on that day; "they were naked" is replaced by "they were wise", precisely because they were not naked, but clothed in garments of splendour with which they had been created, here the garments are assimilated with wisdom; the serpent is replaced by Sammael, i.e. YHWH-Elohim himself, according to the name given to him by the gnostics. But in this instance, he is the angel of death, through a simple modification of the etymology of the word, here derived from the root SM, 'poison' instead of the root SM' 'to be blind'; "their eyes opened" is replaced by "their eyes were illuminated", which strangely recalls a phrase from *On the Origin of the World*: "then the light of the gnosis illuminated them". It is no longer the voice of God but the voice of the Word that they hear, in order to safeguard divine transcendence (cf. p. 136), the voice of this Word with which the Saviour Jesus will be identified, and which iconography will depict expelling man out of paradise. Lastly, instead of tunics of skin — Philo wondered whether they were not unworthy of such a creator and he justified them as a wise precaution against lust (*Questions on Gen* I,53) — God made them 'garments of glory' out of the serpent's skin to replace those which the manducation of the fruit had stripped them; this is a formal negation of original sin since Adam and Eve recover what their disobedience had made them lose.

The *Neofiti* and *Onkelos* targums only retained of this anti-gnostic transposition the garments of glory after the fault. Their mention is only comprehensible in the *Pseudo-Jonathan* text, which makes *Neofiti* and *Onkelos* appear as expurgated *Pseudo-Jonathan*. The garments of glory restored to Adam will be transmitted from one new-born child to the next: Rebecca, according to *Pseudo-Jonathan* in Gen 27.15, will take them from Esau to clothe Jacob, which explains Isaac's mistake (Gen 27.27), and Jacob in turn, this time according to *Neofiti*, will transmit them to Joseph, Rachel's eldest son (Gen 48.22).

The *Book of Wisdom* seems reflect this doctrine of the restoration of Adam: "(men) have been saved through Wisdom: it was she who protected the father of the world, the first being formed by God, when he was created alone (understood: it was Eve who made him sin); it is she who delivered him from his fault and gave him the strength to dominate the universe" (Wis 9.18-10, 2).

Adam and Eve's divestment of their garments of glory is also mentioned in the *Apocalypse of Moses* (20): "At the same moment (Eve is speaking), my eyes opened and I knew that I was stripped of the justice which clothed me. I wept and said: Why did you make me do this? I am deprived of the magnificence which clothed me..."

In the *Cavern of Treasures* (3.14), we read that before their fault, "Adam and Eve spent three hours in paradise, clothed with glory and shining with splendour".

The other apocryphal authors also speak of splendour but not explicitly as a garment.

### THE GARMENTS OF INNOCENCE AND IMMORTALITY

In the Church Fathers one also sometimes finds references to the garments of paradise in the proper sense, for example, in Ephraem: "Adam was divested of his robe of light" (*Hymns* 15.8,6), or again, a sentence placed in Adam's mouth: "Remorse weighed on me because I had thus lost the crown, the *noûs*, the glory, the tunic, the luminous thalamus..." (*Hymns*, 7.24, 3-6)

But usually the loss of garments is only a symbol of the loss of innocence or immortality. According to Theophilus of Antioch (*Ad. Aut.* 2,25), it was "to prolong Adam's state of innocence and simplicity", that God forbid him the tree of science, "besides, it is unseemly that children in infancy have knowledge beyond their years".

It is especially the commentary on the parable of the prodigal son that gives the Fathers the opportunity to speak about the garments of paradise; the father says to his slaves: "Quickly, bring out a robe — the first one — and put it on him" (Lk 15.22). Most modern Bibles transpose "the first robe" into "the best robe", but since Tertullian, the Fathers have seen this "first" or "primal robe" as Adam's state before his sin. Augustine asks: "Where did they get the first robe from, if he does not receive the immortality that Adam lost?" (*PL* 34,352), and he assures elsewhere that "Adam was clothed in divine light" (*PL* 34,209). From this traditional interpretation is derived the short prayer which the Roman missel invites the priest to pronounce as he puts on the stole: "O Lord, give me back the robe of immortality that I lost through the transgression of my first father".

Adam's garment of immortality brings us back to the problem of the origin of death encountered earlier. Sensing the difficulty of human immortality on earth, Gregory the Great reverts to the symbolism of innocence: "The first robe is the garment of innocence that man, well created, received, but which, wrongly persuaded by the serpent, he lost" (*PL* 75, 991).

"Two further passages from Lk's Gospel, writes Brian Murdoch, are interpreted as referring to Adam's garments. The naked Gerasene demoniac (Lk 8.27)

is seen as Adam stripped of his primal state, like the traveller robbed on the road to Jericho (Lk 10.30). Elsewhere in Christian exegesis Adam is described as clad in clothing of sanctity, virtue, divine grace, chastity, charity or faith" (p. 379).

### THE TUNICS OF SKIN

Another result of the transfer of the garments of light from the gnostic world above to the Jewish-Christian earthly paradise is that man no longer becomes flesh and mortal through the imprisonment of his spirit in the mud model of the creator, but through the tunics of skin, the body of flesh which clothes him after his fault (Gen 3.21).

According to Tertullian, this interpretation was also held by the Valentinians: "For in respect of his image (Gen 1.26) (man) must be deemed clayey, that is to say, material, although the Demiurge is not composed of matter; as to his likeness (Gen 1.26), he is animal, for such, too, is the Demiurge. You have two of his constitutional elements. Moreover, a coating of flesh (Gen 3.21) was, as they allege, afterwards placed over the clayey substratum, and it is this tunic of skin which is susceptible of sensation" (*Adv. Val.* 24).

After Origen and Methodus of Olympus, it was principally Gregory of Nyssa who attested this doctrine: "When we see the tunics of skin enclose our nature and these fragile leaves with which we are clothed after we were stripped of the luminous garments which were ours..." (*PG 44, 1184B*). Similarly, in the *Great Catechism*: "When the earliest of mankind let themselves be induced to what is forbidden and were thereby stripped of that primal blessed condition that Lord clothed them, he gave skin tunics to his first-formed creatures (...) I am convinced that this mortal condition, reserved until then for the creature deprived of reason was, from henceforth, applied to men (...)" (*Great Catechism, VIII, 4*). These tunics of skin are 'a bodily covering' which is added to the true and pure nature of man, and entails the inevitability of generation, nourishment, and sleep, etc; we will be freed from it (...) at death! In *On Melitius* Gregory says: "(Melitius) has put away the coats of skin; the inhabitants of paradise have no need of such garments as these; but he wears the raiment which the purity of his life has woven into a glorious dress" (*PG 46, 861B*).

### NAKEDNESS AND GARMENTS AT BAPTISM

We must mention again the ceremony of baptism which restores the baptized in the state of Adam and Eve in paradise before the fault by making him symbolically take the reverse path: the taking off of ordinary clothes, symbols of the sinful flesh, and, after immersion in the water of regeneration and illumination,

the putting on of the white robe which must be presented immaculate before God's tribunal in anticipation of the recovered celestial garment. "You will plunge into the fountain naked, Zeno of Verona says to the future baptized, but you will arise wearing a celestial robe and a white garment. He who abstains from soiling this garment will possess the kingdom of heaven" (*PL* 11,255). "Clothe all those you see naked (an allusion to "I was naked and you clothed me" in Mt 25.36) out of respect for your incorruptible garment which is Christ; as we have been baptised in Christ, we have all clothed ourselves with Christ" (Gal 3.27) says Gregory of Nazianzus (*Sermon on the Holy Baptism*, *PL* 36,359).

### THE ICONOGRAPHY OF ADAM AND EVE IN PARADISE

Though paintings of the creation and paradise abound, it is curious that a theological doctrine as ancient and as universally widespread as that of Adam's divesting of his garments of innocence and immortality by the manducation of the fruit is only reflected in very late and localized depictions. A few ancient mosaics in churches in Syria (5th c.) depict Adam dressed and naming the animals, but there he is portrayed as are also David or the Good Shepherd under the guise of Orpheus charming nature. To my knowledge, the only examples of the theme occur in a series of paintings on the walls of three Roumanian churches in Moldavia, constructed in the 16th century: Arbore (1541), Voronetz (1547), and Sucevitza (1596). 1) Adam is created naked but 2) is magnificently clothed when put in paradise and 3) when naming the animals, 4) naked again for the creation of Eve, and 5) Adam and Eve are clothed when in paradise and 6) about to eat the fruit, but 7) naked again with a thick girdle of leaves around their thighs after eating and 8) when driven out of paradise (see my article 'Thèmes antignostiques dans l'iconographie', 1979, p. 223-230).

### CONCLUSION: THE TEACHING OF THE TEXTS

The purpose of this chapter was to show that two essential themes of Christian theology: the theme of the Devil or Satan making man sin out of envy and condemn himself out of pride, and the theme of the paradisiac garments of glory, light, immortality and innocence supplemented by the themes of the tunics of skin and the theme of the baptismal robe — the nuptial robe should be added —

are derived from the reversal of the gnostic exegesis of the paradise myth via Jewish then Christian counter-exegesis.

Before counter-exegesis, for the Jews, the serpent was just an animal endowed with speech, and for the gnostics, he concealed the Saviour Jesus. According to counter-exegesis, on the contrary, the serpent is Sammael or Satan, i.e. in fact the God of Genesis under another name.

Before the counter-exegesis, Adam and Eve became aware that they were naked through eating the fruit. According to counter-exegesis, they became naked.



**Chapter 9**

**THE PROBLEM OF THE SCRIPTURES,  
THE SUPREME GOD, THE DEVIL AND JESUS  
IN THE CLEMENTINE HOMILIES**

But deliver us from the Evil One  
(‘Our Father’, Mt 6.13)

The Pseudo-Clementine writings, especially the *Homilies*, like the *Dialogue* between the Christian Justin and the Jew Tryphon, but at an earlier stage in Christian problematics, are excellent examples of the discussions which were taking place between the gnostics, on the one hand, and the Jews or Christians, on the other.

Although relatively late in date in their definitive form, the *Homilies* give a fairly faithful picture of earlier documents. Their major interest resides in the fact that the problems are posed and discussed whereas the other gnostic, Jewish or Christian writings usually only affirm solutions which the author wanted to impose in an authoritarian and unsubstantiated way. For this reason they deserve more attention than they are usually given.

The setting contrasts Simon Magus, ‘the father of all heresies’ according to the unanimous opinion of the Church Fathers, with his homonym or double Simon Peter, the defender of all orthodoxies. Despite his bias in favour of Peter, the author (or authors) often only manages to prove him right by loopholes or by making the assumed audience proclaim a victory which is far from convincing to the modern reader.

The fundamental problem which the two Simons discuss is the unicity of God, to be more exact, whether the supreme god is different from the Jewish god, as Simon claims or whether he is identical, as Peter asserts.

But if the Jewish god is the supreme god as Peter affirms, and not the Devil as Simon asserts, “where does the Evil One come from?”, Simon asks Peter. The latter admits he is unable to answer because the Scriptures are silent on the subject.

The Scriptures are in fact the ‘theological arena’ from which both adversaries draw their arguments. Not only the Old Testament which, to contradict Simon,

Peter is forced to recognize contains both truth and falsehood, but also the New Testament, where Simon points out contradictions in Jesus' own sayings, which is very embarrassing for Peter as he considers Jesus to be the true prophet who would have already revealed himself in the forms and names of Adam and Moses.

The four problems : the unicity of God, the origin of Satan, the truth of the Scriptures, the identity of Jesus, are logically connected and therefore more or less intermingled in the texts we are going to quote.

### THE CREATOR IS NOT THE SUPREME GOD

Simon today, Peter announces, is, as he arranged, prepared to come before all, and show from the Scriptures that He who made the heaven and the earth and all things in them, is not the supreme god, but that there is another, unknown and unspeakable, as being in a manner God of gods. (*Hom. III,2*)

His objective is contrasted with Peter's :

But we can easily show many passages from these same Scriptures to prove that He who made the world alone is God, and that there is no other beside Him. Whatever opinion you defend, you will always find ready-made answers in the Scriptures on any subject you choose. (*Hom. III, 10*)

### TRUTH AND FALSEHOOD IN THE SCRIPTURES

The Scriptures, from which each one claims to draw his truth about God, therefore pose a problem.

The problem for Peter is not so much to distinguish between true and false pericopes, — those in favour of his thesis are true, the others are false —, but rather to explain why God mixed up truth and falsehood in a Scripture inspired by himself. The answer is: in order to test the 'worthy' who will know how to distinguish between them, and the 'unworthy' who will not.

And conversely, the problem for Simon will be to explain why an evil, perverse god, the Jewish god, was able to display the faults and crimes he had committed in a Scripture he inspired. Simon will say that it was against his will and by another power (obviously that of the supreme god) that he did so (*Hom. III, 40*).

In any case, and this will favour Peter's defence, the Scriptures contradict themselves.

The paradise narrative and the opening chapters of Genesis contain numerous examples of such contradictions :

How do they contradict themselves?, Simon asks.— You say, Peter answers, that Adam was created blind (since by eating the fruit his eyes opened). This is not exact, for God would not have shown a blind man a tree by forbidding him to eat from it.— It is Adam's spirit that God blinded, Simon says.— How could Adam be blind even in spirit, when before tasting the tree, with the consent of his creator, he gave each animal its proper name?, Peter retorts.— If Adam possessed the science, how it is that he did not foresee that the serpent was going to deceive his wife?, Simon objects.— If Adam lacked foresight, how could he have imposed on his sons, at their birth, names in accordance with their future destiny?, Peter retorts. He called his first son Cain, a word which means 'jealousy' and it was indeed out of jealousy that he killed his brother Abel, whose name signifies 'bereavement' for it was Abel, the first man to be killed, whom his parents mourned. And if Adam, who was only the work of God possessed foresight, all the more reason the God who had created him! And there is another lie in this phrase from the Scriptures : "God reflects, as it is said about the man who uses his reasoning because of his ignorance!" And again : "The Lord tempted Abraham to see if he would persevere". Similarly : "Let us go down and see if they act in accordance with the outcry that has risen up to me : except, as far as I know!" To avoid expanding indefinitely on the subject, all the words that impute God with ignorance or some other weakness, being refuted by other words expressing the contrary, are suspected of falseness. (*Hom.* III,42-43)

### THE TESTIMONY OF JESUS

Nevertheless, according to Simon, Jesus himself distinguishes between the supreme god and the creator

And that Peter does not really believe even the doctrines proclaimed by his teacher is evident, for he proclaims doctrines opposite to his. For he said to someone, as I learn, "Call me not good, for one is good". Now, in speaking of the good one, he no longer speaks of that just one, whom the Scriptures proclaim, who kills and makes alive, kills those who sin, and makes alive those who live according to His will (Deut 32.34). But that he did not really call Him who is the framer of the world good, is plain to anyone who can reflect. For the framer of the world was known to Adam whom He had made, and to Enoch who pleased Him, and to Noah who was seen to be just by Him; likewise to Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob; also to Moses, and the people, and the whole world. But, Jesus, the teacher of Peter himself, came and said, "No one knows the Father except the Son, as no

one knows even the Son except the Father, and those to whom the Son may wish to reveal Him" (Mt 11.27). If, then, it was the Son himself who was present, it was from the time of his appearance that he began to reveal to those to whom he wishes, Him who was unknown to all. And thus the Father was unknown to all who lived before him, and could not be He who was known to all. (*Hom. XVII, 4*)

Another argument, in the next Homily, reaches the same conclusion :

At once, then, asks Peter, state to me whether you maintain that the framer of the world is the same as the lawgiver or not? If, then, he is the lawgiver, he is just; but if he is just, he is not good. But if he is not good, then it was another that Jesus proclaimed, when he said, "Do not call me good; for one is good, the Author who is in the heavens" (Mt 19.17). (*Hom. XVIII,1*)

### EVEN JESUS CONTRADICTS HIMSELF

The commentators usually discern Marcion's doctrine in these passages from the *Homilies* and they are right. But this doctrine was not invented by Marcion since it is found in the Gospels and is, as a result, even earlier. In the Gospels, however, it is sometimes formally professed and sometimes concealingly refuted or, if one prefers, sometimes concealingly professed and formally refuted, which Simon does not hesitate to underline :

In saying this, Jesus is consistent not even with himself. For sometimes by other utterances, taken from the Scriptures, he presents God as being terrible and just, saying "Fear not him who kills the body, but can do nothing to the soul; but fear Him who is able to cast both body and soul into the gehenna of fire, yea, I say unto you, fear Him" (Mt 10.28). But that he asserted that He is really to be feared as being a just God, to whom he says those who receive injustice cry, is shown in a parable of which he gives the interpretation, saying: "If, then, the unjust judge did so, because he was continually entreated, how much more will the Father avenge those who cry to Him day and night? Or do you think that, because he bears long with them, he will not do it? Yea, I say to you, He will do it, and that speedily" (Lk 18.6). Now he who speaks of God as an avenging and rewarding God, presents Him as naturally just, and not as good. Moreover, Jesus gives thanks to the Lord of heaven and earth (Mt 11.25). But if He is Lord of heaven and earth, He is acknowledged to be the framer of the world, and if framer, then he is just. When, therefore, he sometimes calls Him good and sometimes just, he is not consistent with himself in this point. (*Hom. XVII,5*)

Peter is unable to apply his doctrine of true and false pericopes to Jesus' sayings, so his reply can only be disappointing : "Our Lord Jesus Christ, he says, being a prophet of the truth, only made very brief declarations about the points concerning the truth"? When he should in fact have done the opposite!

### THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN THE CREATOR AND THE LEGISLATOR

Marcion's doctrine, contrasting a just god with a good god, is confirmation that some rehabilitation of the Jewish god in comparison with the gnostic Yaldabaoth had already taken place. A new stage has been reached when Simon affirms that "the supreme god sent two gods, one of whom is he who made the world, and the other he who gave the Law" (*Hom.* III,2). Unfortunately, no comment is made on this distinction between the creator of the world and the Jewish legislator, it remains that both were sent by the supreme god and therefore receive a positive assessment.

### A CHOICE BETWEEN TWO KINGDOMS

As for Peter, he only manages to restore the Jewish god to the rank of supreme god by a skilful transposition which places under his authority both the good god and the evil god of the gnostics or the Marcionites, i.e. both the Father, supreme god, and himself, creator and legislator :

The prophet of truth, says Peter, who appeared on earth (= Jesus), taught us that the Maker and God of all (= the Jewish god as supreme God) gave two kingdoms to two kings, good and evil; granting to the evil (the Jewish god) the sovereignty over the present world along with law, so that he should have the right to punish those who act unjustly; but to the good (the Saviour) He gave the eternal age to come. He made each man free with the power to give himself up to whatsoever he prefers, either to the present evil or the future good. Those men who choose the present have power to be rich to revile in luxury, to indulge in pleasures, and to do whatever they can. For they will possess none of the future goods (Lk 16.25). But those who have determined to accept the blessing of the future reign have no right to regard as their own the things that are here (Acts 4.32 sqq), since they belong to a foreign king, with the exception only of bread and water and of those things procured with sweat to maintaining life, for it is not lawful for them to commit suicide, and also one garment (Mk 6.9), for they are not permitted to go naked on account of the allseeing Heaven. (*Hom.* XV,7 see XX,2 5-6)

The present age, surrendered or rather granted to the evil king (Lk 4.6) by the supreme god, is identical with the gnostic world below, the material world, and the evil king is therefore the Jewish creator god, from whom counter-exegesis withdraws the creation in order to transfer or rather preserve it for the same Jewish god as the supreme god. The age to come is the transposition of the gnostic world above according to the Jewish eschatology of the end of time, and the good king of the age to come is a reduction to the dimensions of the Jewish messiah of the gnostic saviour, the good god of Marcion and, finally, the supreme god. The author of the *Homilies* is more explicit about his identity elsewhere :

One day the transient king (the Devil) approached our king, the king of piety (Jesus). He did him no harm for that is forbidden, but he exhorted him and tried to persuade him. Addressing himself therefore in his capacity as king of the present things to the king of the things to come, he said : "All the kingdoms of this world are under my authority; likewise the gold, the silver and all the pleasures of this world are within my power, so kneel and adore me and I will give you all". He said this because he knew if (our king) had adored him he would have had power against him and would thus have deprived him of the glory and the kingdom to come. But our king who knows all (...) answered : "It is written, Fear the Lord your God and serve only him". (Lk 4.1-13) (*Hom.* VIII,21)

The requisite condition for participating in the future age or the world above, is total renunciation of the present age or world below. The transformation of the Jewish god into the devil, to whom the world below "was granted" (Lk 4.6) — since its creation was withdrawn from him —, compels the author of the *Homilies* to maintain the gnostic renunciation of the world below, whereas his establishment in the rank of supreme god compels him to reject the other gnostic requirement, which is to not procreate — since it is no longer "for the archon" —, as a result he recommends marriage (*Hom.* III,68). The obligation to renounce all worldly possessions is of course mitigated by the obligation to share one's possessions with one's brothers (*Hom.* III,49). (See *Sacrifice et sacerdoce*, pp. 95-163).

### THE EVIL ONE EXISTS, BUT WHO IS HE?

The evil prince of the present world is also simply called elsewhere in the *Homilies*, as in the New Testament on twelve occasions, "the Evil One" (*ho ponéros*). In answer to Simon's question "Do you profess, yes or no, that the prince of evil exists?", Peter replies, "I cannot deny my Master's word. This is why I admit that the Evil One exists, for the Master who says the truth about all things, has on many occasions affirmed his existence". And Peter goes on to quote: the

temptation in the desert (Lk 4.5-8) (interpreted *supra* by Simon of the Jewish god), the remark "If Satan is divided against himself..." (Mt 12.26), the words "I watched Satan fall from heaven like a flash of lightning" (Lk 10.18), the explanation "The enemy who sowed the weeds is the devil" (Mt 13.38-39), the warning, "Do not give the Evil One the chance" (*agraphon*), the recommendation "Let your word be either : yes, yes or no, no, anything else comes from the Evil One" (Mt 5.13); the request in the Lord's Prayer "Save us from the Evil One" (Mt 16.13), the maxim "Go into the outer darkness that the Father has prepared for the devil and his angels" (Mt 25.41). If the author of the *Homilies* had been acquainted with the Johannine writings, he would have added the prayer "I am not asking you to take them out of the world, but I ask you to protect them from the Evil One" (Jn 17.15), as also the declaration in 1 Jn "The entire world lies within the power of the Evil One" (1 Jn 5.9). The evil king of the present age or the Evil One or the prince (= *archon*) of evil (*Hom.* XIX, 2,6,8,14,16,17; XX, 9) is assuredly the same as the prince (= *archon*) of this world in the Gospel of Jn (12.31; 14.30; 16.11), the prince of demons in the Synoptic Gospels (Mt 9.34; 12.24 plls), the prince of the powers of the air in Ephesians 2.2; he is the leader of the "princes of this age" (1 Co 2.6,8) and of the "princes, authorities and cosmic powers of this present darkness" (Eph 6.12), the Evil One whose flaming arrows must be quenched (Eph 6.16).

Peter having "the good grace to recognize the existence of the Evil, according to the Scriptures" finds himself in an awkward position when Simon asks: "Tell us how the Evil One has been made, by whom, and why?". Peter answers: "Pardon me Simon, if I do not dare to affirm what has not been written. But if you say that it has been written, prove it. But if, since it has not been written, you cannot prove it, why should we run the risk in stating our opinions in regard to what has not been written?" (*Hom.* XIX,3). Simon thinks this answer is an evasion because he says: "... there are some satisfactory methods which prove to you what is sought no less effectively than the Scriptures. For instance, must it not be the case that the Evil One, who you assert exists, is either originated or unoriginated?" (*Hom.* XIX,3). This is where, as we know, all the stakes between absolute dualism or mitigated dualism lie, whereby the Manichaeans will, among other points, distinguish themselves from the gnostics, and which will still be the cause of dissension among the Cathar schools ten centuries later. We shall not enter into the details of this debate as to whether the Evil One is a created being or was begotten, or emanated from God, or was formed by a mixture, or born from an unmixed void and without God's will, or created by himself, or relative or eternal (*Hom.* XIX,9). To do so would be to stray beyond what concerns us here. We shall conclude this investigation on the Evil One with the following remark by Peter to Simon, which gives a fairly good summary of the contents: "I perceive from what you say at the commencement that you are striving after nothing else than to subject God (the biblical god) to blame as being the prince of evil" (*Hom.*

XIX, 6). And this is indeed what he is, not only for the gnostics but partly in the New Testament as well.

### ADAM, MOSES AND JESUS

One last point in the Clementines *Homilies* must hold our attention : their christology or doctrine of the true and unique prophet "who is the one, who has changed his forms and his names from the beginning of the world, and so reappeared again and again in the world until, coming upon his own time and being anointed by the mercy of God in reward for his works and sufferings, he shall enjoy rest for ever" (*Hom.* III, 20). This unique prophet took the form of Adam, Moses and Jesus in succession:

— Adam, who came from God's own hands, who received the breath of life, i.e. the great and holy spirit of foresight from this God — he could not have committed a transgression for the spirit would have sinned with him! (*Hom.* III, 17).

— Moses, who transmitted God's Law orally — but this Law was falsified by those who set it down later in writing! (*Hom.* III, 47)

— Jesus, who "did not proclaim himself to be God, but with reason pronounced blessed him who called Him the Son of that God who has arranged the universe" (*Hom.* XVI).

Jesus is therefore at the same time not only the New Adam of whom Paul speaks (1 Co 15.45) and a prophet like Moses, in whose guise he is often presented in the Gospels as we saw, for example, in the rewritings of the Feeding narratives, but also Adam himself, and Moses himself, who were only the first two forms he took. This is where the Jewish-Christian conception diverges from the gnostic conception of the saviour who appeared as a serpent in Paradise and as a human being during the reign of Tiberius.

The Gospel can only therefore repeat or reiterate the true Mosaic law : "Not one letter will pass from the Law", says Jesus, "I have come not to abolish but to fulfill"; "You have heard that it was said to those of ancient times (...), but I say unto you (...)" (Mt 5.17,18,2.7-28, etc.). This is a truly Jewish reaction to the doctrine Marcion professed, which is only the pure gnostic doctrine : "Jesus came from that Father who is above the god that made the world (...) to abolish the prophets and the law, and all the works of that god who made the world and whom he (Marcion) also calls Cosmocrator" (*Adv. H.* I,27,2), a doctrine which the Johannine school also professed by simply substituting "the god who made the world" by its Christian equivalent 'the devil' : "The Son of God was revealed to destroy the works of the devil" (1 Jn 3.8).

The mosaic Law, which the Gospel only restores to its former purity, only reiterates in turn "the religion of salvation transmitted the first to mankind"

(*Hom. IX,19*). Adam transmitted it to his children, and if they had remained faithful, "there would have been no need either of Moses or Jesus". This eternal and immutable religion of salvation is the key to the kingdom; it was entrusted to the scribes and the Pharisees sitting on Moses' throne, but they stop those who want to enter and do not enter themselves (*Gospel of Thomas 39; Mt 23.13*). And "this key, which alone can open the gate of life and alone enables to enter into eternal life", is 'knowledge' (gnosis), assuredly the same that Adam acquired by eating the fruit. Salvation is not dependent on the redeeming death of Christ, contrary to what Paul believes, but solely, as Paul also asserts elsewhere, on faith in the true doctrine, a faith which encompasses the practice of good works prescribed by this doctrine : "... eternal punishment awaits you because you entertain different opinions from theirs, and deny the established truth", says Peter to the pagan Festus (*Hom. XV,1*).

As the teaching Moses and Jesus transmitted is the same, God favourably receives the man who believes in either one. Therefore, neither the Hebrews for ignoring Jesus, nor the believers among the Gentiles for ignoring Moses, are condemned. Besides, if someone receives the grace of knowing both at once, he will be counted as blessed before God (*Hom. VIII, 6-7*).

#### CONCLUSION : THE TEACHING OF THE TEXTS

These are the general outlines of the problems raised in the *Clementine Homilies* by confronting gnosticism with Judaism. The solutions each side brought varied and changed in answer to the new objections of their opponents, though they never succeeded in being entirely satisfactory for no one. One thing is clear : the identification of the Jewish creator god with the Father, the gnostic and hermetic supreme god, had as its counterpart the converse identification of the same Jewish creator god, prince of this world, the evil king of the present age, with his loyal servant, instructed by him with thankless missions in past ages, the devil, Satan.

Until now the heresiologists had placed the Pseudo-Clementine writers and editors among the Jewish-Christians with the Nazarenes and the Elkesaites, as if what they called Jewish-Christianity was a Christianity incompletely and imperfectly freed from its Jewish origins. The evolution might have worked towards this end for some converts, but the beliefs themselves are not to be set on the point of the transition from Judaism to Christianity and then to gnosticism, but on that of the rejudaization of gnosticism beyond the phase where the Christianity of the great Church came to a halt. So-called Jewish-Christianity is in reality Christian-Jewish-Gnosticism.



## Chapter 10

# CONDEMNATION AND REHABILITATION OF THE JEWISH GOD IN Gnostic MYTHS

I am God and there is no other  
(Is 45.21)

### I. INTRODUCTION

As we have just seen, the example of the *Clementine Homelies* reveals a wide range of opinions with regard to the Old Testament god. He was sometimes or simultaneously considered as the unique and supreme god, or as an inferior god creator of the world and author of the Mosaic law, or as the Evil One, the devil, Satan.

More precisely, Peter who represents Jewish and Christian orthodoxy for the author, considers him in a conscious and avowed way as the unique god, the supreme god, creator of the world and legislator through Moses, and in an unconscious and unavowed way as the king of the present age, the archon or prince of this world, the Evil One, the devil or Satan.

Simon, to whom were ascribed in turn and indiscriminantly different gnostic opinions, always considers him as distinct from the supreme god, though sometimes as the Evil One, sometimes as the just god contrasted with a good god, sometimes as two distinct gods sent by the Father, one to create the world, the other to give the Law.

These opposing or contradictory conceptions were almost incomprehensible before the discovery of the Nag Hammadi codices. The myths related by these texts explain them.

The *Hypostasis of the Archons* teaches us how the biblical god, because he claimed to be the one and only god, was cast into Tartarus where he became the devil under the names of Yaldabaoth, Samael or Saklas and furthermore, how, under the name of his son Sabaoth, assumed to have made *metanoia*, i.e. converted, was exalted to the seventh heaven and made master of the world in the same position from which he had fallen.

The writing *On the Origin of the World* is a step forward for the rehabilitation of the Jewish god. His descent into the Abyss in punishment for his blasphemy is deferred to the end of time so that Sophia, Wisdom, his mother, when she has

exalted him and set him on her right under the name of her son Sabaoth, can let him sit enthroned a second time on her left under the name of Yaldabaoth, the creator god.

As the texts we are going to quote were composed rather late in time, and display, like the paradise narratives earlier, inconsistencies and contradictions resulting from a mixture of ancient and new viewpoints, in order to understand them fully it is important to ascertain from which strand each element comes and to do this, we must turn to the hidden problems the myths wanted to solve.

At the outset the problem is not one of theogony, i.e. the origin and nature of supernatural beings, in particular of the Jewish god, but a problem of anthropogony or anthropology, i.e. the origin and nature of man. This problem is posed by the assertions in the opening chapters of Genesis.

### GOD SAID "LET US MAKE MAN IN OUR IMAGE"

The first text to examine is Gen 1.26 : "God said, Let us make man in our image and our likeness". The words "Let us make" indicate that the Jewish creator god is speaking and that he does not work alone. Those on whom he calls to fashion man with him are his 'Powers' or 'Forces'. They are distinct from him, sometimes in a purely virtual way like the faculties are distinguished from the soul or the members from the body, sometimes in a real way, personalized as sons, directly begotten by him for he is androgynous. Through these Powers or sons therefore he governs the world. For this reason they are called 'governors' or 'archons', and as according to astrology the planets govern fate, *heimarménē*, the archons and their father, their chief, are identified with them. These seven Powers of the seven heavens of chaos receive the same more or less deformed names given to the Jewish god in the Bible : Iao, Adonaios, Sabaoth, Eloaios, together with Oraios, and Astaphaios. The name of the father, Yaldabaoth, is clearly intended as a copy of 'YHWH sabaoth'. As the Septuagint version of the Psalms renders YHWH sabaoth by *Kurios tôn dunameōn*, "Lord of the powers", it is thought that Yaldabaoth should be interpreted as "Genitor (*iald*) of the powers ((*s*)*abaoth*)" in accordance with his other designation as 'archgenitor'. To this name will be added those of Samael (the blind) and Saklas (the fool), the meaning of which will become clearer later on. In addition to his seven powers, sons or planetary archons, Yaldabaoth also engendered twelve more, the twelve signs of the zodiac, and created a court of angels who people the seven heavens. Only the archons (*archontes*) or powers (*dunameis*), also called authorities (*exousiai*), are concerned by the invitation "let us make man in our image and likeness".

### "IN THE IMAGE OF GOD HE CREATED HIM"

The second text to consider is encountered in Genesis in the verse immediately following the one we have just commented on. It indicates the realization of his intention : "And God created man in his image : in the image of God he created him" (Gen 1.27). Here the word 'God' is taken by the gnostics to mean two different persons. In the phrase "God created man in his image", God clearly designates the Jewish creator god who has just spoken, but in the phrase "in the image of God he created him", God designates the supreme god. Man modelled by the archons out of the dust of the earth (Gen 2.7) will therefore be both in the image of his creators and in the image of the supreme god.

The problem is therefore to explain how the creator and his powers, who had only created angels and animals until then, had seen not the invisible god which is obviously impossible, but his image. The explanation given is that they would have seen the reflection of his image in the waters of the world below.

### BLASPHEMY OUT OF IGNORANCE AND THE APPEARANCE OF THE IMAGE

Now there must be a reason for the appearance of this image or at least a pretext, since everything happens according to the will and plan of the world above. The pretext will be the claim of the Jewish god to be the only god. His affirmation "I am God and no one else", repeated in the Bible in different forms, in particular in Isaiah chapter 45 (v. 6,18,21,22), and supposed uttered since the beginning of the world, will require and provoke a denial. In the first place this will be a voice from the upper world of Incorruptibility and attributed to Sophia or her daughter Zoe, saying "You are mistaken, Samael"; next, it will be the introduction of a ray of light in the darkness below in confirmation of this voice; the ray of light will make the reflection of the divine image appear in the waters, i.e. the image of the image of God; from this image the demiurge will mould man. The visible image of the invisible Father (Col 1.15), the model of the reflection in the waters, will be called Primordial Man or the Son of Man.

### BLASPHEMY OUT OF MALICE AND PRECIPITATION INTO TARTARUS

Onto the first myth another myth has been grafted. Some gnostics, influenced by their discussions with the Jews like those related in the *Clementine Homilies*, came to acknowledge that beside the envious, bloodthirsty creator the Bible also depicts an admittedly extravagant, but moral and just legislator. The contrast between the two figures made it difficult to accept that the same person was in-

volved. But to rehabilitate the one implies condemning the other. The affirmation "I am God and there is no other" is therefore reinterpreted. What was simply a manifestation of ignorance — since the archon was sometimes made to utter it when he opened his eyes at birth, i.e. when he became aware of his own existence — becomes, especially through his insane and arrogant repetition after the denial from above, a deliberate and voluntary blasphemy which deserves punishment. The exclusion of Sophia's abortion from the pleroma because it was an abortion, and his banishment below the veil separating the world above from the world below, reinterpreted, becomes his precipitation into the Abyss or Tartarus by an angel of fire. In the Jewish and Christian traditions this myth will become Satan's expulsion from heaven by the archangel Michael (Rev 12.7-9).

### PARTIAL REHABILITATION UNDER THE NAME OF SABAOOTH

The Jewish god under his negative aspects therefore becomes the devil to enable his rehabilitation under his positive aspects. This rehabilitation is effected by the myth of the exaltation to the seventh heaven, in the place left vacant by his fall, of his son Sabaoth, no doubt chosen for this glorious role from among the other archons possessing divine names because it is he whom the seraphim in Isaiah's vision proclaim thrice holy (6.1-3).

Sabaoth is exalted to the seventh heaven because he made *metanoïa*, i.e. converted. He turned from his father Yaldabaoth and his mother Matter towards Sophia, the Wisdom from above, and her daughter Zoe, Life. He becomes the model for those who are capable of conversion, i.e. those who are psychics like himself — the hylics or materials are by nature incapable of conversion, and the pneumatics or spirituals have no need to convert. His *metanoïa* was truly a conversion, according to the proper meaning of the Greek word, and not, according to the meaning it will often be given later, repentance, for Sabaoth has no fault for which he can be reproached.

### PRECIPITATION AND EXALTATION DO NOT BELONG TO THE PRIMITIVE MYTH

After Yaldabaoth's blasphemy, the identical place of Sabaoth's *metanoïa* in the *Hypostasis of the Archons* and *On the Origins of the World*, on the one hand, and Sophia's *metanoïa* in the *Apocryphon of John*, on the other, enables us to assume that Sabaoth's *metanoïa* is a reinterpretation in favour of the Jewish god of Sophia's earlier conversion, when she becomes aware that her son, produced by her irresistible urge to procreate, is only an abortion, and that he proclaims himself equal to the Father. Imitating the Aeons of the pleroma who had restored her below them in an intermediary heaven lying between the world above and the

world below, Sophia installs Sabaoth beneath her in the highest place he could occupy in the world below, the place from which his father Yaldabaoth has just been expelled.

The substitution of Yaldabaoth, enslaved in Tartarus, by his son Sabaoth who inherits, at this precise moment in the history of the world before the creation of man, his power and his functions, introduces some confusion in the sequel of the myth and forces the reader of the *Hypostasis of the Archons* to reinterpret it by redistributing the roles. Whereas in the *Apocryphon of John* which ignores the substitution of the father by the son, the myths of the creation of man and paradise are conducted by the same chief archon who has already created the heavens with their angels and truly represents the creator god of the Bible, in the *Hypostasis of the Archons*, where Yaldabaoth is deprived of his power, it is the archons in a body who act and say, for example : "Let us make man...". When, following the biblical narrative, the chief archon acts alone and inbreathes into Adam the breath of life which makes him 'a living soul', the text reads : "He breathed", leaving the reader to guess whether "he" refers to Sabaoth, the substituted one, or to Yaldabaoth, the real creator. In fact it does concern Sabaoth, the psychic who makes man psychic, whereas in the *Apocryphon of John*, by breathing the breath of life received from Sophia and so depriving himself, Yaldabaoth makes man a pneumatic. The reinterpretations of the myth are proof, if one were necessary, that the *metanoia* of the Jewish god and his subsequent rehabilitation are secondary and later episodes.

This is even more obvious in *On the Origins of the World*. Here the Sabaoth episode interrupts the narrative as an interpolation. After answering the boasting of the Archgenitor, the passage reads : "Pistis-Sophia (Faith-Wisdom) revealed the image of her greatness in the waters. And then she withdrew up to her light", and after the Sabaoth episode, the narrative continues : "When the Archgenitor saw the likeness of Pistis in the waters (...)" (*Orig. World*, 103,29-32 and 107, 17-19). The Archgenitor is not thrust into Tartarus as in the *Hypostasis of the Archons*, his punishment is deferred until the end of time, and though the myth undergoes significant reinterpretations and embellishments, he is always the one who says to the archons "Let us make man (...)".

### DUAL REHABILITATION OF THE JEWISH GOD AS LEGISLATOR AND CREATOR

The author of *On the Origin of the World* therefore refuses the precipitation of the Jewish god in Tartarus through Sophia's breath but, as there must be someone in Tartarus, an anonymous and mysterious 'troublemaker' of the six higher heavens of chaos (*Orig. World*, 102,32-34) is thrown by the same breath from Pistis. This reinterpretation might be at the same time a reinterpretation of the

episodes of the Titans or Typhoe in Hesiod's theogony, since the author shows a liking for Greek and other mythologies.

Whereas in the *Hypostasis of the Archons* Sophia places her daughter (Life, Spiritual Eve) on the right of Sabaoth and the angel of wrath on his left, while Yaldabaoth is relegated to the bottom of the abyss from which he will only intervene to do evil — for example, destroy humanity by the flood —, in *On the Origin of the World* Pistis-Sophia places Sabaoth on her right and Yaldabaoth on her left, from whence he pursues his work of creation. The Jewish god is thus rehabilitated — in so far as he can be for the gnostics — both as a psychic legislator (Sabaoth) and as a hylic creator (Yaldabaoth). The transformation of the myth only explains that the legislator supplants the creator, that the right is called justice and the left injustice, and especially that Yaldabaoth is so jealous of his son as to become angry and "engenders death out of his own death" (*Orig. World*, 106, 23-25).

#### THE OTHER NAMES OF YALDABAOOTH : SAKLAS AND SAMMAEL

In addition to his mysterious name Yaldabaoth and his designations as the chief or first archon, or archgenitor, the Jewish god also receives the names of Samael or Sammael and Saklas in our texts.

Saklas means 'the fool', and this qualification is sufficiently justified by the repetition of his blasphemy after an initial denial (*Hyp. Ar.* 95,7). In the *Gospel of the Egyptians* (NH III,56,22 sqq.) and the *Trimorphic Protennoia* (NH XIII, 39, 13 sqq.) Saklas becomes the first name of the archon.

Sam(m)ael in our texts is interpreted in two ways: 'the blind god' or 'the god of the blind'. Both are explained by the 'angelic' last syllable 'el, which originally signified 'god' and the Aramaic root *SM'*. The first interpretation is derived from the meaning of the simple form of the verb 'to lose one's sight' (Samael), hence the affirmation "his thought became blind" (*Hyp. Ar.*, 87,4), and the spiritual blindness often noted of the archons. The second interpretation is derived from the meaning of the intensive form 'to blind' (Sammael), clearly an allusion to YHWH's words to Isaiah, "Make the minds of this people dull, and stop their ears, and shut their eyes so that they may not look with their eyes..." (Is 6.10) which the *Testimony of Truth*, with barely any distorsion of meaning, transposes as "I will make their heart thick, and I will cause their mind to become blind" (*Test. Truth*, 48,9-10), the 'satanic' intention of the Jewish god which the Gospel of John makes Jesus note his accomplishment: "He has blinded their eyes and hardened their heart, so that they might not look with their eyes..." (Jn 12.40). Paul expresses the same formal accusation in "the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers" (2 Co 4.4; 3.15). The theme of the blindness of the Jews is a commonplace in primitive Christianity (Mt 23.16-26; etc.); the healing of the blind occurs more frequently in the gospels and is symbolical in nature. Of

the two explanations of the name the 'blind god' (Samael) and 'the god who blinds' (Sammael), the second seems more characteristic and therefore more primitive — the first is merely a means of emphasizing the ignorance of the demiurge.

In talmudic and post-talmudic literature Sammael will become an important figure: the chief prince of the demons in heaven, the leader of the satans, accuser, seducer, temptor, destroyer, and especially the angel of death — which recalls the creation myth of the latter by Yaldabaoth jealous of Sabaoth or, originally, YHWH envious of Adam — and the rabbis will then derive his name from the root *SM*, 'poison'. Sammael's opponent is the archangel Michael, the defender of Israel (Dan 12.1).

The gnostic Christian compiler of the *Ascension of Isaiah* who introduced Sammael (the intensive form according to the Ethiopian) in an earlier Jewish writing, the *Martyrdom of Isaiah*, by identifying him with Beliar and Satan, may have seen in this name an allusion to the idol (*Semel*) installed by Manasseh in the Temple in Jerusalem (2 Chro 33.15; 2 Kings 21.7), the one whom Ezekiel (8.35) qualified as the 'idol of jealousy', i.e. provoking YHWH's jealousy, the jealous god, though which the gnostics may have understood about YHWH himself, the 'jealous idol'.

This somewhat lengthy introduction will enable us to have a better understanding of the rather difficult texts which should now be quoted. An explanatory heading introduces each paragraph.

## II. THE TEXTS

### 1. THE APOCRYPHON OF JOHN

The author of the *Apocryphon of John* inserts the repentance of Sophia between the blasphemy of her son Yaldabaoth and the appearance of the divine image in the waters. The present narrative results from the fusion of at least two earlier narratives, as the doublet on the boasting of the archon and the two different causes attributed to his mother's repentance show.

#### THE BLASPHEMY OF THE JEWISH GOD OUT OF IGNORANCE AND PRIDE (B 44,9-15)

When he saw the creation above himself and the multitude of angels he had created, Yaldabaoth said to them: "I am a jealous god; besides me there is none other" (Ex 20.5 and Is 45.5-6; 46.9).

#### THE AUTHOR'S COMMENT (B 44,15-18)

By this he intimated to the angels below him that there was another god, for if another god had not existed of whom could he be jealous?

THE REPENTANCE OF HIS MOTHER SOPHIA ASSIMILATED  
WITH THE SPIRIT OF GEN 1.2 (B 44,18-45,5)

Then his mother began to move here and there, when she became aware through the reduction of her own light that she had 'failed' in acting without the consent of her consort.

JOHN THE APOSTLE'S QUESTION AND JESUS' ANSWER (B 45,6-19)  
*(According to Jesus the reason for repentance is not  
the reduction of Sophia's light but her son's blasphemy)*

I asked: "Lord, what does it mean : she moved here and there". Jesus smiled, and said : "Do not think that it was over the waters as Moses said (Gen 1.2). Indeed no, when she saw her son's deficiency and blasphemy, she made *metanoia* (she repented); tossed around in the darkness of ignorance she was ashamed and not daring to return (to the pleroma), she went to and fro. This 'toing and froing' is what to move here and there means".

DOUBLET OF YALDABAOTH'S BOASTING (B 45,19-46, 9)

When he had received power from his mother, the conceited (archon) did not know that numerous aeons existed above her. He thought his mother existed alone. When he saw the large crowd of angels he had created, he boasted in front of them (*Here one would expect a repetition of the blasphemy*).

DOUBLET OF SOPHIA'S REPENTANCE (B 46,9-15)

But when the mother knew that the aborted foetus of darkness was deficient because her consort had not consented, she made *metanoia* (repented), and wept bitterly.

PARTIAL REHABILITATION OF THE MOTHER (B 46,15-47,13)  
*(two traditions are intermingled)*

Her brothers (the aeons of the pleroma) heard the call of her *metanoia* (repentance) and interceded for her. The holy and invisible Spirit (the supreme god) consented. After his consent, the invisible Spirit poured over her a spirit from the pleroma. Her consort descended towards her to redress her fault, and decided to do it by granting her a forethought (*pronoia*). But she was not taken back to the place on high that was hers (in the pleroma) because of the great ignorance which she had shown; she will remain in the ninth heaven until she has atoned for her fault.

AFTER THE ADDITION OF SOPHIA'S REPENTANCE AND ITS DOUBLET,  
THE ANSWER FROM ABOVE TO THE ARCHON'S BLASPHEMY (B 47,14-18)  
And a voice came from on high : "There is the Man and the son of Man". The chief archon, Yaldabaoth, heard it (...).

## 2. THE HYPOSTASIS OF THE ARCHONS

As the prime goal, indicated by his initial quotation from Ephesians 6.12, is to enable the receiver of his treatise to combat the archons, the last author of the *Hypostasis of the Archons* opens his exposition with the narrative of their creation of man. Their envy and struggle against him began with the appearance of the divine image, i.e. the human image, in the waters. To explain this appearance, the author is obliged to go back to the archon's blasphemy, but his account is only a summary of the detailed revelation of the origin of the archons which he reserves for the end of the treatise. In his 'theogonic' summary at the beginning of the treatise the precipitation of Samael into the Abyss does indeed appear, but Sabaoth is not distinguished from the other archons installed in the seven heavens "each according to his power".

### A. THE THEOGONIC SUMMARY (NH 86,26-87,26)

#### THE CHIEF ARCHON'S BLASPHEMY AND HIS PRECIPITATION INTO THE ABYSS (NH II 86,26-87,11)

I am writing these lines in answer to your question about the nature of the Authorities. Their chief is blind. Because of his power and his ignorance and his arrogance, he said in his bewilderment: "I am God and there is none apart from me!" When he said this, he sinned against the Entirety. And this speech got up to Incorruptibility. Then there was a voice that came forth from Incorruptibility, saying: "You are mistaken, Sammael", a name which means 'the god of the blind'. His thoughts became blind. And, having expelled his power, that is, the blasphemy he had spoken, he was pursued down to chaos and the abyss, his mother, by Pistis Sophia. And she established each of her sons, according to their power, after the pattern of the Aeons that are above, for by proceeding from what is hidden, what is apparent was worked out.

#### THE APPEARANCE OF THE DIVINE IMAGE (NH II,87,12-26)

And Incorruptibility looked down into the regions of the waters. Her image appeared in the waters, and the Authorities of the darkness became enamoured of her (...) The archons took counsel and said, "Come, let us make man from the dust of the earth" (...)

### B. THE THEOGONY (NH II,93,32-96,17)

The theogony strictly speaking opens at the end of the treatise with a question Norea, the sister of Seth, asks the great angel Eleleth, to whom she appeals to free herself from the archons.

NOREA'S QUESTION (NH II,93,32-94,2)

"Lord, teach me about the power of these Authorities : how did they come into being, and by what kind of genesis and of what material, and who created them with their power?"

THE BEGETTING OF THE DEMIURGE BY SOPHIA (NH II,94,2-19)

And the great angel Eleleth, the Understanding, spoke to me : "Within limitless realms (aeons) dwells Incorruptibility. Sophia (Wisdom) who is called Pistis (Faith, *to distinguish her from the lower Sophia of the Jewish god*) wanted to create something alone without her consort, and her product was a counterfeit from heaven. A veil separates what is above from the realms (aeons) which are below; and a shadow came into being beneath the veil, and that shadow became matter and that shadow was pushed aside into a region of chaos and a being was created in the matter, like an aborted foetus assuming the form of that shadow. It was an arrogant animal resembling a lion, androgynous, as I have already said, because it was derived from matter".

THE FIRST BLASPHEMY OF THE JEWISH GOD OUT OF IGNORANCE  
AND SOPHIA'S DENIAL (NH II,94,19-34)

Opening his eyes he saw a vast quantity of matter without limit, and he became arrogant, saying : "I am God and there is none other apart from me". When he said this he sinned against the Entirety. Then a voice came forth from above, from the Supreme Authority : "You are mistaken, Sammael!" which means 'the god of the blind'. And he said : "If someone exists before me, let it become visible to me!". And immediately Sophia stretched forth her finger and introduced light into matter and she pursued it down to the region of chaos, and she returned up to her light. Once again matter was in darkness.

THE CREATION OF THE HEAVENS AND THE PLANETS (THE ARCHONS, HIS SONS)  
(NH II,94,34-95,4)

This Archon, by being androgynous, made himself a vast realm (æon), an extent without limit. And he contemplated creating offspring for himself, and created for himself seven sons, androgynous just like their parent.

THE SECOND BLASPHEMY OF THE JEWISH GOD  
AND HIS PRECIPITATION INTO TARTAROS (NH II,95,4-13)

And he said to his offspring : I am the God of the Entirety. Zoe (Life = Eve) cried out and said : "You are mistaken, Saklas!" — 'the Fool', another name of Yaldabaoth. She breathed into his face and her breath became a fiery angel for him, and that angel bound Yaldabaoth and cast him down into Tartarus below the abyss.

SABAOTH'S *METANOIA* (CONVERSION) (NH II,95,13-18)

Now when his son Sabaoth saw the force of that angel, he made *metanoia* (he converted) : he condemned his father and his mother, matter, he loathed her, but sang songs of praise up to Sophia and her daughter Zoe.

## THE EXALTATION OF SABAOTH IN HEAVEN (NH II,95,19-25)

And Sophia and Zoe caught him up and set him in charge of the seventh heaven, below the veil between the above and the below. And he is called 'god of the powers, Sabaoth', since he is up above the powers of chaos, for Sophia established him.

SABAOTH IS ENTHRONED ACCORDING TO THE VISIONS IN ISAIAH,  
EZEKIEL AND DANIEL (NH II,95,26-31)

Now when these events had come to pass, Sabaoth made himself a huge four-facced chariot of cherubim, and infinitely many angels to serve him, and also harps and lyres.

## SOPHIA GIVES HIM A COUNSELLOR AND A LAWGIVER (NH II,95,31-96,33)

And Sophia took her daughter (Life, Zoe), and had her sit upon his right to teach him about the things that exist in Ogdoad (the eighth heaven), and the angel of wrath she placed upon his left. Since that day his right has been called Life (Zoe) and the left has come to represent injustice.

## YALDABAOTH'S ENVY AND THE CREATION OF DEATH (NH II,96,4-14)

Now when Yaldabaoth saw him in this great splendour, he envied him and the envy became an androgynous product and this was the origin of Envy. And Envy engendered Death; and Death engendered his offspring and gave each of them charge of its heaven. And all the heavens of chaos became full of their multitudes. (*Compare with Wis 2.24 : "But through the devil's envy death entered the world"*).

## 3. ON THE ORIGIN OF THE WORLD

By using, quoting or summarizing writings no longer extant, *On the Origin of the World* develops to a considerable extent the basic pattern followed by the *Apocryphon of John* and the *Hypostasis of the Archons*. This amplification will frequently entail reinterpretations or modifications.

The demiurge's self-awareness is no longer explicitly expressed by a blasphemy. Seeing no one else, he only thinks he exists alone, not that he is the only God. His thought is expressed by a word which is a being, the Word, the creative Word who implements everything it says. And what it says is another being, the Spirit who moves to and fro over the waters. The first blasphemy is replaced by the coming into existence of two other divine figures of the Christian trinity, and

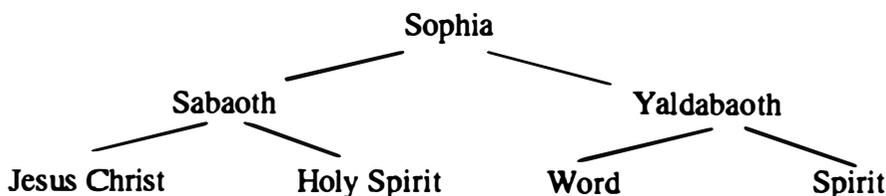
the Spirit is no longer, as in the *Apocryphon of John*, higher Wisdom made hesitant out of shame for his fault, but lower Wisdom, an auxiliary of the demiurge in the creation according to Proverbs 8.22-31.

His boasting and claim to be the only God is only expressed after the begetting of his sons and the creation of the heavens and the earth, which seems more normal. Sophia's verbal denial directly reveals the existence of Immortal Man, his future manifestation in the world as saviour and the annihilation of the Archon and his work at the end of time. Their future return to nothingness will not be the punishment for his blasphemy, but the normal destiny of "what was manifested outside the truth".

Sabaoth's *metanoia* is no longer caused by the power of the angel who cast his father into Tartarus, but by the voice and revelation of Sophia. His installation in the seventh heaven is described with a wealth of details; the author clearly does not wish to ridicule Sabaoth by trashy splendour, but give a lofty idea of his greatness, however relative it might be. The signs of his greatness are only an imitation and not a counterfeit of what is in the world above because, as in the *Hypostasis of the Archons*, Sophia gave Sabaoth her daughter Zoe to teach him about all that is in the Ogdoad. Sabaoth created a Church (the Christian Church) resembling the Church above, and a firstborn called Israel (the Jewish people) and another first-born, a personal one, Jesus Christ, who resembles the true Lord who is above Ogdoad. Sabaoth made Jesus Christ sit on his right hand, according to the *testimonium* so often quoted from Psalm 109.2, "The Lord said to my Lord: Sit at my right hand", and places the Virgin of the (holy) Spirit on his left (the Spirit is a virgin because the word *rouah*, spirit, is feminine in Semitic languages). The author has no intention of denigrating the Christian Trinity here. He places it in his conception of things in exactly the same place as Christians themselves: for them the Father is indeed, at the late date he was writing, no different from the Jewish god and cannot therefore be the supreme god, whatever they might think; for them Jesus Christ is a true man of flesh, whereas the true Saviour only took on a human appearance; lastly, the holy Spirit is the spirit of Elohim in Genesis 1.2 who also spoke through the prophets.

The rest of the passage is a doublet which apparently reinterprets an earlier tradition. Sabaoth is seated on a throne in a luminous cloud where, according to the *Apocryphon of John* (B 38,6-14), Sophia hid Yaldabaoth from the sight of the pleroma, and Sophia herself, no longer Zoe, instructs him with a view to the creation (already achieved) of all that exists in Ogdoad. And although already in the light of the cloud — that of Ex 13.21-22 and 19.16 — Sophia separates him from the 'Darkness', and Yaldabaoth with him out of necessity, since she makes one sit on his right and the other on his left. The Jewish god who was divided into two persons to allow for the rehabilitation of one, is rehabilitated here in its two halves.

The lower world which originates from Sophia's fault, is therefore finally governed by three trinities according to the following diagram :



The two lower trinities will be added up term by term : Yaldabaoth and his son Sabaoth, i.e. the two halves of the Jewish god, will be identified with the Father, the supreme god; fused together Jesus Christ and the Word will become the Son; the Spirit, presented here as a virgin, will be called 'the Mother' among Aramaic speaking Christians ('The Song of the Pearl' in the *Acts of Thomas*, etc.).

It is understandable that in Tartarus Yaldabaoth created Death out of revenge, but less so that while seated at the left of Sophia he created it 'from his own death', only announced for the end of time. This is fresh proof that the author has reinterpreted an earlier myth in a sometimes thoughtless way.

After enumerating the numerous offspring of demons engendered by Death, the long parenthesis on Yaldabaoth's delayed punishment and Sabaoth's exaltation is closed and, as if nothing had occurred in the interval, the narrative of the creation of man picks up where it left off with the appearance of Sophia's image in the waters, a doubling moreover of the appearance of the divine-human image.

Here is the text of the untitled work *On the Origin of the World*

THE FORMATION OF THE ARCHON YALDABAOth (NH II,100,1-10)

And when Sophia desired to cause the aborted foetus that had no spirit to be formed into a likeness and to rule (*archein*) over matter and over all its forces, there first appeared an archon (*archon*) out of the waters, lionlike in appearance, androgynous, having great force within him and ignorant of whence he had come into being.

THE FANCIFUL ETYMOLOGY OF THE NAME OF YALDABAOth  
*(Ialda = engendered); Ba = to go; Oth = the divine last syllable (?)*  
*(NH, 100,10-14)*

Now when Pistis saw him moving about in the depths of the waters, she said to him : "Young man, pass through to here", — whose equivalent is Yaldabaoth.

THE ORIGIN OF THE EFFICIENT AND CREATIVE WORD (NH II,100,14-19)

Since that day there appeared the efficiency (*archê*) of the word, which reached the gods and angels and mankind. And what came into being as a result of verbal expression was made by the gods, the angels and mankind.

THE DOUBLET ON IGNORANCE, NAME AND LIKENESS OF THE ARCHON

(NH II, 100,19-26)

Now the archon Yaldabaoth is ignorant of the power of Pistis; he did not see her face, rather he saw the likeness that spoke with him in the water. And because of that voice, he called himself Yaldabaoth. But Ariael is what the perfect call him for he was like a lion (*Ari* = lion).

THE WITHDRAWAL OF PISTIS AND TRINITARIAN AWARENESS OF YALDABAOOTH

(NH II,100,19-2)

Now when he had come to have authority over matter, Pistis Sophia withdrew up to her light. When the archon saw his own greatness — he saw nothing else, except water and darkness — he supposed that it was he alone who existed. His thought expressed itself in speech and the Word appeared as a Spirit moving to and fro upon the waters.

THE ORGANIZATION OF CHAOS (NH II,101,2-9)

And when that Spirit appeared, the archon set apart the watery substance. And what was dry was put in another place. And from matter he made for himself an abode and he called it heaven. And from matter he made a footstool and he called it earth.

THE CREATION OF THE THREE SONS OF YALDABAOOTH BY HIS WORD

(NH II,101,9-23)

Next the archon had a thought — consistent with his nature — and by the word he created an androgyne, and he praised himself for his creation. When the androgyne opened his eyes, he saw his father and said to him : "Eee!". Then his father called him Iao. Next the father created a second son and praised himself for his creation. And he opened his eyes and said to his father : "Eh!". His father called him Eloai. Next the father created a third son and he praised himself for his creation. And he opened his eyes and said to his father "Asss!". His father called him Astaphaios. These are the three sons of their father.

ANOTHER ACCOUNT OF THE CREATION OF

THE SEVEN ANDROGYNOUS SONS OF CHAOS (NH II,101,24-102,11)

Seven androgynous sons came into being out of chaos. They each have a masculine and a feminine name. (Yaldabaoth), his feminine name is Pronoia Sambathas (Forethought of the week), namely Hebdomad. His son called Iao has as feminine name Lordship; Sabaoth, his feminine name is Deity; Adonaois, his feminine name is Kingship; Eloaios, his feminine name is Jealousy; Oraios, his feminine name is Wealth; Astaphaios, his feminine name is Wisdom (lower Sophia). These are the seven powers of the seven heavens of chaos. And they were born androgynous, consistent with the immortal pattern (Man) that existed before them, according to the wish of Pistis: so that the likeness of what had existed since the be-

ginning might reign to the end. You will find the effect of these names and the force of the male entities in the Archangelic Book of the Prophet Moses and the names of the female entities in the First Book of Norea.

**THE ENTHRONEMENT OF THE ARCHONS IN THE HEAVENS (NH II,102,11-25)**

The archgenitor Yaldabaoth who possesses great powers, created magnificent heavens through his word for each of his sons, and in each heaven he created great glories, seven times excellent. Thrones and mansions and temples and chariots and virgin spirits with their glories after the invisible (Spirit), each one has in his heaven mighty armies of powers, lords and angels and archangels and countless myriads of attendants. A detailed description of these matters you will find in the First Account of Norea.

**THE SHAKING OF THE HEAVENS AND THE EXPULSION INTO TARTARUS OF**

**AN ANONYMOUS BEING INSTEAD OF YALDABAOOTH (NH II,102,25-103,2)**

And when all this was completed from this heaven to as far as the sixth heaven, namely that of Sophia (below), the heaven and earth were shaken by the troublemaker that was below them all. And the six heavens shook violently, for the Powers of chaos knew who it was that had destroyed the heaven that was below them. And when Pistis knew about the breakage resulting from the troublemaker, she sent forth her breath and bound him and cast him down into Tartarus. Since that day, the heaven along with its earth had consolidated itself through Sophia the daughter of Yaldabaoth who is above them all.

**YALDABAOOTH'S GUILTY BLASPHEMY (NH II,103,3-15)**

Now when the heavens had consolidated themselves along with their powers and all their administration the Archgenitor arose and was honoured by all the armies of angels. And all the gods and their angels gave blessing and honour to him. And for his part he was delighted and continually boasting, saying to them : "I have no need of anyone". He said : "It is I who am God, and there is no other one that exists apart from me". And when he said this, he sinned against all the Immortals who had conceived and protected him.

**SOPHIA'S DENIAL : THE EXISTENCE OF IMMORTAL MAN AND  
HIS FUTURE "INCARNATION" TO DESTROY THE WORKS OF THE GOD**

**WHO CREATED THE WORLD (NH II,103,15-28)**

And when Pistis saw the impiety of the chief archon, she was filled with wrath. She made herself invisible and said: "You are mistaken, Samael — i.e. the blind god — There is an Immortal Man of light who has been in existence before you and who will appear among your modelled forms. He will trample you just as clay vases are pounded and you will descend to your mother, the Abyss. For at the consummation of your works, the entire defect that has become visible out of the

truth will be abolished and it will cease to be and will be like what has never been".

SOPHIA'S LIKENESS, NOT MAN'S LIKENESS AS EXPECTED,  
APPEARS IN THE WATERS (NH II,103,28-32; 94,28-34)

Saying this, Pistis revealed her likeness of her greatness in the waters. And so doing she withdraw up to her light (*the primitive continuation follows the episode in NH 107,17, infra, p. 133*)

SABAOTH'S CONVERSION BY THE WORD OF PISTIS (NH II,103,32 - 104,3-13)

Now when Sabaoth, the son of Yaldabaoth had heard the voice of Pistis, he sang praises to her and condemned his father and mother because of the word of Pistis. He praised her because she had instructed them about the Immortal Man and his light.

DOUBLET : SABAOTH'S CONVERSION BY THE LIGHT OF PISTIS  
(NH II,104,3-13)

Then Pistis Sophia stretched out her finger and poured upon him some light from her light, to be a condemnation of his father. Then when Sabaoth was illuminated, he received great power against the Power of chaos. And since that day he has been called 'the Lord of the Powers' (= YHWH sabaoth). He hated his father, the Darkness and his mother, the Abyss. and loathed his sister, the Thought of the Archgenitor which moved to and fro upon the waters (= the Spirit in Gen 1.2).

THE JEALOUSY OF THE POWERS AND THE WAR IN HEAVEN (NH II,104,13-26)

And because of his light, all the Powers of chaos were jealous of him and when they had become disturbed, they made a great war in the seven heavens (Rev 12.7).

SABAOTH'S EXALTATION (NH II,104,17-26)

Then when Pistis Sophia had seen the war, she dispatched seven archangels to Sabaoth from her light. They snatched him up to the seventh heaven. They stood before him as attendants. Furthermore she sent three more archangels and established the kingdom for him over everyone so that he might dwell above the twelve gods of chaos (the signs of the Zodiac).

ZOE INSTRUCTS SABAOTH (NH II,104,26-31)

Now when Sabaoth had taken up the place of repose in return for his *metanoia*, Pistis gave him her daughter Zoe together with great authority so that she might instruct him about all things that exist in Ogdoad.

## THE SUMPTUOUS INSTALLATION OF SABAOTH AS THE JEWISH GOD

(NH II,104,31-35)

And as Sabaoth had authority, he made himself first of all a mansion. It is huge, magnificent, seven times as great as all those that exist in the seven heavens.

## SABAOTH'S CHARIOT ACCORDING TO EZEKIEL 1 AND 10

(NH II,104,35-105,16)

And before his mansion he created a throne, which was huge and was upon a four-faced chariot called Cherubim. Now the Cherubim has eight shapes per each of the four corners, lion forms and calf forms and human forms and eagle forms (Ez 1.10; 10.14; Rev 4.6-12), so that all the forms amount to sixty-four forms. And with the seven archangels that stand before it, he is the eighth and has authority. All the forms amount to seventy-two. Furthermore, from this chariot seventy-two gods took shape; they took shape so that they might rule over the seventy-two languages of the peoples (Gen 10.1-32 LXX; Lk 10.1, 17).

## THE SERAPHIM ACCORDING TO ISAIAH 6.2-3 (NH II,105,16-20)

Above the throne he created other, serpent-like angels, called seraphims, who praise him at all times.

## THE MYRIADS OF ANGELS ACCORDING TO DANIEL 7.10 (NH II,105,20-23)

Thereafter he created a Congregation (Church) of angels, thousands and myriads, numberless, which resembled the congregation of Ogdoad;

## ISRAEL PERSONIFIED ACCORDING TO EXODUS 4.22 (NH II,105,23-25)

and a firstborn called Israel, which is "the man that sees God";

## THE CHRISTIAN TRINITY (NH II,105,31)

and another being, called Jesus Christ, who resembles the saviour above in the seventh heaven and who sits at his right upon a revered throne, and at his left, there sits the virgin of the Holy Spirit upon a throne and glorifying him (*So Sabaoth does not loath his sister, the Spirit of Yaldabaoth* (NH II,104,11-13). *The Trinity : Yaldabaoth, the Word and the Spirit in NH II,100,29-101,3 becomes here Sabaoth, Jesus Christ, and the Spirit.*)

## THE REINFORCEMENT OF THE PRAISERS (NH II,105,32-106,3)

And seven virgins stand before the virgin of the Holy Spirit possessing thirty harps, and psalteries and trumpets, glorifying him, and all the armies of the angels glorify him, and they bless him.

DOUBLET: THE APPLICATION TO SABAOOTH OF WHAT, ACCORDING TO THE  
 APOCRYPHON OF JOHN 38,6-14 FIRST SEEMED TO CONCERN YALDABAOOTH

(NH II,106,3-11)

Now where he sits is upon a throne of light within a great cloud that covers him. And there was no one with him in the cloud except Sophia the daughter of Pistis, instructing him about all the things that exist in the seventh heaven, so that the likeness of those things might be created, in order that his reign might endure until the consummation of the heavens of chaos and their forces.

THE REORGANIZATION OF THE GOVERNEMENT OF THE WORLD (NH II,106,11-18)

Now Pistis set him apart from the darkness and summoned him to her right, and the Archigenitor she put at her left. Since that day, right has been called justice and left called wickedness. Now because of this they all received a realm in the congregation of justice and wickedness which is above the creation (?).

YALDABAOOTH'S JEALOUSY AND THE CREATION OF DEATH (NH II,106,19-27)

Thus when the Archgenitor of chaos saw his son Sabaoth and all the glory that he was in, and perceived that he was the greatest of all the authorities of chaos, he envied him. And having become wrathful he engendered Death out of his death : and he (Death) was established over the sixth heaven, for Sabaoth had been snatched from there. And thus the number of the six authorities of chaos was achieved.

THE DESCENDANTS OF DEATH (NH II,106, 27-107,3)

Then Death, being androgynous, mingled with its own nature and begot seven androgynous offspring. these are the names of the male ones : Jealousy, Wrath, Tears, Sighing, Suffering, Lamentation, Bitter Weeping. And these are the names of the female ones : Anger, Pain, Lust, Sighing, Curse, Bitterness, Quarrelsomeness. They had intercourse with one another and each begot seven, so that they amount to forty-nine androgynous demons. Their names and effects you will find in the *Book of Solomon*.

COUNTER CREATION BY ZOE (LIFE) (NH II,107,4-7)

And in the presence of these, Zoe, who was with Sabaoth, created seven good androgynous forces. These are the names of the male ones : the Unenvious, the Blessed, the Joyful, the True, the Unbegrudging, the Beloved, the Trustworthy. Also, as regards the female ones, these are their names : Peace, Gladness, Rejoicing, Blessedness, Truth, Love, Faith (Pistis). And from these there are many good and innocent spirits. Their influences and their effects you will find in *The Confirmation of the Fate of Heaven that is above the Twelve* (signs of the Zodiac).

## RESUMPTION OF THE CREATION OF MAN (NH II,107,17-34),

*INTERRUPTED BY THE EPISODE OF SABAOTH IN NH 103,32, p. 130*

And having seen the likeness of Pistis in the waters, the Archgenitor grieved very much, especially when he heard her voice, like the first voice that had called to him out of the waters (100,10-14, p. 127). And when he knew that it was she who had given a name to him, he sighed. He was ashamed on account of his transgression. And when he had come to know in truth that an immortal man of light had been existing before him, he was greatly disturbed; for he had previously said to all the gods and their angels, "It is I who am god. No other one exists apart from me". For he was afraid they might know that another had been in existence before him, and might condemn him.

## THE ARCHON'S CHALLENGE (NH II,107, 34-108,2)

But he, being devoid of understanding, scoffed at the condemnation and acted recklessly. He said: "If anything has existed before me, let it appear, so that we may see its lights".

## THE MANIFESTATION OF THE LIKENESS OF MAN

## (NH II,108, 2-9, A LOGICAL SEQUEL TO NH II,103,28)

And immediately, behold! light came out of the eighth heaven above and passed through all the heavens of the earth. When the Archgenitor saw that the light was beautiful as it radiated, he was amazed. And he was greatly ashamed. As that light appeared, a human likeness appeared within it (...).

## CONCLUSION : THE TEACHING OF THE TEXTS

The aim of this chapter was to quote the texts which narrate how the blasphemy of the Biblical god brought about the reflection in the waters of the Image (the Son of Man, Second Adam) of the supreme god (Man, First Adam), according to which earthly man, Third Adam, will be moulded by him, and at the same time, his precipitation under the name of Yaldabaoth and his exaltation under the name of Sabaoth.



## Chapter 11

# THE IDENTIFICATION OF THE SAVIOUR JESUS WITH THE LORD SABAOTH AND OF THE FATHER WITH YHWH

The Lord said to my Lord  
(Ps 110 (109).1)

In the *Hypostasis of the Archons* and *On the Origin of the World* we have witnessed the division of the Jewish god into two persons : Yaldabaoth, condemned for his blasphemy, and Sabaoth, exalted for his conversion.

The rehabilitation of the Jewish God to the rank of supreme god, required by Jewish faith and nationalism, called for a second division. To identify him with the invisible and immutable god of the philosophers and gnostics, it was necessary to detach from him his apparitions and interventions in the world so as to preserve or attribute to him only a pure and abstract deity. As we said earlier, the Jews had already more or less achieved this dissociation by attributing his theophanies to his Angel and his interventions to one or other of his personified or hypostasized attributes. In the gnostic movement which will lead to Christianity, the dissociation between the invisible deity and the theophanies is achieved by merging into a single person the gnostic Saviour Jesus and the Lord Sabaoth, the half of the Old Testament god rehabilitated by the Gnostics.

This merging entails the reversal of the exegesis of the paradise narrative : the undefined celestial figure who descended from the world above into the serpent to incite Adam and Eve to eat the gnosis becomes the Genesis god who forbids them to eat the fruit and expells them from paradise!

And in particular, when Jesus the gnostic saviour becomes Sabaoth, he not only assumes all the theophanies of the biblical god but becomes his son as well and, in so far as he belongs to the world above, he raises his father YHWH to the rank of supreme god, which is why the Jewish god will be mistaken for the Father. In his capacity as supreme god the biblical god remains the creator of the world, for nothing could have occurred without his supreme will; but neither was anything made by him: everything that was made was made by Jesus, his personified Word, his *Logos*. The *Logos* had appeared and intervened in the world throughout History and finally, in human form during the reigns of Herod and Tiberius.

Here and in the two following chapters, we shall review in succession

1) the texts of the early Fathers which expose the necessity of distinguishing in the Bible between the invisible and immutable Father and the Son who made himself visible in different forms;

2) the texts from the New Testament, the Fathers and the liturgy that attest to the belief, then universal in the great Church, in the identity of Jesus with the Lord Sabaoth;

3) the hymn of the Epistle to the Philippians 2.6-11, earlier than Paul, which muddles up in the same abasement and exaltation the saviour Jesus and the gnostic Lord Sabaoth.

## I. THE REASONING OF THE EARLY FATHERS ON THE NECESSITY OF DISTINGUISHING TWO GODS IN THE BIBLE

### THEOPHILUS OF ANTIOCH

In *Ad Autolyicum*, Theophilus of Antioch, after relating the paradise narrative according to the Genesis text and obviously interpreting it in a Christian way, supposes that his interlocutor Autolykos raises the following objections :

You said that God ought not to be contained in a place, and how do you now say that He walked in Paradise? Hear what I say. The God and Father of all, indeed, cannot be contained, and is not found in a place, for there is no place of His rest; but His Word, through whom He made all things being His power and His wisdom, assuming the person of the Father and Lord of all, went to the garden in the person of God, and conversed with Adam. For the divine Scripture itself teaches us that Adam said he had heard the voice. But what else is this voice but the Word of God, who is also His Son? Not as the poets and writers talk of the sons of gods begotten from intercourse with women but as Truth expounds, the Word, that always exists, residing within the bosom of God. For before anything came into being He had Him as a counsellor, being His own mind and thought. But when God wished to make all that he determined on, He begot this Word uttering it out of Himself (*prophorikon*), the first-born of all creation, not Himself being emptied of the Word, but having begotten the Word, and always conversing with his Word. (*Ad Autolykus*, II,22)

This text is familiar to theologians for it was the first to distinguish between the Word immanent in God (*endiathetos*) and the Word uttered outside God (*prophorikos*). Theophilus of Antioch was therefore already concerned with the difficulty of reconciling the unicity of God — if God were not unique he would not be God — with the necessity of distinguishing two gods in the Bible to safeguard the transcendence of the former.

## JUSTIN

In the *First Apology* Justin the Martyr exposes the differences between Jewish and Christian belief concerning the god revealed in the Scriptures :

Even now, all Jews teach that the ineffable God spoke to Moses (in the burning bush, Ex 3.2 sqq). Wherefore, the Prophetic Spirit, censuring the Jews through Isaiah, the above mentioned prophet, said : "The ox knows his owner, and the ass his master's crib; but Israel has not known Me, and My people have not understood Me" (Is 1.3).

Because the Jews did not know the Father nor the Son, Jesus Christ likewise upbraided them saying : "No one knows the Father except the Son; nor does anyone know the Son except the Father, and whose to whom the Son will reveal Him" (Mt 11.27). Now, the Son of God is His Word, as we have already stated, and he is called Angel and Apostle; for, as Angel he announces all that we must know, and as Apostle He is sent forth to inform us of what has been revealed, as our Lord himself says : "He that hears Me, hears Him that sent Me" (Mt 10.40 pl).

This will be further clarified from the following words of Moses : And the Angel of God spoke to Moses in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush (Ex 3.2-22 sqq) and said "I am the one who is (the being, *ho ōn*), the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob, the God of your fathers; go down into Egypt and bring forth My people". If you are curious to know what happened after this, you can find out by consulting these same Mosaic writings, for it is impossible to recount everything in this work. What has been quoted has been set down to prove that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and his Apostle, being of old the Word, appearing at one time in the form of fire, at another under the guise of incorporeal beings, but now at the will of God, after becoming man for mankind, He bore all the torments which the demons prompted the rabid Jews to wreak upon Him. (*1 Apology*, 63)

Though apparently personified, the various "hypostases" accepted by the Jews did not undermine the unicity of the divine person; their reunion in the person of the Word made man, Jesus, declared Saviour and God, necessarily divides the deity into two.

The affirmation that Jesus is the god of the burning bush who defined himself, according to the usual translations : "I am the one who is" (*ho ōn*, "the being, the one that is", in the Septuagint), is undoubtedly surprising for Christians today; it was unacceptable to the Jews. Therefore, when Justin makes the same affirmation in his *Dialogue with Tryphon*, his interlocutor attempts to maintain "that the one who manifested himself in a flame of fire was an angel, and the one who spoke to Moses was God, so that in this vision there was an angel and God". The distinction Tryphon makes is based on a passage from Exodus

where, in 3.4-6, the words are placed in God's mouth, whereas in verse 2, to safeguard the divine transcendence, the redactor ascribes the apparition to the Angel of YHWH. Justin replies :

It will not be the Creator of the world who is the God who said to Moses that he was the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, but it will be He who was proved to you to have been seen by Abraham and Jacob, doing the will of the Creator of the universe, and putting into execution His will in the judgement of Sodom. Thus, even if these were two persons, as you claim, an angel and God, yet no one with the slightest intelligence would dare to assert that the Creator and Father of all things left his super celestial realms to make Himself visible in a little spot on earth. (*Dial.* 60)

Justin affirms, too readily perhaps, that Tryphon accepts this fundamental reasoning, and sets out to prove that the person who elsewhere is called God when he speaks and Angel when he appears is the same. From the Angel of YHWH, he then turns to other hypostases :

I shall now show from the Scriptures that God has begotten of Himself a certain rational Power as a Beginning before all creatures. The Holy Spirit indicates this Power by various titles, sometimes the Glory of the Lord, at other times Son, or Wisdom, or Angel, or God, or Lord, or Word. He even called himself Commander-in-chief when he appeared in human guise to Joshua, the son of Nun (Jos 5.14). Indeed, He can justly lay claim to all these titles from the fact both that He performs the Father's will and that he was begotten by an act of the Father's will. (*Dial.* 61)

The distinction between the Father and the God who acts in the Bible and the identity of Jesus with the latter are so important for Justin that he returns to the subject at the end of the *Dialogue* in a sort of recapitulation :

And I presume that I have shown sufficiently that when God says, "God went up from Abraham" (Gen 17.22), or "The Lord spoke to Moses" (Ex 4.4; etc.), and, "The Lord came down to see the tower which the children of men built" (Gen 11.5), or, "God closed the ark of Noah from without" (Gen 7.16), you should not imagine that the Unbegotten God Himself descended or ascended from any place. For the Ineffable Father and Lord of all neither comes to any place, nor walks, nor sleeps, nor arises, but always remains in His place, wherever it may be, acutely seeing and hearing, not with eyes or ears, but with a power beyond description. Yet he surveys all things, knows all things, and none of us can escape His notice. Nor is he moved who cannot be contained in any place, not even in the whole universe, for he existed even before the universe was created. How, then, could he converse with anyone, be seen by anyone, or appear in the smallest place of the

world, when the people were not able to behold the glory of God's messenger at Sinai; and when Moses had not the power to enter the tabernacle he had built, when it was resplendent with the glory of God; and when the priest could not remain standing before the shrine when Solomon brought the ark into the building he had created for it in Jerusalem? Thus, neither Abraham, nor Isaac, nor Jacob, nor any other man saw the Father and Ineffable Lord of all creatures and of Christ Himself, but they saw Him who, according to God's will, is God the Son and His Angel because He served the Father's will; He who, by His will, became man through a virgin; who also became fire when He talked to Moses from the bush. Unless we interpret the Scriptures in this manner, we would be forced to conclude that the Father and Lord of all was not in Heaven when what Moses thus described took place: "And the Lord rained upon Sodom fire and brimstone from the Lord out of heaven" (Gen 19.24). And, again, when it was said through David: "Lift up your gates, O ye princes, and be ye lifted up, O eternal gates, and the King of glory shall enter in" (Ps 23.7,9). And yet again, when he says: "The Lord says to my Lord: sit at my right hand until I make your enemies your footstool" (Ps 110 (109).2). (*Dial.*, 127)

These three texts, and especially the last one (Ps 110 (109).2), quoted 21 times in the New Testament, to which should be added Psalm 118 verse 26, "Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord", were thought to be evidence from the Bible itself affirming the existence of another god truly God who is identified with the Father, above the god who appears and acts in the Bible and who is identified with the Saviour Jesus.

#### TERTULLIAN

Similarly, in his treatise *Contra Iudaeos* (IX), Tertullian affirms that "He who ever spoke to Moses was the Son of God himself; who, too, was always seen, for 'God the Father none ever saw, and lived'. It is therefore certain that it was the Son of God himself who spoke to Moses (...)". And in his treatise *De carne Christi* (VI): "But our Lord Himself at that very time appeared to Abraham amongst those angels without being born, and yet in the flesh without doubt, in virtue of the aforementioned diversity of cause" (See also *Adv. Praxeas*, 16; *Adv. Marcionem*, II, 27; *De praescriptione*, 13).

#### THE EPISTULA APOSTOLORUM

In the *Epistula apostolorum*, an apocryphal writing preserved in Ethiopian and Coptic, the twelve Apostles confess their faith as follows:

Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, God, Son of God, sent by the Father, master of the universe, his artisan and creator, called all names, who is above the Powers

(Phil 2.9), Lord of lords and King of kings (Rev 17.14; 19.16), Mighty of the mighty, celestial, who sits enthroned above the cherubims and seraphims at the right of the throne of the Father (Mt 22.44; etc.). By his word he created heaven, the earth and all contained therein and set the limits of the seas, who created the abysses and made the springs form streams on the earth, who created day and night, the sun and the moon and the stars in the sky, who separated the light from the darkness, who brought hell into existence and in an instant ordered rain in winter, fog, hail and ice and the days according to their seasons, who caused the earth to tremble and kept it steady, who created man in his image and likeness and spoke in parables and verily with the ancient fathers and prophets, whom the Apostles preached and the disciples touched, God, the Lord, the Son of God, we believe he is the Word made flesh (Jn 1.4), born from the womb of Mary, the holy virgin, conceived by the operation of the Holy Spirit not by carnal lust but by God's will, wrapped in swaddling clothes in Bethlehem and revealed, having grown and attained maturity when we saw him. (ch. 3)

The German translator Isaac Wajnberg in Carl Schmidt's edition (*Gespräche Jesu mit seinen Jüngern nach der Auferstehung*, Leipzig, 1919) felt obliged to remark in a footnote (p. 27 n. 3 and 7) that the attributes of the Father and the Son are muddled up in this text! We know that this is not the case at all, and that all the attributes belong to Jesus.

#### EUSEBIUS OF CAESAREA

Eusebius of Caesarea, in the beginning of his *Ecclesiastical History* in the chapter entitled "Brief summary of the præexistence and divinity of our Saviour and Lord, the Christ of God", after mentioning his appearance by the oaks of Mambre (Gen 18.1 sqq.) continues in these terms :

If it is impossible to assume that the innate and immutable substance of allmighty God changes into a human form or deceives the eyes of spectators with the appearance of a creature, or again, that the Scripture falsely imagined such accounts, the God and Lord who judges the entire world and passes judgement, who is seen with a human appearance, since it is not permitted to say that he is the first cause of the universe, how to call him anything other than the Word, which alone preexisted before the world? Of the Word it is also said in the Psalms (Ps 106.20): "He sent forth his Word, and healed them and delivered them from destruction". Moses says quite clearly that the Word is the second Lord after the Father, saying : "The Lord rained on Sodom and Gomorrah sulphur and fire from the Lord" (Gen 19.24). The Word again who appeared before Jacob in a human form, the holy Scripture calls him God when he says to Jacob : "Your name shall no more be called Jacob, because you fought against God" (Gen 32.28). Jacob then

also calls this place the 'Vision of God', saying : "I have seen God face to face and my soul is saved" (Gen 32.30). (*E.H.* I,ii,8-9)

### SAINT EPHRAEM SYRUS

In his *Hymn* on the cross Ephraem is not afraid to write (17.3) : "He left the chariot drawn by four animals and took up the cross". The chariot is that of Eze-kiel's visions in chapters 1 and 10 and also that of Sabaoth's exaltation in the *Hypostasis of the Archons* (NH 95,24-32) and the writing *On the Origin of the World* (NH 105,1-20).

### DE SACRAMENTIS AND DE MYSTERIIS

The author of *De Sacramentis*, one of the first who no longer attributed the 'consecration' to thanksgiving but to the words of the Last Supper narrative, draws his argument from the all powerful words of Christ creator of the world to assure his catechized of the transformation of the bread and wine into his body and blood :

Therefore, the word of Christ consecrates this sacrament. What is the word of Christ? That, to be sure, whereby all things were made. The Lord commanded, and the heaven was made; the Lord commanded and the seas were made; the Lord commanded and every creature was produced. You see, therefore, how effective is the word of Christ. (*De Sacramentis*, IV, 14-15)

Similarly, the author of the *De Mysteriis* writes :

(...) will not the word of Christ be powerful enough to change the characters of the elements? You have read of the work of the whole creation that he spoke the word, and they were made; he commanded and they were created. The word of Christ could make out of nothing that which was not; cannot it then change the things which are into that they were not? (*De Mysteriis*, 32)

## II. PASSAGES FROM THE NEW TESTAMENT IDENTIFYING JESUS WITH THE GOD OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

The theologians and apologists have long since set themselves the task of proving the divinity of Jesus against his "rationalist" deniers. On their own admission many of the texts they allege assimilate Jesus with the Old Testament god, for example, his claim to pardon sins (Mk 2.3-12) or his affirmation that he is lord (*kyrios*) of the sabbath (Mk 2.28); certain miracles, for instance the calming of the storm (Mk 4.35-40) or the walking on the water (Mk 6.45-52), show

that the elements obey Jesus as their creator. These texts create no embarrassment for the theologians; they make no distinction between the New Testament god, the Father, and the Old Testament god, YHWH; for them they are both simply God. But there are other less ambiguous texts which pose problems and which they try to eliminate one way or another.

#### 1 CORINTHIANS 10.1-13

The author of the passage incites the converted Jews not to succumb to temptation as their fathers did when they left Egypt. He reminds them that "their ancestors were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea (as they themselves were baptized in the Spirit and in water), and all ate the same spiritual food (as they eat the eucharist), and all drank the same spiritual drink (as they drink from the cup), for they drank from that spiritual Rock that followed them, and the Rock was Christ" (1 Co 10.2-4). If we refer to the passage in Numbers (17.2-7) where, in the place which will be called Massa and Meriba, the people driven by thirst complain, we read that YHWH says to Moses : "I will stand before you on the rock of Horeb, you will strike the rock, and water will spring forth and the people will drink". Thus in Numbers 17.6 it is YHWH who stands on the rock; in 1 Cor 10.4 the rock itself is Christ. The author of 1 Co certainly identifies Jesus with YHWH.

The identification is even less debatable in verse 9: "Nor let us tempt Christ as some who tempted him perished by serpents". This is an allusion to the episode in Numbers 21.5-9 where the people once again spoke out against God and against Moses who made them leave Egypt in order to make them, supposedly, die in the desert. To punish them YHWH sent burning snakes whose bites caused many to perish. The survivors cried out for mercy and YHWH made Moses set a snake of bronze on a rod and whosoever looked at it was saved. For the Evangelist John (3.14) the snake of bronze represents Christ on the cross, but it is YHWH himself that the author of 1 Co calls Christ.

Such a clear identification has not failed to surprise the copyists, and the word *Christos*, attested by many authoritative witnesses including the Latin Vulgate, was replaced in just as many other authoritative manuscripts by the word *Kyrios*, Lord, designating YHWH in the copyist's mind, as if this title was not also exactly that of the Christ Jesus.

#### JUDE 4-7

<sup>4</sup> Certain persons have wormed their way in among you (...) who disown our only master and Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>5</sup> I want to remind you, you who know all (as gnostics), that Jesus having saved the people out of Egypt, then destroyed those who were disbelievers; <sup>6</sup> and he reserved for judgement on the great Day, bound in everlasting chains beneath the darkness, the angels who did not keep their rank,

but who abandoned their proper home. <sup>7</sup> Like Sodom and Gomorrah and the neighbouring cities who committed fornication and followed unnatural lusts, lie there in eternal fire, an example for all to see.

The passage alludes to three exemplary punishments: the first refers to the Israelites who had left Egypt, none of whom were accounted for in the plains of Moab on the threshold of the promised land owing to their successive rebellions and especially their adoration of the golden calf (Ex 32.7-14): "YHWH said: "They will die in the desert" (Num 26.65; Ps 106.26; 1 Co 10.5; Heb 3.17). The second punishment refers to the fallen angels, according to the interpretation given in 1 Enoch (ch. 6 and 7) of the marriages of the "sons of God" with the "daughters of men" (Gen 6.1-4) and according to the tradition also related in the Second Epistle of Peter 2.4 and Revelation 20.3 (see *supra*, p. 90. The third punishment refers to Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 19.24) "which YHWH destroyed in his wrath and fury" (Deut 29.23), the punishment that the proximity of the Dead Sea does not allow to forget so that it is recalled nine times in the Old Testament and three times in the New (Lk 17.29; 2 Pet 2.6; Jude 7). It was Jesus therefore who executed the three punishments according to the most numerous and authoritative manuscripts and the Latin Vulgate itself. But in other manuscripts — it was to be expected — "Jesus" was replaced by "the Lord" or by "God" and, unfortunately, it is the reading "the Lord" which is adopted by the so-called "critical" editions and, in particular, in the most recent one by "The United Bible Societies". The reason given by Bruce M. Metzger, who fortunately does not share the opinions of his colleagues, is that, despite the rules of criticism which should have retained the reading "Jesus", the best attested by the Greek and the versions, and the most difficult one — the substitution of 'Jesus' for "the Lord" is incomprehensible whereas the contrary is attractive —, the majority of the Committee members had considered it to be so "difficult as to be impossible" (*A Textual Com.*, 1971, *ad locum*). This opinion, apart from constituting a real professional fault by the Editorial Committee, denotes a lack of understanding or ignorance of the New Testament, patristics, liturgy and iconography. The same reproach can be levelled at the French translators of Segond's Bible, the Jerusalem Bible (JB), the Oecumenical Translation (TOB), but compliments to Crampon's translation.

#### JOHN 8.37-40

During his long discussion with the Jews, Jesus says to them: "8<sup>39</sup> If you are the descendants of Abraham, do the works of Abraham. But now you attempt to kill me (...) 40 That Abraham did not do". The question to ask is when, according to the author of the Gospel, would Abraham have had the opportunity to kill Jesus? Certainly not during Jesus' life on earth, but certainly during Abraham's li-

fetime, and more precisely when YHWH (Septuagint : "God") appeared before him with the two angels by the oaks of Mambre (Gen 18.1-32).

#### JOHN 8.56-58

<sup>56</sup> Your ancestor Abraham rejoiced that he would see my *Day*; he saw it and was glad. <sup>57</sup> Then the Jews said to him : "You are not yet fifty years old and have seen Abraham (variant : and Abraham saw you)!" . Jesus says : "Very truly, I tell you, before Abraham was, I am".

What then is this *Day* of Jesus, which recalls the *Day* of YHWH announced by the prophets, that Abraham first rejoiced to see in the future and which he does see later? The question to be asked is the same : how could Jesus, who was not yet fifty, have seen Abraham or, according to a variant, how could Abraham, dead for over a thousand years, have seen Jesus? The answer is certainly during Abraham's lifetime since Jesus declares : "Before Abraham was born, I am". The eagerness Abraham shows in welcoming YHWH when, seated at the threshold of his tent, he sees three men standing before him, designates the apparition by the oaks of Mambre as the *Day* of Jesus that Abraham rejoiced to see and did see.

Justin confirms this interpretation :

Moses (...) tells us that He who appeared to Abraham under the oak tree of Mambre was god, sent with two accompanying angels to judge Sodom by another God who always abides in the super-celestial sphere, who has never been seen by any man, and with whom no man has even conversed, and whom we call Creator of all and Father. (*Dial.* 56)

And so does Irenaeus

And Moses says again the Son of God came towards Abraham to converse with him : "And God appeared by the oak of Mambre at midday (...) and now three men stood before him and he glorified up to the earth and said : "Lord (...)" Now two of the three were angels, but one, the Son of God, exactly the one with whom Abraham conversed (...)." (*Dem.* 44; see *Adv. H.* III, 11,8; IV, 5,3;)

As for Abraham's anticipated joy in expectation of the *Day* of Jesus, it is almost impossible to find any trace of it in the Bible; one might think of earlier promises of numerous descendants, but Irenaeus gives us another reason :

Abraham was a prophet and saw things to come which were to take place, even that the Son of God in human form (Gen 18.2) should speak with men (Abraham and Sara) and eat with them (Gen 18.8), and then should bring in the judgement

from the Father, having received from Him who rules over all the power to punish the men of Sodom (Gen 19.24-25). (*Dem.*, 44)

### JOHN 8.58 AND PARALLELS

"Before Abraham was, I am". The affirmation *Ego eimi*, translated here by "I am", does not only mean that Jesus existed before Abraham; it has a much greater significance. All the commentators have pointed out that *Ego eimi*, used in an absolute way without a complement, should mean "I am he". But if this translation sometimes makes sense, for instance, when Jesus says "I am he" when the soldiers come to arrest Jesus of Nazareth (Jn 18.4-5) — but what made this answer so powerful that it made them fall to the ground? —, this is not the case in several other passages. It must therefore be translated by "I am" and this expression is seen as referring to how the god of Abraham, of Isaac and of Jacob spoke of himself when, in the vision of the burning bush, after giving Moses the evasive answer: "I am who I am", he adds, "Thus you shall say to the Israelites: 'I am' has sent me to you" (Ex 3.14). Admittedly the Septuagint translates "I am" by *ho ôn*, "the being", "he who is" (Vulgate: *qui est*), but a text from Isaiah is used as a relay: "Be my witnesses, and I (I will be) witness, said the Lord God, and the servant that I have chosen so that you may *know* and *believe* and understand that *Ego eimi*" (Is 43.10). Here *Ego eimi* translates the Hebrew *any hu*, "I am he", but the author of the Gospel wanted to understand, with reference to the Hebrew text of Exodus 3.14: "that you may *know* and *believe* that I am". Hence the affirmations: "You will die in your sins unless you *believe* that I am" (Jn 8.24), "when you have lifted up the Son of Man (like the bronze snake) you will *know* that I am" (Jn 8.27), "I tell you this now, before it occurs, so that when it does occur you may *believe* that I am" (Jn 13.19).

### JOHN 5.39-40 and 45-46

"<sup>39</sup> You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; <sup>40</sup> Yet you refuse to come to me to have life (...) <sup>45</sup> Do not think that I will accuse you before the Father; your accuser is Moses, on whom you have set your hope. <sup>46</sup> If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote about me.

Contrary to the usual explanation, these passages are not to be understood as alleged messianic prophecies contained in the Pentateuch, or the Law entirely interpreted as the announcement and type of the Gospel. Quoting the last verse, Irenaeus made the following comments:

For if you believed Moses, you would also have believed me; for he wrote of me; saying this no doubt, because the Son of God is implanted everywhere throughout

his writings : at one time, indeed, speaking with Abraham, when about to eat with him; at another time with Noah, giving to him the dimensions of the ark; at another, inquiring after Adam; at another bringing down judgement on the Sodomites; and again, when He becomes visible, and directs Jacob on his journey, and speaks with Moses from the bush. And it would be endless to recount the occasions upon which the Son of God is shown forth by Moses. (*Adv. H.*, IV, 10,1)

A few lines earlier in the same book, Irenæus had written :

But that the writings of Moses are the words of Christ, He does Himself declare to the Jews as John has recorded in the Gospel : "If you had believed Moses (...)". He thus indicates in the clearest manner that the writings of Moses are His words. If, then, this be the case with regard to Moses, so, also, beyond a doubt, the words of the other prophets are His words, as I have pointed out. (*Adv. H.*, IV, 2,3)

#### JOHN 12.37-41

12<sup>37</sup> Although he had performed so many signs in their presence, they (the Jews) did not believe in him. <sup>38</sup> This was to fulfill the words spoken by the prophet Isaiah : "Lord, who has believed our message? and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?" (Is 53.1; Rom 10.16). <sup>39</sup> So they could not believe, because Isaiah also said : <sup>40</sup> "He has blinded their eyes and hardened their heart, that they should not see with their eyes nor understand with their hearts and be converted and I should heal them". <sup>41</sup> Isaiah said these things when he saw his glory and spoke of him.

Just as Moses "had written" about Jesus, so Isaiah "had spoken" about him and, furthermore, Isaiah "had seen his glory".

The two phrases quoted aim to show that the incredulity of the Jews had been predicted. The first consists of a twofold question whose general meaning (disregarding the details : the addition of the interpellation "Lord" at the beginning and the active or passive acceptance of *akoê hêmôn*, "what we make clear", or "what we understood") is that it calls for the answer "no one" or "a small number". The fact that it was borrowed from the description of the suffering servant (Is 53.1) neither obliges to conclude nor exclude the intention of the evangelist here to identify Jesus with the servant.

What is paradoxical about the second phrase borrowed from Isaiah's inaugural vision, as the evangelist specifies, more precisely, when he was sent on a mission, is that, not only is the mission doomed to failure in advance, but its failure will be the result of the prophet's preaching itself : "Go and say to the people : Keep listening, but do not comprehend; keep looking, but do not see. Make the hearts of this people numb. Stop up their ears and shut their eyes, so they may not look with their eyes and hear with their ears, and comprehend with their heart

and be converted and healed" (Is 6.9-10). This text will be quoted five times more in the New Testament, each time with a slightly different interpretation.

In the three Synoptic Gospels (Mk 4.12; Mt 13.14; Lk 8.10), it is put forward to justify the teaching by parables supposed intentionally incomprehensible for "outsiders": "To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of God, but to others I speak in parables, so that looking they may not perceive", etc. (Lk 8.10).

In the Acts of the Apostles it occurs in the conclusion to the book; it is placed in Paul's mouth to explain his lack of success in preaching to the Jews in Rome (and elsewhere) and his uncertainty as to their future conversion. But here it undergoes the following modifications: it is the Holy Spirit, the author of the Scripture, who speaks to the fathers through Isaiah, not God himself; it is no longer the prophet who hardens the people, but the people who harden themselves: "Harden his ears and stop up his eyes" has become "they hardened their ears and stopped up their eyes"; lastly, the impersonal "lest he be healed" became "lest I should heal them, "I" must refer to God (Acts 28.24-28).

In the Epistle to the Romans, it is God who hardens: "God brought upon them a numbness of spirit; he gave them blind eyes and deaf ears" (Rom 11.8).

Lastly, in our passage from Gospel of John (2.37-41), the person responsible for hardening is neither the prophet nor the people nor God, but someone who is not designated: "He blinded their eyes and hardened their heart"; "he", which takes the place of the Old Testament god can only designate in this instance the Archon of this world, whereas "I" in the phrase "lest I should heal them", who also takes the place of the Old Testament god and, more especially, of the Lord Sabaoth in Isaiah's vision, can only designate Jesus.

In fact Isaiah "said this, when he saw his glory". The vision of the glory of YHWH (Ez 1.28; 10.4,18) when the quoted words were pronounced, is described by Isaiah as follows:

6<sup>1</sup> In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lofty; and the hem of his robe filled the temple. 2 Seraphim were in attendance above him; each had six wings (...) 3 And one called to another and said: Holy, holy, holy (is) the Lord Sabaoth! The whole earth is full of his glory!

The identity of Jesus with the Lord Sabaoth affirmed by the text from John clearly contradicts later opinion which only sees the revelation of the Father in the Old Testament and limits the New Testament to the manifestation of the Son. Similarly, the reading "*when* he saw his glory" in many numerous and authoritative witnesses including the Latin Vulgate is replaced in other manuscripts by the variant "*because* he saw his glory", which aims at suppressing the reference to a specific event and suggests that Isaiah might have had another vision, not related in the Scripture, of the future glory of Jesus. The reading "because" (*hoti* instead of *hote*) was unfortunately adopted once again in the latest edition of the United

Bible Societies. But the reading *hoti*, which Cyril of Alexandria also read, did not prevent him, sustained by the true tradition, from interpreting the text correctly :

And after the death of King Uzziah, the age of silence came to an end and the God of all things sent visions to the holy prophets. And thus the prophet Isaiah said : "And it came to pass in the year of the death of King Osias that I saw the Lord Sabaoth sitting on the high and lofty throne". No one doubts that the prophet saw the Son in the glory of God the Father since John wrote in full on this matter : Isaiah said that because he saw his glory and spoke with him". (PG 70, 172 D)

Many other texts from the Old Testament are to be found in Joseph Barbel, *Christos Angelos. Die Anschauung von Christus als Bote und Engel in der gelehrten und volkstümlichen Literatur des christlichen Altertums* (The conception of Christ as Messenger and Angel in Learned and Popular Literature in Christian Antiquity). The author stresses the identification of Jesus with the "Angel of YHWH", specifically invented to alleviate the anthropomorphisms of the Bible. See also L. Thunberg's article (*Studia P.*, 1966, pp. 560-570).

#### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION: THE TEACHING OF THE TEXTS

For the early Fathers, especially Theophilus of Antioch, Justin, Irenaeus, Tertullian, the Epistle of the Apostles, Eusebius of Caesarea, Ephraem, Cyril of Alexandria, the author of *De Sacramentis* and *De Mysteriis*, since God is infinite and invisible, it is not the Father who appeared throughout the Old Testament but his Word, his Son, his Angel, Jesus, the Lord Sabaoth.

In the New Testament this doctrine only subsists explicitly in a passage in 1 Co, in Jude and in five places in the gospel of John. The Jews could not of course admit the identity of YHWH with the saviour Jesus. The latter could only be his messiah, Christ. This is what the synoptic gospels endeavoured to prove. As the Son, Jesus nevertheless retains his divinity and, as there can only be one God, he will become consubstantial with the Father.

## Chapter 12

# JESUS LORD SABAOTH IN THE LITURGICAL PRAYERS TRANSFERRED TO THE FATHER OR TO THE THREE DIVINE PERSONS

Holy, holy, holy, Lord Sabaoth (Is 6.3)

The identification of the saviour Jesus with the god of the Old Testament and, more particularly, with the Lord Sabaoth whose glory Isaiah had seen, suggests that he would be honoured in the liturgy by the seraphic hymn "Holy, holy, holy, Lord Sabaoth, all the earth is full of his glory", or by hymns extolling his holiness. This is what did in fact occur. Except that, as a result of evolving beliefs, the hymns addressed to Christ were, apart from a few exceptions, transferred to the Father or to the three divine persons.

It was hard to maintain the distinction between God with a capital letter for the Father and god with a small letter for the Son. When a monotheistic definition of God had been reached, as the same word was still used to designate both the infinite and unique God and the gods, the latter could no longer be regarded as gods and were called false gods, and it was believed that the two to whom godhead was ascribed, Jesus and the Holy Spirit, were 'God'.

If, therefore, the Father and his Son are both God, since there can only be one God, one of the two following solutions must be adopted

— either the Father and the Son are the same person : God under two different names, in which case, it is the Father who became incarnate and suffered under the name of Son, as the so-called monarchian and patripassian heresies will claim;

— or the Father and the Son are not the same person but are both the unique and infinite God, then it will be concluded that the Son is consubstantial with the Father: *unius substantiae cum Patre, quod Graece dicunt homousion*, "of one and the same substance with the Father, which is called *homo-ousion* in Greek".

Even before this definition became official, once the Father was identified with the Old Testament god, as was the case already in most of the New Testament, it had become difficult to compose a hymn which addressed the cry of the seraphim to Jesus his messiah or even preserve for him the hymns written previously for him. After Nicaea, the supporters and adversaries of the council

agreed to transfer the *sanctus* to the Father : the Nicenes fearing a confusion of persons, the Arians a confusion of natures. For the former, the Son had to be clearly distinguished from the Father, for the latter the godhead of the Son had to be distinguished from the godhead of God in the absolute sense. Nonetheless, the original address to Christ was best preserved in Arian and heretical countries, isolated by heresy and their geographical situation.

The hymns involved are the *Sanctus* of the mass, the Latin *Te Deum*, the Greek and Latin *Gloria in excelsis* and in the Greek liturgies, the *Heis hagios*, the *Trisagion*, the *Cheroubikon*, and the *Phôs hilaron*. Here I shall summarize more detailed and technical studies which, failing their publication in a planned volume entitled "Carmina Christo", have been or will be published, I hope, as separate articles in specialized journals (see the Author's bibliography).

## I. THE SANCTUS OF THE MASS

The liturgical *Sanctus* consists of adaptations of the seraphic cry in Isaiah 6.3 and of the verses 25-26 of Psalm 118. It runs as follows:

Holy, holy, holy, Lord god Sabaoth,  
 Heaven and earth are full of your glory.  
 Hosanna in the highest.  
 Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.  
 Hosanna in the highest.

Though the *Sanctus* did not initially follow the eucharistic thanksgiving as exemplified, for instance, by its absence in the liturgy of the *Diataxeis* (wrongly called Hippolytus' liturgy), it was gradually introduced into all the Latin or Greek liturgies. Three courses are open to us to demonstrate that it was first addressed to Christ : 1) the introductions to the *Sanctus*; 2) the *Hosanna-Benedictus* verse, and 3) the *Vere sanctus, vere benedictus* in the Gallican liturgies.

### THE INTRODUCTIONS TO THE *SANCTUS* IN THE LATIN LITURGIES

In the Latin, i.e. the Roman, Ambrosian, Gallican, Celtic, and Mozarabic liturgies, the *Sanctus* is introduced by a formula linked to the *per Christum* which ends the thanksgiving or preface. Five formulae have followed one another in succession down the ages, of which the oldest has survived, as is normal, only in the non-roman books.

1) The formula *per xpm* (an abbreviation for *Christum* in the manuscripts) *cui merito omnes angeli (...)*, "By Christ to whom, quite rightly, all the angels and archangels, cherubim and seraphim unceasingly cry out with one voice : Holy, holy, (...)".

According to Dom Paul Cagin's statements in his book *Te deum or illatio*, this formula appears in 10 out of 68 prefaces in the *Missale gothicum*, 17 out of 76 in the *Bobbio Missal*, 11 out of 15 in the *Masses of Mone*, 27 out of 52 in the *Liber ordinum*, 55 out of 152 in the *Missale mixtum*, 25 out of 203 in the *Bergamo Sacramentary*, 155 times in all the few books that have survived.

2) The formula *per xpm quem laudant angeli* (...), "by Christ who is praised by the angels and archangels, the cherubim and seraphim who unceasingly cry out daily with one voice : Holy, (...)".

This formula, a stylistic improvement on the previous one, frequent in the works above mentioned, appears 12 times in the sacramentary called the *Gelasian Sacramentary, Vaticanus reginensis* 316, a roman presbyteral sacramentary though probably written in Gaul. It is still used as a Trinity preface, formerly a preface for ordinary Sundays, but with *quem* (masculine) changed into *quam* (feminine) as the grammatical antecedent is no longer Christ but the "true and eternal godhead".

3) The formula *per xpm per quem maiestatem tuam laudant angeli* (...), "by Christ, by whom the angels praise your majesty, the seigniorities adore it, the powers of heaven fear it, the virtues of the heavens with the blessed seraphim in a common rejoicing celebrate it. We beseech you to ordain that our voices be admitted to join theirs in a supplicatory confession : Holy, (...)".

It is this formula which became official in Rome when the prefaces were assembled in the so called *Leonine Sacramentary, Veronensis* 85, since it appears 252 times out of 267, and will be from henceforth the formula of the "ordinary preface" until Vatican II.

The substitution of *per xpm quem laudant angeli*, "by Christ whom the angels praise" by *per xpm per quem maiestatem tuam laudant angeli*, "by Christ by whom the angels praise your majesty", takes the *Sanctus* from Christ and attributes it to the Father, though the word *tremunt* proves that this is a modification of the original formula. Since if it can be admitted that the praise of the angels transits through Christ's mediation, it is not acceptable that the powers need his mediation in order to "fear" the divine majesty. On the other hand, it is perfectly normal that they "fear" the Lord Sabaoth, "Lord of the powers", because he subdued them (Col 2.14-15), and God made him sit above them (Eph 1.21; 1 Pet 3.22) until he destroys them (1 Co 15.24). But, as a matter of fact, these "powers" are one of the nine angelic choirs enumerated by Pseudo-Dionysius with the seigniorities, authorities and principalities of Yaldabaoth.

4) The formula *Quapropter* (...), "This is why the entire world, inundated with the pascal joys, exults on earth; but also the virtues from above and the angelic powers sing in chorus, unceasingly saying the hymn of your glory: Holy, (...)".

This is the first formula to have been directly composed to address the *Sanctus* to the Father. Intended for the Easter feast with the protocol *Te quidem omni*

*tempore* to which it responds, it is still said in the masses of the Holy Spirit (with the reference to Easter eliminated!).

5) The formula *Et ideo cum angelis (...)*, "And this is why with the angels and archangels, the thrones and seigniorities, and also the entire militia of the celestial army, we sing the hymn of your glory, saying unceasingly: Holy, (...)"

This formula occurred 12 times in the *Leonine Sacramentary* (against 252 for *per quem*) and is the most frequent (16 out of 24) in the 1969 missal. It is derived from the previous formula from which it adopts the liaison by an adverb — which eliminates the need for ending the preface with *per xpm*. It retains the expression "saying unceasingly" which was true for the angels, but could not be so for earthly worshippers!

### THE INTRODUCTIONS TO THE SANCTUS IN THE GREEK AND EASTERN LITURGIES

As regards the *Sanctus*, the Eastern liturgies can be divided into three categories :

1) The oldest liturgies, long since obsolete, which do not include the *Sanctus*. I have counted seven which need not be listed here.

2) The most recent liturgies, where the introduction to the *Sanctus* forms an integral part of the thanksgiving as in the liturgy described in the Vth mystagogic catechesis of St. Cyril (or John) of Jerusalem, which will become the liturgy of St. James by adding the *Vere sanctus*, the christologic thanksgiving, the narrative of the Last Supper and the anamnesis.

3) Liturgies where the *Sanctus* was inserted into a preexistent text. They are recognizable by the absence of a link between the thanksgiving and the introduction to the *Sanctus*.

Into these kinds of anaphoras were apparently quite simply introduced a preexistent hymn, composed of explicit or implicit scriptural quotations, in particular from Daniel 7.10, Ezekiel 10.12 and Isaiah 6.3, found in all the texts. Proof that the preexistent hymn was indeed addressed to Christ is that it is always followed by the *Hosanna-Benedictus* verse except in the liturgy of St. Mark. But the latter compensates for this absence by making the quotation from Ephesians 1.21, which can only be addressed to Christ, precede the traditional hymn. Here is the text:

For you are the one above all principality and authority, power and sovereignty, and any name that can be named, not only in this age but in the age to come (Eph 1.21).

Thousand thousands and ten thousand times ten thousand holy angels and archangels stand in attendance on you (Dan 7.10).

Two very honorable living beings stand in attendance (Hab 3.2 (LXX)), polyommat cherubim (Ez 10.12) and hexapter seraphim with two wings to veil their

face, two to cover their feet and two to fly (Is 6.3), and cry aloud to each other with untiring voice in uninterrupted praises, the triumphant and thrice holy hymn, singing, acclaiming, glorifying, crying out and saying to your magnificent glory : Holy, holy, (...)

All hallow you for ever, but with them all who hallow you, receive our hallowing too, saying Holy, holy, (...).(Br., 125; Hänggi-Pahl, 101)

#### THE EASTERN ANAPHORAS WHICH ARE ENTIRELY ADDRESSED TO CHRIST

Two anaphoras are renowned for being entirely addressed to Christ : the Alexandrine anaphora of St. Gregory of Nazianzus and the Chaldean (Nestorian) anaphora of the holy Apostles Addai and Mari. Both of them are still in use. Curiously, each anaphora consists of two independant anaphoras which the author has interwoven into each other with slight modifications to both.

#### THE ALEXANDRIAN ANAPHORA CALLED ST. GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS

Here are both texts, omitting what does not concern us, the second in italics :

*The priest:* It is truly right and just to praise you (...), you, the only true God, friend of man, inexpressible, invisible, infinite,

(...) The angels praise you, the archangels adore you, the principalities sing of you, the sovereignties acclaim you, the authorities declare your glory, the thrones address their homage,

ten thousand thousands stand in attendance and ten thousand ten thousands offer their ministry unto you,

invisible beings sing of you, the visible ones adore you, all accomplish your word, O Master.

*The deacon:* Stand up

*The priest:* You "who are" (Ex 3.14), the true Lord God of the true God, who revealed the splendour of the Father to us, who gratified us with the true knowledge of the Holy Spirit, and who taught us the great mystery of life,

*who instituted the choirs of incorporeal beings on behalf of men, who delivered to us who are on earth, the hymn of the seraphim,*

*receive also our voices with those of the invisible beings, unite us with the celestial powers. That we may also say with them, rejecting any alien thought, that we cry like them : (the Sanctus is expected here)*

*The deacon:* Look towards the East.

*The priest:* For the cherubim and seraphim stand in attendance around you, each with six wings : two to veil their face, two to hide their feet and two to fly, they cry out to one another the triumphal hymn of our salvation with a glorious voice, a clear voice, celebrating, singing, crying, glorifying and saying

*The deacon:* Attention

*The priest:* Holy, holy, (...) Hosanna in the highest, Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord (...) Hosanna (...)

Holy, holy are you, Lord and quite holy. Eminent is the splendour of your substance (*ousia*), inexpressible the power of your wisdom (...) You created me in your mercy, you unfolded the heaven to make me a roof, you consolidated the earth to give me a floor, you restrained the sea for me (...)

*The People :* Kyrie eleison.

*The priest:* You fashioned me (...) You showed me the tree of life and signified the sting of death (...) I ate (...) and I deserved the sentence of death.

*The People :* Kyrie eleison.

*The priest:* You commuted my sentence : like a good shepherd you ran towards the lost lamb (...) You gave me the Law as a help (...) You came from a virgin's womb. Boundless God, you did not deem a prey to be equal to God, you demeaned yourself by becoming a slave (...) You offered your back to whips, your cheeks to slapping and did not avert your face from spitting for my sake. (Hgg 358)

*The People :* Kyrie eleison (...)

Two complete anaphoras are interwoven into each other. The first opens with a thanksgiving to the one true, ineffable, invisible, etc. God who might be thought the Father. It is prolonged by an introduction to the *Sanctus*, a verbose paraphrase of introductions to the *Sanctus* of a type common in the East. But this introduction is interrupted between the mention of ten thousand ten thousands and that of cherubim and seraphim by another, entirely different type of introduction to the *Sanctus*, in reality a second thanksgiving which begins, like that of St. Basil's anaphora with *Ho òn*, "He who is", a definition YHWH gave of himself in Ex 3.14 (LXX), and continues with "true Lord God (born) of the true God" according to the formula of the Nicene symbol, reminding Jesus that he made the Father, the Holy Spirit and the mystery of life known to us and asking him to unite us with the celestial powers to proclaim his majesty. Instead of the expected *Sanctus*, the first introduction picks up with the mention of cherubim

and seraphim, and leads to the chant of the triumphal hymn and the *Hosanna-Benedictus* by the congregation.

The *Vere sanctus* then sets forth the divine "philanthropy" in the creation and the economy of salvation, and it might be thought that all that is attributed to the Father if, suddenly the virgin birth, the humbling as a slave, the crucifixion and burial did not remind us that it is spoken to Jesus.

Jesus is addressed throughout the Last Supper narrative, the "anamnesis", the epiclesis-offering — which is twofold like the thanksgiving and the introduction to the *Sanctus* — and the long intercession leading to the doxology.

It therefore appears that one anaphora addressed to Christ only consisting of a thanksgiving, *Sanctus* and epiclesis — like the anaphora attested in the Vth mystagogic catechesis of St. Cyril of Jerusalem — was inserted into another complete anaphora of the Antiochene type, originally addressed to the Father but completely rewritten in a rhythmic rather poetical style, in order to be addressed to Christ.

At this late period, it is hard, at least for me, to ascertain the orthodox or heretical intentions of the last redactor, but if one maintains that he did not confuse the persons of the Father and the Son, one will at least think that he had the untraditional idea of addressing an anaphora to Christ because he was convinced that the *Sanctus* belonged to him and that, as a result, for obvious reasons of unity, the preceding thanksgiving and the following epiclesis had to be addressed to him.

#### THE ANAPHORA OF THE HOLY APOSTLES ADDAI AND MARI

The anaphora known as the anaphora of the holy Apostles Addai and Mari has come down to us with variants, by three different channels : the Nestorian Church of Mesopotamia, its offshoot the Nestorian Church of Malabar, the Maronite Church of Lebanon where it bears the name of Sharrar or Peter III.

This anaphora has been studied in detail and with some passion because the Nestorian version does not include a Last Supper narrative though, according to Roman theologians, it must at all costs have contained one. Unfortunately the Maronite narrative occurs in the interpolation of an earlier interpolation in the intercessory prayer. I will spare the reader the semblance of analysis given for the St. Gregory anaphora and confine myself to reproducing the conclusions of a study published in *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 53 (1987) 107-158. The analysis distinguishes two hymns to Christ used as eucharistic thanksgivings as the prayers added to them bear witness, and the whole consists of two anaphoras interwoven into each other. Here are the two texts :

## THE FIRST INCOMPLETE ANAPHORA

### THE HYMN INCLUDING THE SANCTUS

Your majesty, O Lord, thousand ten thousand of those on high  
 bless and worship it  
 and ten thousand times ten thousand holy angels.

Hosts of spiritual beings, ministers of fire and wind, praise your Name  
 with holy cherubim and spiritual seraphim,  
 offering worship to your sovereignty,  
 proclaiming and praising without ceasing  
 and crying to one another and saying.

Holy, holy (...) Hosanna (...) Blessed is he that comes (...)

### THE POST-SANCTUS

With the heavenly powers,  
 we also, O Lord, your weak and frail and miserable servants  
 who are gathered together in your Name,  
 stand before you at this time,  
 and have received from tradition the rite which comes from you,  
 rejoicing and praising and exalting and commemorating and celebrating  
 this great and fearful divine mystery  
 of your passion, death and resurrection,  
 we render thanks unto you and praise you with unclosed mouths and open  
 faces,  
 now and forever the world without end.

## THE SECOND MORE COMPLETE ANAPHORA

### THE DIALOGUE

—The Lord be with you.

R — And with your spirit.

— Lift up your thoughts on high.

R — To you, O God of Abraham, of Isaac and of Israel, Glorious King.

— Let us give thanks, adore and glorify God, Lord of all things.

R — It is right and meet.

### THE HYMN

Praise be  
 to your adorable and glorious Name,  
 who created the world by your grace  
 and its inhabitants by your mercifulness,  
 and saved mankind by your compassion  
 and gave great grace unto mortals.

You took on our humanity  
to give us life by your divinity.  
You raised our baseness,  
lifted up our fallen state,  
resurrected our mortality,  
justified our guilt,  
redeemed our debts,  
illuminated our understanding,  
subjected our enemies,  
and made our weakness triumph.

For all these your bounties towards us  
let us raise praise and honour to you  
now and ever world without end.

#### THE INTERCESSIONARY PRAYER

O Lord, in your many and unspeakable mercies, remember with goodwill and favour all the just and righteous fathers : the prophets and apostles and martyrs and bishops and deacons and all the children of the holy catholic Church, that have been signed with the sign of baptism.

#### THE PRAYER OF OFFERTORY OF GIFTS

— The offering is made to God, Lord of all things.

R — It is right and meet.

— May your Holy Spirit come, O Lord, and rest upon this offering of your servants,  
that it may be to us for the pardon of offences and the remission of sins and for the resurrection of the dead and for a new life in the kingdom of heaven for ever.

The first anaphora is in fact just a hymn including the *Sanctus* of a type common in the East which the admirable post-*sanctus* proves was addressed to Christ.

The second anaphora is addressed to the God of Abraham, of Isaac and of Israel (Ex 3.15-16), the King of Glory (Ps 24 (23).7-9; 1 Co 2.8;), God the Lord of all things (= *pantocrator*, one of the translations of "Sabaoth" in the Septuagint), the Name (*Hashshem*), the Lord Sabaoth, the One who comes, all titles that belong to Jesus, who created the world and redeemed it by "taking on our humanity to give us life through his divinity".

The compiler who merged the two sets together inserted the hymn containing the *Sanctus* into the middle of another hymn "Glory be to you", which he follows

with the post-sanctus, the prayer of intercession and the epiclesis (on the epiclesis see *Sacrifice et sacerdoce*, p. 62-76), but did so with connecting formulas and rather subtle interpolations, which explains why no one until now has been able to conclude the analysis initiated by Dom Hieronymus Engberding on the prayer of intercession (*Oriens christ.* 41 (1957), 102-124).

#### THE HOSANNA-BENEDICTUS IN THE WEST AND THE EAST

Further proof that the *Sanctus* was originally addressed to Christ is that, in all the liturgies save two, it is followed with no indication of a change of address by the exclamation *Hosanna in excelsis. Benedictus qui venit in nomine Domini. Hosanna in excelsis*, "Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest". This is the acclamation which the evangelists took from Ps 118 (117).25-26 to place it in the mouths of the crowd when Jesus made his triumphant entry into Jerusalem (Mt 21.9 and pl). The two exceptions are the alexandrian liturgy in its various anaphoras by anti-arianism and that of the *Apostolic Constitutions* by arianism.

#### THE VERE SANCTUS OR POST-SANCTUS

In the liturgies the continuation of the anaphora is linked to the *Sanctus* by a transition which, except in Rome, repeats one or more words from it. This transition proves that the prayers following the *Sanctus-Benedictus* are more recent, and the absence of the *Vere sanctus* in the roman canon proves that the *Te igitur* existed before the introduction of the *Sanctus* in Rome.

There are three kinds of Post-sanctus :

1) In the gallican and mozarabic liturgies the two words *sanctus* and *benedictus* are repeated and introduce more or less directly into the narrative of the Last Supper. The simplest and most direct formula is : *Vere sanctus, vere benedictus dñs nr ihs xps qui pridie quam pateretur (...)*, "Truly holy, truly blessed our Lord Jesus Christ, who on the eve of his passion, took the bread (...)". The reference to Christ quite naturally calls for the insertion of a more or less prolix christological development between the duplicated words and the introductory words to the Last Supper narrative.

2) In the Eastern liturgies, the word *benedictus* is never duplicated, which seems to prove that the *Vere sanctus* were only written after the *Sanctus* had been transferred to the Father. They usually introduce a second so-called christological thanksgiving, which in fact develops the theme of the "economy" or plan of redemption from original sin to the resurrection and the last judgement; this development is summarized by the enumeration of the "anamnesis", preceded by the insertion of the the Last Supper narrative.

3) In the Alexandrian type liturgies, where the *Benedictus* is absent, the link is effected by repeating the last sentence of the *Sanctus* : "Truly the heaven and

earth are filled with your glory! Fill us also with the glory which comes from you (Jn 5.41; 17.5) and daign to send the Holy Ghost onto your creatures (...)" (*Papyrus from Deir Balyzeh*, Hänggi-Pahl 128).

## CONCLUSION TO OUR STUDY ON THE SANCTUS OF THE MASS

However incomplete and cursory, our study allows us, in our opinion, to suggest the following conclusions :

1) The liturgical *Sanctus* was originally addressed to Christ in his capacity as Lord Sabaoth, sometimes more or less mistaken for the Father because of the principle of the unicity of God.

2) The introduction of the *Sanctus* in the anaphora suggests that Jesus was already honoured by hymns where the seraphic song was addressed to him. We think we identified one of these hymns in the pattern formula of Eastern introductions to the *Sanctus*, a formula reproduced with a number of variants in the anaphoras. We shall identify another of these hymns for the Western liturgies in the *Te Deum*.

## II. HYMNS ADDRESSED TO CHRIST

### THE TE DEUM

The *Te Deum* was also transferred from Christ to the Father and the three divine persons. Once again it is close attention to the rules of grammar which mainly enable to eliminate the glosses. The mentions of the Father and the Trinity should be in the vocative, but they are in the accusative, since their function is to correct or complete the first two parts of the sentence where *deum* and *dominum* are in the accusative. Now the accusative clearly indicates that these words act as predicate of the pronoun *Te* in the accusative and we must translate : "We praise you as god, we confess that you are the Lord". If we apply the rule, the mentions of the Father and the three divine persons make nonsense; we will omit them in our translation.

Another correction should be made in the *Te ad liberandum suscepturus hominem* verse, a verse which has caused much ink to flow, particularly from the pen of Dom Germain Morin (*Rev. Ben.* 7 (1890) 115-156; 11 (1894) 49-77, 337-345; 15 (1898) 99-101), to justify the expression 'to assume man'. But if this difficult meaning is given to *suscipere hominem*, *liberandum* has no complement. All we need to remember is that *suscipere* with a verbal adjective means "to take care of, to undertake" according to the example in my school grammar *puerum educandum suscepit*, "he undertook to bring up the child", or in Gaffiot's dictionary *gloriam Africani tuendam* "to undertake to defend the glory of the African".

Therefore, *ad* which transforms the verbal adjective into a gerund, must be suppressed and we must translate "undertaking to free man, you did not abhor the womb of a virgin".

Lastly, according to the Bangor antiphony (7th c.) and the Irish Book of Hymns, the *Te Deum* was preceded, like the *Gloria in excelsis*, by an invitatory consisting of the first verse of Psalm 112, to which the first two verses of the *Te Deum* respond verbally, *Laudate pueri Dominum, laudate nomen Domini — Te deum laudamus, te Dominum confitemur*.

With some other minor improvements, the hymn regains its perfect unity, literary elegance and true meaning :

— O children, praise the Lord,  
praise the Name of the Lord  
R — We praise you as god,  
we confess you as Lord.  
To you all the angels,  
To you the heavens and all their powers,  
To you the cherubim and seraphim  
cry with an unceasing voice :  
Holy, holy, holy, Lord god Sabaoth.  
Heaven and earth are full of the majesty of your glory!

The glorious choir of Apostles,  
the multitudinous troops of prophets,  
the white cohort of martyrs praise you.  
In the whole world the holy Church confesses you!  
You, the King of glory, O Christ,  
You, the eternal Son of the Father.

Undertaking to free man  
You did not abhor a virgin's womb!  
Destroying the sting of death,  
You opened the kingdom of heaven to believers!  
Seated on the right hand of God,  
You are awaited to come as judge!  
You therefore, we beseech you, help your servants  
whom you redeemed with your precious blood.  
May they together with your saints  
receive the gift of eternal life.

It will be noted that I eliminated the words "in the glory of God" which duplicate "to the right of God" and are borrowed from Ph 2.11, with the same aim

of attenuating, if not contradicting the affirmation "Heaven and earth are filled with your glory", and the apostrophe "King of glory".

It will be specially noted the statement that Christ, the King of Glory, is the eternal Son of the Father, unlike the gnostic Sabaoth who is the son of Yaldabaoth and is not eternal.

#### THE GLORIA IN EXCELSIS DEO

The *Gloria in excelsis deo* does not include the *Sanctus*, but comes into our subject since it was also originally addressed entirely to Christ, to whom "because of his great glory", it is said "alone you are holy, alone you are the Lord, Jesus Christ".

Three recensions of the *Gloria* have survived : the Greco-Latin recension sung at mass, the arianized recension from the *Apostolic Constitutions* VII,47 and the Nestorian recension. To these must be added another arianized hymn, *Ainete paides kyrion*, "*Laudate pueri Dominum*" of the *Apostolic Constitutions* VII,48.

The analysis of these texts and their comparison allow us to conclude that the *Gloria* is a rewriting of *Laudate pueri A.C.* VII,48 before the hymn was arianized. The invitatory *Laudate pueri* from Ps 112.1 was replaced, in order to address half of the hymn to the Father, with the Christmas hymn from Lk 2.14 (itself a rewriting of Lk 19.38b). Furthermore, in the middle of the text the words "God allmighty Father, Lord the only begotten Son Jesus Christ" have been interpolated and, at the end, the words "with the Holy Spirit in the glory of God the Father".

Here is the translation of both texts restored to their original form, set in facing columns

#### The *Ainete* hymn in A.C. VII,48

O Children, praise the Lord,  
praise the Name of the Lord.

We praise you,  
We sing of you,  
we bless you

#### The primitive Greek *Gloria*

O children, praise the Lord,  
praise the Name of the Lord.

We praise you,  
we bless you,  
we adore you,  
we glorify you,

on account of your great glory,  
O Lord king,  
  
Lamb of God,  
Son of the Father,  
who takes away the sin of the world.

Unto you praise,  
Unto you the singing,  
Unto you the glory,  
Jesus Christ,  
world without end.

on account of your great glory,  
O Lord king,  
Lord god,  
Lamb of God,  
Son of the Father.  
(You) who takes away the sins of the  
world,  
Have pity on us.  
Receive our prayer,  
(you) who sitteth enthroned  
at the right of the Father.  
For alone you are holy,  
alone you are Lord,  
alone you are glorious,  
Jesus Christ,  
world without end.

The Christmas hymn makes a break with the beginning proper of the hymn: "Glory be to God on high, and on earth peace, towards men goodwill. We praise thee,...". The addresses "Lord king, Lord god, Lamb of God, Son of the Father" will be noted as well, the latter being no more of a truism than in the *Te Deum*. The notation "who takes away the sin of the world" (Jn 1.29) in the *Ainete* hymn is a second motif of praise that parallels the first "on account of your great glory"; in the *Gloria* it becomes the beginning of a supplication.

#### THE HEIS HAGIOS

The *Heis hagios* "Only one holy, only one Lord, Jesus Christ, in the Glory of God the Father" corresponds to the last phrase of *Gloria in excelsis* in its oldest attestation, the *Alexandrinus* (5th c.), but this acclamation is certainly much earlier still, and is rather the source of the phrase of the *Gloria*.

In the Eastern rites the *Heis hagios* is the people's response to the priest's declaration: "Holy things unto the holy". Pronounced before the distribution of the holy communion to the congregation so as to exclude the unworthy from the holy table this statement comes from Mt 7.6 via *Didache* IX,5: "Let no one eat or drink your eucharist, unless those baptized in the name of the Lord, for on this matter the Lord said: "Do not give what is holy to dogs ". The passage from Mt continues; "Do not throw pearls before swine lest they should trample them and tear you". The sentence "Do not give what is holy to dogs" is contradicted in Mt 15.27 (Mk 7.28) : "Even the dogs eat the crumbs from their master's table". Originally, it was the formulation in the Jewish language of the gnostic recommendation which follows it. The dogs, denoting the non-Jews, correspond to swine, denoting non-agnostics, with an allusion to an episode from the *Odys-*

sey: Ulysses' companions were turned into pigs by Circe's wand (Song X, 188 sqq.). Simonian gnosticism as attested in the *Elenchos* (VI,15-16) reinforced the similarity between the eucharist and "molu" herbs by attributing to the sacramental efficiency of the latter, not only to protect Ulysses from the magic effectiveness of Circe's wand, but even to turn the swine back into men: "Only he who had tasted the fruit was not turned into an animal by Circe and, though his men had already been changed into animals, by virtue of this fruit (and not by the Circe's wand) they were restored to their former, natural state, and thus recovered their original shape and nature".

*Ta hagia*, "holy things", or *to hagian*, "the holy thing", correspond to the "pearls" or "pearl" (*margaritês* in Greek, *margârîthâ* in Syriac, *margarita* in Latin) which designates the consecrated particles (Br. 385; Hanssens, *Inst. lit.* II, 181; dictionaries edited by Du Cange, Payne-Smith, Brockelmann, Costaz, etc., *ad verbum*) which, as we saw in the conclusion to our study of the Emmaus narrative in chapter four (*supra*, p. 51), symbolize the gnosis. It is gnosis which is represented by the word "pearl" in the parable of the pearl from the *Gospel of Thomas* 76: "The kingdom of the Father is like a merchant who possessed a bundle and found a pearl. He was a wise merchant: he sold the bundle and only bought the pearl. You, too, will seek the treasure that never fails, on which the moth does not feed, nor the worm destroy". This parable like that of the hidden treasure (*Gospel of Thomas*, 109), is plagiarized in Mt 13.44-46 with a loss of substance (See a more comprehensive study in my book *Sacrifice et sacerdoce*, pp. 115-125). Likewise, in the 'Song of the pearl' in the *Acts of Thomas* (108-113) the pearl whose possession alone enables to return to the homeland, can only symbolize the gnosis, the knowledge of the path of salvation.

The sequel of the logion: "lest they should trample them underfoot and turn to attack you" can only be understood in the allegorical sense as the equivalence between the pearl and gnosis, between holy things and mysteries. The author of the *Testamentum Domini* makes Jesus say: "(...) my accomplished workers will know most of my word, all those I have often imparted to you in secret before I suffered, the words you know and understand, for my mysteries are for mine own (...) Take care not to give my mysteries to dogs, nor throw pearls before swine, as I have often recommended (...) But this teaching will be given to those who stand fast and firm (...)" (*Testamentum Domini* I,XVIII). Criticizing the heretics, Tertullian applies the same meaning to the logion: "It is doubtful who is a catechumen, and who is a believer, they have all access alike, they enter, listen, pray pell-mell even with pagans if one comes along; they have no scruples about giving holy things to dogs and scattering pearls (false pearls to tell the truth) before swine" (*De prescriptione*, 41).

The affirmation "Only one holy" refers in the last analysis to the seraphim cry, perhaps via the phrase in the translation from Daniel 8.13 in Theodotion's version, as understood in the *Apostolic Constitutions* VII,35,3: "And the army of the angels of fire and intelligent spirits say: Only one saint to Phelmouni; and the

holy seraphim with the hexapter cherubim cry out the triumphant hymn, chanting aloud: "Holy, holy, (...) filled with your glory" (transcribed literally in Greek, *Phelmouni* simply means "so-and-so" in Hebrew).

The affirmation "only one Lord" comes from 1 Co 8.6: "yet for us there is only one God the Father, (...) and only one Lord, Jesus Christ (...)", and also from Eph 4.5-6. "One Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all (...)". But principally the affirmation "only one Lord, Jesus Christ" is opposed in 1 Co just as in the liturgy to the Jewish faith, the *shema* from Deuteronomy 6.4: "Hear, O Israel: 'YHWH our God YHWH one!'". This nominal phrase, i.e. without a verb, fairly common in Hebrew, is open to several interpretations depending on where one chooses to insert the verb 'to be'. In the context of the henotheist struggle against alien gods expressed in the decalogues in Ex 20.2-3 and Deut 5.6-7: "I am YHWH your god (...), you shall have no other god but me", the *shema* formula can only mean: "YHWH is our god, YHWH alone". Though, clearly the monotheist interpretation based on Deut 4.35 is preferred: "so that you may know that YHWH is the true God and there is none other". And it is impossible to make this text express this meaning unless the word 'YHWH' (fraudulently translated as 'the Eternal') or 'Lord' is understood as equivalent to the word 'God', hence the translators' bewilderment: "The Eternal, our God, the Eternal is One" (Créhange, *Prières des Israélites du rite allemand*, Paris, 1863, p. 47); "The Eternal our God is the only Eternal one" (Ostervald, Segond); "YHWH our God is the only YHWH" (Jerusalem Bible). The Koran will simply say: "No god but God", but this is not a translation.

The purpose of the words "in the glory of God the Father" from Eph 2.11, as we remarked earlier for the *Te Deum* and the *Gloria*, is to subordinate the Son to the Father by transferring the glory from the first to the second. But the liturgies did not stop there: the St. James liturgy adds a doxology which rather seems to address the Father (Br. 62); the 9th century Byzantine liturgy adds "in the fullness of the Holy Spirit" (Br. 341); and the Alexandrian liturgy affirms more clearly still its trinitarian belief: "Only one holy Father, only one holy Son, only one holy Spirit, in the unity of the Holy Spirit".

### THE TRISAGION

The *Trisagion*: *Hagios ho theos, hagios ischyros, hagios athanatos, eleèson hêmas*, "God Holy, mighty Holy, immortal Holy, have mercy on us" is a trope or paraphrase of the *Sanctus* which adds a qualification to each of the three repetitions of the word Holy. For this reason alone, it unquestionably addresses Christ, but the Byzantines wanted it to address the Trinity, hence the 'B

byzantine' quarrel between the partisans of either attributions, especially when Peter the Fuller, archbishop of Antioch (468-470), added the words "who was crucified for us". The history of this quarrel is to be found in theological

dictionaries, and there is a very full account of the texts in Hanssens, *Inst. Lit.* III, 108.156.

First of all, some grammar : *ho theos* with the article means "God" with a capital letter and, despite the article, stands in apposition to *hagios* like *ischyros* and *athanatos* as in the biblical expression *Kyrios ho theos*; it must therefore be translated as we did, and not as is usually the case, by "O holy God, holy and mighty, holy and immortal".

"God Holy" affirms the divinity of Jesus beneath his humanity, "mighty Holy" affirms his power, masked by his voluntary state of weakness, with reference to the words of John the Baptist: "but one who is more powerful than I is coming after me" (Mt 3.11) and to the victory of the one who "has bound the Mighty One (the creator) and plundered all his possessions" (Mt 12.29 and pl). "Immortal Holy" recalls that, though immortal Christ experienced death, though impassive he suffered, though rich he became poor, etc. "Take pity on us" continues the unending series of Old Testament *miserere*, echoed by as many *misertus es*, "he took pity".

In addition to the statement by Peter the Fuller that the *Trisagion* belongs to Christ by adding "who was crucified for us", many others are to be found, and some are totally independent. Let us first quote this trope from the trope in the Ethiopian liturgy:

God Holy, mighty Holy, living immortal Holy,  
 born of Mary the holy virgin,  
 take pity on us, O Lord!

God Holy, mighty Holy, living immortal Holy,  
 baptized in the Jordan and hung on the tree of the cross,  
 take pity on us!

God Holy, mighty Holy, living immortal Holy  
 who rose from the dead on the third day,  
 ascended to heaven in glory,  
 sits at the right hand of the Father,  
 will return in glory to judge the quick and the dead,  
 take pity on us, O Lord!

Glory to the Father, glory to the Son, glory to the Holy Ghost,  
 now and for ever world without end.

But the most beautiful trope is undoubtedly the both christological and vetero-testamentary commentary in the *Improperia* for the adoration of the cross on Holy Friday:

O my people, what have I done to you? How have I grieved you?  
 Answer me!  
 Was it because I took you out of Egypt (Jude 5)

that you prepared the cross for your saviour?

Agios o Theos, Sanctus Deus,  
 Agios ischyros, Sanctus fortis,  
 Agios athanatos, eleison imas,  
 Sanctus immortalis, miserere nobis.

Was it because I led you forty years in the desert,  
 nourished you with manna and led you to a beautiful land  
 that you prepared the cross for your saviour?

Agios o Theos, Sanctus Deus,  
 Agios...

The questions and supplications in response follow one another twelve times in succession, each time opposing an episode from the passion: the perforated side, flagellation, slapping, the crown of thorns (...) with one or other of the salvational interventions of the Old Testament, often the very ones which the author of the IVth *Book of Esdras* reminded YHWH, imploring his mercy and pity once again.

In contrast with these and other texts, the trinitarian interpretation appears somewhat artificial and very poor, for instance the trope quoted by St. John of Damascus (8th c.): "Holy God and Father, holy mighty Son of God who become incarnate and was crucified in the flesh for us, holy immortal Holy Spirit, the only Lord Sabaoth, take pity on us" (*De Trisagion*, 26; Br. 481, 23-26).

The non-roman Latin liturgies have also retained traces of the *Trisagion* addressed to Christ. The *Liber Mozarabicus Sacramentorum*, evidence of an ancient liturgy from Spain, has preserved numerous echoes (Férotin, c. 186, 191, 737, 745, 756, 760, 763, 806, 809). The *Bobbio Missal* (Lombardy), evidence of an ancient Gallican liturgy, contains two oraisons whose title *Post aios* proves that the *Trisagion* was sung. Here is the text (25 and 32):

O God Most High, *Aios* (= *hagios*) allmighty Sabaoth, who descended from the highest heaven to suffer for us, take pity on us! (...)

You who redeemed us, protect the price of your precious blood.

In the Coptic church in Egypt it was customary to inscribe the rim of the eucharist bread, destined to become the body of Christ, with the *Trisagion* in the form *agios o theos, agios ischyros, agios athanatos* or the seraphic cry *agios, agios, agios Chyrios Sabeoth* (Hanssens, *Inst. lit.* II, 77).

We shall conclude with a phrase from Denys Bar Salibi on the *Trisagion* in his *Exposition of the Liturgy* written between 1166 and 1171 in Amida (Diarbekir) in Mesopotamia: "The hymn is addressed to the Son alone and not to the three persons, contrary to what the Chalcedonians believe" (IV, Labourt p. 45).

## THE CHEROUBIKON

No document has preserved a description of the ceremonial with which the *fermentum* was brought and received in the *tituli* in Rome. But it may be assumed that the offertory procession described in the *Ordines* is a continuation of it. This is what, by comparison, allows us to think that the function of the offertory procession in the Gallican liturgy was to carry to the altar together with the bread and the chalice for consecration, fragments reserved from the eucharist at the previous mass, which in Rome are called the *sancta*, 'the holy things'. St. Germanus of Paris (496-576) described and commented on this procession as follows:

We are commanded to be quiet spiritually (...) so that (...) our hearts concentrate on receiving Christ. The *sonus* is sung when the oblation advances : the Lord commanded Moses to fashion silver trumpets (...) Now, therefore, when the body of Christ is carried to the altar, it is no longer with irreproachable trumpets but with spiritual voices that the Church sings the illustrious wonders of Christ with a sweet melody. The body of Christ is brought in towers because the tomb of the Lord was hewn out of stone in the shape of a tower and inside a bed (was hewn) on which the body of the Lord lay and from which the triumphant King of glory arose. The blood of Christ from his side is offered in a chalice because the mystery of the eucharist was consecrated in such a vessel on the evening before the Lord suffered (...) (*PL* 71, 89-98).

Proof that, at least in the beginning, the offertory procession concerned consecrated bread is this often quoted passage from Gregory of Tours (538-594):

After reading the passion (of St. Polycarp) and other lessons, the time came for the sacrificial offering. The deacon also received a tower in which the mystery of the body of the Lord was placed. He took it to the doorway, but as he entered the temple to place it on the altar, it slipped out of his grasp and floated towards the altar, and the deacon was unable to grasp it back. The reason, in my opinion, is that the deacon had an unpure conscience (*Gloria Martyrum*, 85).

Such a naive legend would not have been invented if the tower had not contained consecrated hosts.

The same offertory procession is found in the East called the Great Entrance, and certainly possessed the same function initially as the accompanying chants attest, and it could only have come into existence if Christ himself was carried in the species or figure of the bread. Moreover, this is precisely what happens in the mass known as the Pre-sanctified, a eucharistic ritual for communion, only celebrated on Holy Friday in the Latin Church but throughout Lent in the Eastern rites.

Four texts are to be found in the liturgies, the first three quoted, for special days, have not been glossed, the fourth, for ordinary celebrations, has become trinitarian:

The *Nun hai dynameis* for the mass of the Pre-sanctified:

At that moment the powers of heaven unite invisibly  
their adoration to ours,  
for the King of glory is making his entrance,  
for the perfect victim is escorted!

With faith and awe let us draw nigh  
to partake in eternal life. Hallelujah.(Br. 348,21)

The *Tou deipnou sou* for Holy Thursday:

Today, O Son of God, take me as a guest at your mystical banquet:  
I will not divulge your mysteries to the enemies,  
nor will I give you the kiss of Judas,  
but like the penitent thief I confess you:

Remember me in your kingdom. (Br. 396,5)

The *Sigêsato pasa sarx* for Easter day:

Let all mortal flesh be quiet  
and stand in awe and trembling,  
proscribing all earthly thoughts,  
for the King of kings, Christ our God,  
comes to be immolated and given as nourishment to believers.

He is preceded by choirs of angels,  
all the powers and principalities,  
the polyommat cherubim and hexapter seraphim  
who veil their face and cry out the hymn Hallelujah.(Br. 41,25)

The *Cheroubikon* for ordinary celebrations:

We who mystically act as cherubim,  
(and sing to the lifegiving Trinity the thrice holy hymn)  
brush aside all the cares of life  
to welcome the King of all things  
invisibly escorted by the angelic orders. Hallelujah. (Br. 122,18;377,9)

## THE PHOS HILARON

The prayer *Phôs hilaron*, 'Joyous light' takes pride of place among the 'lucernary' prayers, i.e. thanksgivings for the light recited in the evening when the lamp is lit. This is the translation of the actual text:

Joyous light of the holy glory  
of the heavenly immortal Father, holy and blessed,  
O Jesus Christ,  
arrived at the setting of the sun,  
lit by the evening light,  
we sing of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit of God.

You are to be sung at all times by seasonsable voices,  
O Son of God who gives Life;  
this is why the universe glorifies you.

In this hymn addressed to Christ, the reference to the three holy persons is wholly unexpected; it destroys the unity of the prayer. The original text was clearly "we sing of you".

However, it is the initial address that deserves our attention. Here Jesus is identified with the light which radiates from the glory of the Father, i.e. the luminous aura, halo or physical aureole depicted as emanating from the divine majesty, with such a dazzling brightness that the angels are unable to bear its light, but which the elect, on the contrary, according to the gnostics, may contemplate because they are of the same nature as God and in his image and likeness. Now this is quite different from the generation of the Word *Lumen ex Lumine*, "Light born of Light", according to the expression of the Nicene Council, to illustrate the consubstantiality of Father and Son. The solution to the problem is that the words "heavenly Father" were introduced into the text to explain the words "holy Glory". The word "Glory" should be written with a capital letter. It is one of the reverential expressions used by the Jews to designate God without pronouncing his Name. Here are a few examples of this use of the word "Glory", often qualified by the adjective "great" or "holy".

— In the description of the dwelling places of the heavens in 1 *Enoch*, we read in chapter 14.19-21:

And from underneath the high throne there flowed out rivers of burning fire (Dan 7.10) so that it was impossible to look at it. And the great *Glory* sat on it, and his raiment was brighter than the sun and white than any snow. And no angel could enter, nor see the face of the *Glorious* and Magnificent one, nor any creature of flesh could look on it.

— A similar description of the seven heavens in the *Testament of Levi*, chapter 3.4, reads:

In the seventh heaven, the highest heaven, dwells the *great Glory* above all godliness.

— In the *Ascension of Isaiah* one of dozen circumlocutions the author uses to designate "the one who is not named" (7.37; 8.7) is "great Glory" and "the Glorious One", even applied to the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Let us first quote chapter 9.41-46 :

And the eyes of my spirit were open, and I saw the *great Glory*; but I could not then look upon him, nor could the angel who was with me, nor any of the angels I had seen worshipping my Lord. Yet I saw the righteous gazing intently upon the *Glory*. And my Lord (and the angel of the Spirit too) came near me and said, 'Privileged indeed you are to have been allowed to see God, and privileged also, because of you, is the angel who is with you'. And I saw how my Lord worshipped, and the angel of the Holy Spirit too, and both together gave praise to God. And Then all the righteous came near and worhsipped, and the angels came near and worshipped; and all the angels sang praises.

Let us also quote the passage from Chapter 10 where Isaiah witnesses the coming of the Saviour into the world (Jn 3.17 etc.) and later his descent through the heavens. The significance of this text for the subject of this book goes far beyond what it has for the point we are currently proving:

10<sup>4</sup> And I heard the voice of the Most High, the Father of my Lord, saying to my Lord the Christ, who will be called Jesus: "Go and descend through all the heavens (...) and you must transform yourself so as to be like all those who are in the five heavens (...) and in the vault of heaven as well (...) And so none of the angels of the world will know that you are Lord with me of the seven heavens and their angels (1 Co 2.8; Eph 3.10-12) (...) so that you may judge and destroy the archons and the angels and the gods of that world and the world itself over which they exercise dominion (1 Jn 3.8; Marcion according to Irenæus, *Adv. H.* 1,27,2). For they have denied me and have said, "We alone are and who is there apart from us?" (Is 45.6, etc.). And afterwards you will ascend from the angels of death to your appointed place; and you will have no need to transform yourself as you go up, for you will ascend in glory (Ps 24 (23).7-10) to sit on my right hand (Ps 110 (109).2). Then the archons and the powers of the world will worship you". And I heard the *great Glory* giving these commands to my Lord.

And so it was that when he had left the seventh heaven (...)

Isaiah witnesses the accomplishment of the plan until its fulfilment:

11<sup>22</sup> And I saw how he ascended to the seventh heaven, and how all the righteous and the angels glorified him. And then I saw him sit on the right hand of the great *Glory* (Heb 1.13; 8.1), whose brightness I said I could not bear to gaze upon . And also I saw the angel of the Holy Spirit sit on his left hand (...).

— In Jude, the author warns the receiver of his letter against "the ungodly, (who) pervert the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny our only master and lord Jesus Christ"; to support his warning he recalls some exemplary punishments from the Old Testament, and then adds, verse 8.

Despite this, the ungodly in their madness defile the flesh, reject the Lordship, slander the *Glories*.

In spite of the Second Letter of Peter which plagiarizes the Jude throughout to correct it and makes the "glories" into a category of demons — as if demons could be "blasphemed" — the blasphemed "Glories" can only be the Father and the rejected "Lordship", to which the Holy Spirit might perhaps be added.

The *Phôs hilaron* should therefore read as follows:

O radiant light of the holy Glory,  
 immortal, holy, blessed Jesus Christ,  
 arrived at the setting of the sun,  
 lit by the evening light,  
 we sing of you.  
 You are worthy to be sung at all times  
 by seasonable voices,  
 O Son of God who gives life,  
 and this is why the universe glorifies you.

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION: THE TEACHING OF THE TEXTS

In the early Church Jesus was not worshipped as the messiah or Christ but as the thrice holy Lord Sabaoth.

The *Sanctus* of the mass implies, we said, the previous existence of hymns addressing him the seraphim cry. All the introductions to the *Sanctus* in the Eastern liturgies seem to derive from a hymn comprising the myriads of angels from Dan 7.10, the cherubim from Ez 10.12 and the seraphim from Is 6.3. In the West,

the *per xpm* which concludes the preface, has provided the insertion point for the *Sanctus* and seems to have attracted it as the glorification of Christ to complement that of the Father. The roman genius for oratory, gave birth to the solemn *Te Deum*. To Christ are also addressed the Greek *Gloria* (originally an *Ainete, paides — Ainoumen se*), the *Heis hagios*, the *Trisagion*, the *Cheroubikon*. To these we added the *Phôs hilaron* because it was also transferred from Christ to the three divine persons.

The studies have led us to quote the liturgies of Gregory of Naziance and Ad-dai and Mari addressed to Christ, and some passages from the *Ascension of Isaiah* on the *descensus* and *ascensus* of Christ in anticipation of the next chapter.

## Chapter 13

### THE PHILIPPIANS HYMN 2.6-11

So that every tongue should confess Jesus is Lord  
(Phil 2.11)

We know therefore from the *Hypostasis of the Archons* that the Old Testament god was cast into Tartaros for claiming to be the supreme god, and that his son was exalted to the seventh heaven in reward for his conversion.

Furthermore, we have learned from the New Testament, the Fathers, the liturgy and even iconography, that Jesus was honoured by the early christians with the Lord Sabaoth title as the god of the Old Testament as revealed and acting in the world, and as the son of the same god of the Old Testament reconsidered as the supreme god.

The hymn preserved by chance, as an example to be followed, in the Letter to the Philippians, assures us that Jesus, the gnostic saviour who descended from the world above became Lord Sabaoth through the assimilation of his descent and ascent to heaven with the conversion and exaltation of the also gnostic Sabaoth. And it is partly due to this assimilation of the saviour with his son Sabaoth that the Old Testament god became once again the supreme god through his assimilation with the Father.

The Philippians hymn 2.6-11 is without doubt the most debated text in the New Testament throughout the ages and even after Vatican II when it was translated in the *Dominical Lectionary* in 1969. The first two verses pose the most serious problems because orthodoxy refuses to admit that they contradict the consubstantiality of the Father and the Son defined and defended by the councils. Acquaintance with the myth in the *Hypostasis of the Archons* greatly facilitates our understanding of the text.

The hymn appears in the Letter as a quotation of a wellknown, and therefore probably liturgical text, a quotation in support of a moral recommendation set out as an example to be followed:

2<sup>4</sup> Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others. 5 Have the same feelings as the Christ Jesus, 6 who, though he was by nature in the form of a god, did not deem a prey to be equal to God,

<sup>7</sup> but emptied himself,  
 taking the form of a server,  
 making himself in human likeness,  
 And in appearance taken for a human  
<sup>8</sup> he humbled himself,  
 become obedient to the point of death,  
 even death on a cross.  
<sup>9</sup> Therefore God also overexalted him  
 and gave him the Name that is above every name,  
<sup>10</sup> so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,  
 in heaven and on earth and under the earth,  
<sup>11</sup> and every tongue should confess Jesus [Christ] is Lord  
 in the Glory of God the Father.

The hymn is in two parts: the first describes voluntary humbling, the second elevation by God.

Voluntary humbling takes place in two stages: the fall from the divine to a human form, then in a human form, the acceptance of death on the cross.

Elevation is the reward for humbling. This elevation would not be a reward if it had not placed he who deserved it above the rank that was first his. In reality, it consists of conferring on the one who was only a god among gods the very name of the supreme god, the one true God. Consequently, Jesus is declared "Lord (= YHWH) in the Glory of the Father".

In the more detailed commentary we must now undertake, we apologize for quoting abundantly Greek words transcribed in Roman characters for typographic reasons; this is indispensable since the main problem concerns translation.

The hymn begins with a relative pronoun. It must therefore be assumed that the pronoun links it to a prayer which, like the introductory sentence, ends with a reference to Jesus. One may think of a "eucharistic" thanksgiving ending with *per Christum*, like the Latin thanksgivings which introduce the *Sanctus*, or "by Jesus your servant", like the thanksgiving in the *Didache*.

### THE FIRST SELF-HUMBLING

The sentence that expresses the first humbling is framed by two participial clauses which echo each other word for word: "existing in the form of a god" — "taking the form of a server". The verb *huparchein*, 'to exist', formed with the noun *arché*, 'beginning' signifies 'to be primitively, originally, by birth, by nature'. For example, man "is (by nature) the image and glory of God": *eikôn kai doxa theou huparchôn* (1 Co 11.7); when the Antioch incident took place, Paul said to Cephas: "You who are a Jew (by birth)": *su ioudaios huparchôn* (Gal 2.14). The word *huparchôn* opposes *labôn* "taking", as what is by nature is oppo-

sed to what becomes by borrowing, while remaining, of course, what it is, the same person, the same 'self', the same subject in a different form.

The word *morphê* means 'form'. A thing or person can assume various forms. Examples of this are abundant. At his transfiguration, Jesus "changed from one form to another", *metemorphôtê*, "was transfigured" (Mk 9.2; Mt 17.2); after his resurrection, Jesus appeared to the disciples "in another form", *en hetera; morphê*. Earlier we quoted Justin: "Jesus Christ, being of old the Word, appearing at one time in the form of fire, at another under the guise of an incorporeal being (...)" (*1 Apol.*, 63); Irenaeus: "Abraham being a prophet knew that the Son of God in a human form..." (*Dem.* 44); and Eusebius: "If it is impossible to accept that the innate and immutable substance of allmighty God can be transformed into human form, (...) the God and Lord (...) who was seen in the likeness of a man how (...) can he be called other than the Word? (...) This Word that appeared to Jacob again in a human form (...)" (*E.H.*, I, ii, 8-9).

The word 'god' in the first part of the phrase should obviously be written with a small letter, because God, being invisible, is without form; which is why the passages quoted earlier distinguish him from the Word. The Word is therefore 'god' with a small letter not 'God' with a capital letter. This is also what the beginning of the Johannine prologue teaches: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God (with the article in Greek and a capital letter in English) and the Word was god (without the article and with a small letter); he was in the beginning with God (with an article and a capital letter)". Since the Word is with God, he is not God, but god.

It is clear, without having recourse to pagan mythology, that gods can have one form and that they can change this form. For the gnostics, Yaldabaoth "assumed a form moulded out of the shadow and became an arrogant creature resembling a lion" (*Hyp. Ar.* 94,19); "the perfect ones call him Ariael, because he is lion-like" (*Orig. World* 100,25); Sophia saw that the abortion of her parthogenesis had assumed "a different form from hers and had taken the form of a snake-faced lion" (*Apoc. John* II,1,10); "Here are the names of the archons with their corresponding bodies: the first is Athoth, he has a sheep's face; the second is Eloaiou, he has a donkey's face; the third is Astaphaios, he has a hyena's face; the fourth is Yao, he has a serpent's face with seven heads; the fifth is Sabaoth, he has a dragon's face; the sixth is Adonim, he has a monkey's face; the seventh is Sabbede, he has a shining fire-face. This is the seventh of the week. But Yaldabaoth had a multitude of faces in addition to all of them so that he could bring a face before all of them according to his desire" (*Apoc. John* II,11,22-12,4).

The word 'god', *theos*, is opposed to the word *doulos*. It is generally translated according to its usual meaning, as 'slave' or 'servant'. But the slave or servant of whom? Furthermore, this form of a slave is simply human form and does not mean that all men are slaves or servants in the ordinary sense. So here the word has a religious meaning: *theos* is a person who is worshipped, *doulos* is he who worships him, the first is honoured, the second honours; the first is adored, the

second adores. The word has the same meaning in the first verse of the Letter to the Romans, and I suggest translating it by 'server' for want of a better equivalent: "Paul, a server of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle".

The verb *ekenôsen heauton*, literally 'he emptied himself', expresses the downfall, degradation, abasement, diminution inherent in the transition from the divine form to the human.

There is no need to look further for the meaning of "*kenosis*". With regard to the translation, in my opinion the Greek expression is best translated in English as "he humbled himself".

The sentence *oukh harpagmon hêgêsato to einai isa theô; alla (...)* is one of those texts that have been "explained, commented, discussed, distorted, forced to such a degree, sometimes twisted to suit the meaning of everyone's argument, that in the end one no longer knows what they mean" wrote Charles Resplandis. We should say that until now no one knew what this hymn meant.

The construction *oukh (...)* *alla*, "he did not (...) but he humbled himself (...)" indicates that one possibility at least other than humbling was available to Jesus: he could choose to remain in his primordial form or elevate himself. Only the first hypothesis could be contemplated by the supporters of Nicene orthodoxy; the second hypothesis is that held by independent critics.

Though not everyone agrees about the meaning of the sentence, there is some agreement at least about the meaning of the words *hêgeisthai*, constructed with a double accusative, means "to judge, appreciate, consider as"; *to einai isa theô;* means "the fact of being on an equal footing with God, equal to God", or, more simply, "equality with God", "God" obviously with a capital letter, because "equality with a god" would be meaningless; *harpagmos* designates either the object of a robbery, 'prey, plunder', or the act of robbing, 'taking by force, theft, usurpation'.

The supporters of the Nicene orthodoxy start from the equality of the three divine persons: therefore, "Jesus existing in the form of God (i.e. being God) did not regard equality with God as something to be usurped, but he humbled himself (...)". To avoid a tautology or nonsense, the word God must be taken with two different meanings: the first expressing the divinity of Jesus, the second designating the person of the Father. Apart from wondering why the idea of usurpation came into the author's mind, two reasons contradict this interpretation. Firstly, "in the form of a god" does not mean "being God" with a capital letter; secondly, if in the beginning Jesus was God equal to the Father, one cannot see what his superexaltation consists of.

The second hypothesis must therefore be chosen. Instead of lowering himself, Jesus could have chosen not to remain what he was, but elevate himself, and then the expressions "to be equal to God" and "usurpation" become altogether appropriate: "Jesus, being in the form of a god, did not consider as a prey (to be pursued), as an usurpation (to be attempted) to be equal to God". Why speak of "equality with God"? Because in reward for his voluntary humbling, when Jesus

receives the name of God itself, he is placed by God himself "on an equal footing" with him.

But why imagine that Jesus might have wished to usurp this equality with God? The only reason I can see is that in the author's mind, he is identified with the gnostic Sabaoth, first in his *metanoia*, then in his exaltation. As Sabaoth, unlike his father Yaldabaoth, did not seek to pass himself off as God by saying "I am God and there is no other", but was humble enough to convert, in reward for which he was exalted, so Jesus far from seeking to usurp equality with God, demeaned and humbled himself, in reward for which he was superexalted.

In this fusion of Sabaoth and Jesus into a single person, the characteristics that belong to either are combined in so far as they are compatible. The principal beneficiary is obviously Sabaoth who ascends to the world above and who from being Yaldabaoth's son becomes the Son of God the Father.

The much discussed sentence therefore alludes to the insistence of the Jewish god, emphasized not only in the Bible and the *Shema* but in gnostic myths as well, to make out that he is the supreme god. And it is this insistence which made the author apparently choose the word *harpagmos*, whose primary meaning is "prey", a term for hunting which denotes tracking and pursuit; whereas "usurpation", a legal term, would abandon this shade of meaning. I therefore suggest the translation "did not deem a prey to be equal to God".

Two propositions clarify what "taking the form of a server" should mean. This form is human form: *en homoiômai anhrôpôn genomenos, kai schêmati heuretheis hôs anthrôpos*, "become (because he made himself) in the likeness of man, and on appearance, found as a man". Both phrases say approximately the same thing; it is debatable whether both should be attached to the second stanza, or separated by attaching the first to what precedes it. The second solution is, in my opinion, more logical: "become in the likeness of men" is the arrival point of the first voluntary humbling; "and in appearance found as a man", the starting point of humbling.

A more important issue is whether or not a more realistic meaning should be given them. The expressions "in the likeness", "in appearance, found as" lend themselves to a docetic interpretation, and were undoubtedly exploited as such. They do not necessarily imply, however, that Jesus' humanity was not real. On the contrary, since his divine form was real, so should his human form be. Otherwise what becomes of *kenosis*? They wish to emphasize that although Jesus resembled a man and was taken for one, through his personality he was a god. The distinction lies between the person himself and the form or forms he possesses from birth or might assume. In his treatise *De carne Christi* (VI) Tertullian tells us that "our Saviour himself appeared before Abraham in the midst of angels with a body that was not the result of birth". The flesh at Mambre was real because Jesus ate and spoke with Abraham, all the more reason the body of Jesus under Tiberius. What should be observed is that the reality of Christ's body assumes neither birth nor death. The Letter to the Hebrews tells us, on the one

hand, "since, therefore, the children (of God) share flesh and blood, (Jesus) himself likewise shared the same things, so that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the Devil (...). Therefore, he had to become like his brothers and sisters in all things" (Heb 2.14,17). And, on the other, Melchisedek was "without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but resembling the Son of God" (Heb 7.3). It is easy therefore to understand why the supporters of the reality of Christ's body wished him to have a human birth and why those who rejected his human birth denied or were accused of denying the reality of his body.

The same ambivalent interpretation may be ascribed to expressions from the *Ascension of Isaiah* which depict Jesus descending from the eighth heaven beside the Father and on crossing each of the lower heavens, to avoid recognition, assuming the form of the angels who inhabit them "until he transformed himself, says the angel to Isaiah, into your appearance and form" (*Asc. Is.*, 8,10; see also the texts from ch. 10 and 11 quoted resp. p. 168 and 209). Likewise, the following announcement by the angel who had accompanied Isaiah which almost parallels the text of the hymn and that of the Letter to the Hebrews:

He will indeed descend into the world in the last days the Lord who will be called Christ after he has descended and become like you in form; and they will think he is flesh and a man. And the god of that world will stretch out his hand against his son (they will lay their hands upon him and will hang him on a tree) and they will have him on a tree and will kill him, not knowing who he is. And his descent, as you will see, will be hidden even from the heavens, so that it will not be known who he is. And when he has plundered the angel of death, he will ascend on the third day. (*Asc. Is.* 9,13-15)

We will return to many of the statements in this text.

## THE SECOND SELF-HUMBLING

The second abasement of Jesus mentioned in the hymn is that "he humbled himself, became obedient to the point of death, death on a cross". So far no difficulties arise. Two expressions however require comment: obedience and death on a cross.

Some critics wanted to regard the repetition "to the point of death on a cross" as a later addition. But to add the specification "on a cross", there is no need to repeat "to the point of death". Death and the cross are in actual fact related : if the crucifixion was not believed, there would have been no belief in Jesus' death. When his teaching mission was accomplished, he would have reascended to heaven, as he will in fact after a certain period of time depending on the traditions, when he taught his disciples after his death and resurrection: "I came from the

Father and have come into the world; I am leaving the world and going to the Father" (Jn 16.28). After Jesus' farewell speech to his disciples related in the Gospel of John one would expect the Ascension rather than the Passion. Paul's insistence, recalled in the First Letter to the Corinthians, apparently directed towards those who claimed the authority of Apollos or Cephas (1 Co 1.12), that he preached the crucified Jesus (1 Co 1.17,18,23; 2.2), suggests that his crucifixion had not always been universally accepted. What kind of crucifixion is it furthermore, since it relates to "a wisdom that none of the archons of this age (who are vanquished) understood, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory" (1 Cor 2.7-8)?

But if the archons, namely the Jewish god, were the "unconscious" authors of the crucifixion, to whom was Jesus, the Lord of glory, obedient to the point of death on a cross? In other words: who wanted, required and ordained Jesus to die on the cross? Obviously it cannot be the supreme god, the Father, as conceived by the gnostics, but only as conceived by the Jews. Just as the first covenant had been sealed in blood, so the second covenant had to be too (Heb 8.7-10.20). "Since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, they are now justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a sacrifice by his blood, effective through faith" (Rom 3.23-25). Were the gnostics not right in accusing the Jewish god of being blood thirsty and here these base instincts are attributed by the Jew Paul to the supreme god! He went on to write : "(God) who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, will he not also give up all things with him?" (Rom 8.32). The first part of the phrase would be perfectly true if by the word God was understood, not the Father, but Yaldabaoth, and by the word Son, Sabaoth, as in the passage quoted *supra* in full from the *Ascension of Isaiah*: "And the god of that world will stretch out his hand against his son" (9,14). The Latin summary corrects the words "against his son" by "against the Son of God", but like Marcion, leaves the god of this world responsible for the crime which Paul will impute to the supreme god by mixing up the two persons.

This incredible requirement of the Father for the death of his Son gave rise in the Gospels to Jesus' prayer in the Garden of Olives, invented to justify it: "Father, all things are possible to thee; remove this cup from me; yet not what I want, but what you want" (Mk 14.36; plls). The Letter to the Hebrews echoes it, stating that this prayer was fulfilled by the resurrection, after obeying the inflexible divine will: "<sup>5</sup>In the days of his flesh, (the Son) offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to the one who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his godly fear. <sup>8</sup>Although he was a Son, he learned obedience through what he suffered; <sup>9</sup>and having been made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him (...)" (Heb 5.7-9). "For, says the Letter to the Romans (Rom 5.19), as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by one man's obedience many will be made righteous". Clearly the reversal of the gnostic exegesis of the paradise narrative

lies at the origin of the confusions and role switches between persons and also of these divine illogicalities and monstrosities.

## EXALTATION

Exaltation follows voluntary humbling: *dio kai ho theos auton huperupsôsen*, "this is also why God superexalted him". As if "exalted" was not enough, the author added "*huper*" as if to emphasize that Jesus Sabaoth was not only established in a higher position than the one he enjoyed before his voluntary humbling, but in the highest position possible. God could not obviously make him become God, i.e. himself, nor equal to himself (*isos theô;*), but only "as his equal" (*isa theô;*).

And God will achieve his exaltation as his equal by giving him his Name: *kai echarisato autô; to onoma to huper pan onoma*, "and he gratified him with the Name which is above all names". The name above all names must be the name of God himself, otherwise another would exist above him. But there is a problem here: for the Jews, the supreme god has a name; he is called YHWH: "his name is YHWH, Lord Sabaoth" (Amos 4.13); he has a name because he is only a minor national god raised to the rank of supreme god. Though, for philosophers and gnostics the supreme god is unutterable and unnameable. We shall see later on how the gift of the Name to Jesus precisely solves this antimony?

The Name is conferred on Jesus "so that at the name of Jesus every knee in heaven and on earth and underneath the earth shall bow and every tongue confess (...)". These words are taken from a passage in Isaiah where the Jewish god claims to be the supreme god, where certain expressions, however, are also especially relevant for the saviour:

There is no other God besides me. I am the only righteous god and a saviour. Turn to me and be saved, all the ends of the earth, for I am God and there is no other. By myself I have sworn, truth has come from my mouth and my word will not be revoked: to me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall confess. (Is 45.21-23)

In this way the words by which Yaldabaoth wanted to usurp the supreme godhead and which caused him to be cast into Tartaros are reemployed to super-exalt his son Sabaoth as equal to the supreme god.

## THE NAME

It is at the Name of Jesus that every knee shall bow, not on account of the name 'Jesus'. Contrary to what is sometimes explained, the "Name" is not Jesus; Jesus is the one to whom the Name is given and it is on account of the Name that Jesus will be honoured.

The Name is named in the text of the exomologesis, i.e. the profession of faith: *hoti Kyrios Iesous Christos eis doxan theou Patros* "(shall every tongue confess) that Jesus Christ (is) Lord in the Glory of God the Father". The Name is therefore *Kyrios*, "Lord". However, this name is a cryptogram. The Hebrew word *Adonai* which it translates is, we know, one of the words used to replace the name of YHWH, and the vowels from the word *Adonai* will be inserted into the tetragram subsequently, and this will give rise to a barbarism, majestic nonetheless, "Jehovah". It is therefore in actual fact the name of YHWH that Jesus receives; and as the name defines the person, he becomes the person whose name he receives, he becomes YHWH.

Just as the gnostic Sabaoth following his exaltation receives the name of *Kyrios tôn dunameôn* "Lord of the powers", i.e. *YHWH Sabaoth* (according to the translation of these words occurring a hundred times over in the Septuagint), thereby adding to his name of Sabaoth the name of YHWH in his capacity as the rehabilitated Jewish god, so Jesus, assimilated with Sabaoth in his godly form and voluntary humbling, receives the name of YHWH in his exaltation and becomes the Jewish god in his manifestations.

But the confession of faith, "Jesus Christ is Lord", contains an inherent contradiction. Christ, the Messiah is the annointed one of YHWH; Jesus cannot be at one and the same time YHWH and his annointed one, the one who sends and the one who is sent. The antinomy is solved if the one who sends, while being YHWH, is the Father, and if the one who is sent, while being the Messiah is YHWH. This solution will however only become valid later. On the level of the composition of the hymn, it does not seem that Jesus had been presented before to the Jews as the Messiah; he will be so later because the identification of the crucified saviour with YHWH will obviously not satisfy them, since the identification of the same with the Messiah will not satisfy them either. It seems therefore that the original formulation of the confession of faith did not include the word "Christ". This is what can be deduced from the verse from 1 Corinthians: "Therefore I want you to understand that no one speaking by the spirit of God ever says 'Let Jesus be cursed' and no one can say 'Jesus is Lord' except by the holy spirit" (1 Co 12.3). If the formula of the profession of faith had been "Jesus Christ Lord", it would be inconceivable that the author of the Letter suppressed the word Christ on two occasions. On the other hand, it is easy to imagine that the author who quotes the hymn to invite us to have the same feelings as "Christ Jesus" added the word Christ in the profession of faith.

Jesus is therefore the Lord, *eis doxan theou patros*. It is usually translated "for the glory" or "to the glory of God the Father", according to the classical meaning of the preposition *eis*; a comma must therefore be inserted after "Jesus is Lord" to link the part of the phrase outside the confession of faith to the verb "to confess" and mean "let every tongue confess to the glory of God the Father that Jesus is Lord", which does not afford a particularly rich meaning and distorts the word order. In the *koinê* the preposition *eis* is often substituted for *en*, and it is the meaning of *en* that is expressed by the Latin translation "*in gloria patris*", "in the Glory of the Father", as in the Vulgate and also at the end of *Gloria in excelsis*: "Only you are Lord, Jesus Christ, in the Glory of God the Father" and in the *Te Deum*: "You who sit at the right hand of God in the Glory of the Father (...)". The same meaning should certainly be understood in the Greek *Heis hagios*: (...) there is only one Lord, Jesus Christ, in the Glory (...). Understood in this way by the tradition the part of the phrase belongs to the confession of faith. The word "glory" then takes on a definite meaning: no longer a synonym for "honour" or "praise", it designates "the Glory of YHWH" as in Ezekiel chapter 10 (Ez 10.14,18-19) and it alone suffices to identify the Father with the Jewish god. But let us not forget that the Glory attributed here to the Father properly belongs to Jesus and it was his own Glory and not that of the Father that Isaiah saw (Jn 12.41; ch. 5 supra).

The words *theou patros* designate the unnameable supreme god whom the hermetists and gnostics, since he must be designated by a word, call "the Father", though aware that this is not his name. Only later will "the Father" become the proper name of the first person of the Holy Trinity, "the Son" the proper name of the second and "the Holy Spirit" the proper name of the third. In the hymn is only constituted the faith that will be proclaimed in 1 Co 8.6: "Yet for us there is one God, the Father (...) and one Lord, Jesus Christ". To avoid an anachronism, it is better not to translate, unlike some bibles, "in the glory of God the Father", but rather "of God Father".

The hymn not only identifies Jesus with the Jewish god but also God Father, since the unpronounceable Name given to Jesus is supposed to be that of the unnamable supreme god.

But Jesus not only receives the Name, he becomes the Name. To avoid pronouncing the name YHWH, instead of Adonai or Kyrios, 'Lord', *Hashshem*, 'the Name', is also used. 'The Name' then becomes a hypostasis, a person distinct from the person whom 'the Name' designates, distinct from the supreme god who therefore has no name, if only this hypostasized Name which is another himself.

This speculation is set forth in a long passage from the *Gospel of Truth* which, much later than the hymn, traces the conferment of the Name back to the generation of the Son or the proferation of the Word. Not all the phrases unfortunately are clear for us.

Now the name of the Father is the Son. It is he who first gave a Name to the one who came forth from him, who was Himself, and he begot him as a Son. He gave him his Name which belonged to him; He is the one to whom belongs all that exists around Him, the Father. His is the Name; his is the Son. It is possible for him to be seen. But the Name is invisible because it alone is the mystery of the Invisible which comes to ears that are completely filled with it.

For indeed the Father's Name is not spoken, but it is apparent through a Son. In this way, the name is a great thing. Who therefore will be able to utter a name for Him, the great Name, except Him alone to whom the Name belongs and the sons of the Name in whom rested the Name of the Father, (who) in turn themselves rested in his name?

Since the Father is unengendered, He alone is the one who begot a Name for Himself before he brought forth the aeons in order that the Name of the Father should be over their head as Lord, that is, the Name in truth, which is firm in his command through perfect power. For the Name is not from (mere) words, nor does his Name consist of appellations, but it is invisible. He gave a Name to himself since he sees himself, he alone having the power to give himself a Name. For he who does not exist has no name. For what name is given to him who does not exist? But the One who exists (*ho ón*, Ex 3.14;) exists also with his Name, and he knows himself. And to give himself a name is (the prerogative of) the Father.

The Son is his Name. He did not therefore hide it in the work, but the Son existed; he alone was given the Name. The Name therefore is that of the Father, as the Name of the Father is the Son. Where indeed would Mercy find a name except with the Father?

But no doubt one will say to his neighbour, "Who is it who will give a name to him who existed before himself, as if offspring did not receive a name from those who begot them? First, then, it is fitting for us to reflect on this matter: what is the Name? It is the Name in truth; it is not therefore the Name from the father, for it is the one which is the proper Name. Therefore he did not receive the Name on loan as (do) others, according to the form in which each one is to be produced. But this is the proper Name. There is no one else who gave it to him.

But he is unnameable, indescribable, until the time when he who is perfect spoke of himself. And it is He who has the power to speak his Name and to see it. When therefore it pleased Him that his Name which is uttered should be his Son, He gave the name to him, that is, him who came forth from the depth, he spoke about his secret things, knowing that the Father is a being without Evil.

For that very reason he brought him forth in order to speak about the place and his resting-place from which he had come forth, and to glorify the Pleroma, the greatness of his Name and the gentleness of the Father. (NH I,3,36,6-41,3)

In Irenaeus we find the identification of the Son and the Name, but the explanation given is the opposite to that of Valentinus: instead of the Father giving his Name to the Son, he appropriates the name of the Son for himself. In this passage

Irenaeus opposes the Jewish cult with the christian cult which, according to him, replaces it and which he wants to prove it from the prophecy in Malachi 1.10-12:

Who among you will shut the temple door so that you will not kindle fire on my altar in vain? I have no pleasure in you said YHWH Sabaoth and I will not accept an offering from your hands. For from the rising of the sun to its setting my name is great among nations, and in every place incense is offered to my name and a pure offering, for my name is great among the nations, says the allmighty Lord (*pancrator*), but you profane it.

From this text and the eucharist liturgy Irenaeus reasons as follows:

(Malachi) indicating in the plainest manner, by these words, that the former people (the Jews) shall indeed cease to make offerings to God, but that in every place (...) his Name is glorified among the Gentiles. But what other name is there which is glorified among the Gentiles than that of our Lord, by whom the Father is glorified, and man also? And because it is the name of his own Son, who was made by Him, He calls it His own. Just as a king, if he himself paints a likeness of his son, is right in calling his likeness his own, for both these reasons, because it is the likeness of his son, and because it is his own production; so also does the Father confess the name of Jesus Chrsit, which is throughout all the world glorified in the church, to be His own, both because it is that of His son, and because He is who engraved it, giving him for the salvation of men. Since, therefore, the name of the Son belongs to the Father, and since to the omnipotent God the Church makes offerings through Jesus Christ, the prophet says well on both these grounds "in every place incense is offered to my name..." (*Adv. Her. IV,17,5, sqq.*)

To understand this passage, we must keep in mind that for Irenaeus, as we saw in some of the passages from his work quoted in Chapter 9, all the theophanies of the Old Testament are manifestations of the Son. The proper name of the Son, of Jesus Christ, is therefore YHWH Sabaoth, and according to the prophecy in Malachi, so that it be the Name of the Father who is glorified in the nations, the Father must have declared as his the name by which his son is honoured, "Lord Sabaoth", to whom the seraphim cry out.

In the *Ascension of Isaiah* the angel who led Isaiah to the seventh heaven did not pronounce the ineffable Name of the Lord who will descend to earth, but revealed that when he has descended he will be given the name of Jesus:

And he who permitted you to ascend is your Lord, the Lord of the world, the Lord Christ, who will in the world be called Jesus, but his name you cannot hear until you have left your body. (*Asc. Is. 9,5*)

E. Tisserant (later cardinal) in a note in his translation supposes the words "who will be called Jesus in the world" to be an interpolation because "Jesus" is the name Isaiah could not yet hear. But Isaiah in his flesh, like all men, can hear the name of "Jesus", borne, moreover, by many others than the Saviour, but cannot hear the ineffable Name YHWH, a name so ineffable that scholars were obliged to rediscover its pronunciation.

#### CONCLUSION: THE TEACHING OF THE TEXT

Through the assimilation of the descent and ascent of the saviour Jesus with the conversion (*metanoia*) and exaltation of the gnostic Sabaoth, the son of Yaldabaoth cast into Tartaros because of his claim, considered pretentious by the gnostics, to be the only God, Jesus is identified with YHWH in his theophanies, and YHWH, with his claim, supported by the Jews, to be the unique God, is identified with the Father.

The Name of YHWH or Lord Sabaoth become ineffable for the Jews and given by the gnostics to the converted and exalted son of Yaldabaoth is supposed in the Philippians 2.6-11 attributed to Jesus after his exaltation by the unnamed Father, who is thereby identified with YHWH who has a name, though ineffable.

In the *Gospel of Truth*, the Father first begot the Son by pronouncing the Name, whereas for Ireneus the Father declares the Name of the Son is his own so that, according to Malachi's prophecy, his Name be glorified by the glorification of Jesus as the three times holy Lord Sabaoth.



## Chapter 14

# THE TWO SUCCESSIVE IDENTIFICATIONS OF THE SERPENT WITH THE INSTRUCTOR JESUS AND WITH THE SEDUCER DEVIL

Jesus Christ, our Saviour, is not the serpent, but he  
came to combat the serpent  
(Epiphanius, *Pan.* 37,8)

The preceding chapters described the avatars or transformations of the Genesis god, cast into Tartarus, exalted under the name of his son Sabaoth, and who became the supreme god through his identification with the Father, especially in consequence of the identification of the saviour Jesus with the Lord Sabaoth.

The object of this chapter is to present a few texts that bear witness to the transformations or avatars of the serpent.

The Emmaus narrative and the Nag Hammadi writings have taught us the identity of the serpent in paradise with Jesus; on the other hand, Jewish and Christian traditions transformed the serpent into the devil with the envy, pride and sometimes even the gnostic appellation of the Genesis god.

In the following quotations or summaries we shall encounter the two contrary identifications of the serpent with Jesus and the devil, sometimes affirmed simultaneously in more or less complex mythological constructions elaborated to explain the origin of the world, which also include some elements from pagan mythology, physics and astronomy or astrology of the period. Much is obscure in these elucidations. Some obscurities probably arise because the heresiarchs who made them known to us, especially Irenaeus, the disputed author of the *Elenchos* and Epiphanius, determined to prove the absurdity of such doctrines, misunderstood or distorted the ideas of their opponents. But the complex nature of these doctrines resulting from the fusion of too many disparate elements explains most of them. This is not the place to elucidate them. Consequently, the sole aim of our quotations or summaries, sometimes with a brief comment, is to show that everything stems, when all is said and done, from the gnostic exegesis of the paradise narrative.

### THE Gnostics ACCORDING TO IRENEUS (*Adv. H. I,XXX*)

Irenaeus directed most of his attacks against his contemporaries, the Valentians. He also summarized, more briefly, the doctrines of doctors closer to the origins, such as Saturnin and Basilides (I, XXVII) and especially, the doctrines of a sect he calls the Gnostics, as if they were gnostics *par excellence*. According to him the sect consisted of two schools, which modern authors call the Barbeliots because of the role allocated to an entity from the pleroma named Barbelo, and the Ophites, on account of the importance attributed to the serpent (*ophis* in Greek).

The Ophite doctrine Irenaeus summarizes clearly derives from myths set out in the *Apocryphon of John*, the *Hypostasis of the Archons* and *On the Origin of the World*. Some developments or reinterpretations were added to them. The following passages relate more specifically to the serpent :

The first of them (the archons), namely, Yaldabaoth, holds his mother in contempt, inasmuch as he produced sons and grandsons without the permission of anyone, yea, even angels, archangels, powers, potentates and dominions. After these things had been done, his sons turned to strive and quarrel with him about the supreme power — conduct which grieved Yaldabaoth and drove him to despair. In these circumstances, he cast his eyes upon the subjacent clays of matter, and fixed his desire upon it, from which they declare his son owes his origin. This son is *Noûs* itself, twisted in the form of a serpent; and from which also were derived the spirit, the soul, and all mundane things : from which too were generated all oblivion, wickedness, emulation, envy and death. They declare that this serpent-like *Noûs* imparted still greater perversity to his father by his crookedness when he was with him in heaven and Paradise. (*Adv. H. I,XXX,5*)

The above passage displays a rather incoherent mixture of successive identifications. The rebellion of Yaldabaoth's sons to fight for first place is a reinterpretation of the exaltation of Sabaoth who, according to the *Hypostasis of the Archons* and *On the Origins of the World*, supplanted his father, but here the myth is not ignored but rejected. Of his role as the instructor of Adam and Eve and his belonging to the world above according to early gnostic exegesis, the serpent retains being the *noûs*, "the Intellect", but the reversal of the exegesis transforms him into a seducer devil, whereas the identification of Jesus with Sabaoth makes the same serpent into the son of Yaldabaoth.

Irenaeus continues as follows :

On this account, Yaldabaoth, becoming uplifted in spirit, boasted himself over all those things that were below him, and exclaimed, "I am Father, and God, and above me there is no one". But his mother, hearing him speak thus, cried out against him, "Do not lie, Yaldabaoth : for the Father of all, the first Anthropos, is

above you; and so is Anthropos, the son of Anthropos". Then, as all were disturbed by this new voice, and by the unexpected proclamation, and as they were inquiring whence the noise proceeded, in order to lead them away and attract them to himself, they affirm that Yaldabaoth exclaimed, "Come, let us make man after our image". The six powers, on hearing that, and their mother furnishing them with the idea of a man (in order that by means of him she might empty them of their original power), jointly formed a man of immense size, both in regard to breadth and length. But as he could merely writhe along the ground, they carried him to their father, Sophia so labouring in this matter, that she might empty him of the light with which he had been sprinkled, so that he might no longer, though still powerful, be able to lift up himself against the powers above. They declare, then, that by breathing into man the spirit of life, he was secretly emptied of his power, that hence man became a possessor of *noûs* and *enthymesis*; and they affirm that these are the faculties which partake in salvation. Man (they further assert) at once gave thanks to the first Anthropos, forsaking those who had created him.

But Yaldabaoth, feeling envious at this, was pleased to form the design of again emptying man by means of woman, and produced a woman from his own (of man) *enthymesis*, but Pronikous laying hold of her, imperceptibly emptied her of power. But the others coming and admiring her beauty, named her Eve, and falling in love with her, begat sons by her, whom they also declare to be the angels.

But their mother Sophia cunningly devised a scheme to seduce Eve and Adam by means of the serpent, to transgress the command of Yaldabaoth. Eve listened to this as if it had proceeded from the Son of God, and yielded an easy belief. She also persuaded Adam to eat of the tree regarding which God has said they should not eat of it. They then declare that, on their thus eating, they attained to the knowledge of that power which is above all, and departed from those who had created them. (*Adv. H.* I,XXX,6-7)

The myths related by Irenæus are fully in accordance with what we already know from gnostic documents: Yaldabaoth's first blasphemy which provokes his mother's denial, the moulding of man "in the image" though the appearance of the image is omitted, his animation by the *noûs*, the spirit, of which Yaldabaoth deprives himself by breathing it in his face.

Then follows the creation of spiritual woman explained as Yaldabaoth's attempt out of revenge to deprive man of the *noûs* he had unwittingly transmitted, and the archons' lustful desire for the spiritual woman who deceives them by abandoning her shadow, the fleshly woman, which they hastened to defile.

Eve transgresses God's command, persuaded by the serpent "as if she had heard the Son of God". For Irenæus, the Genesis god is simply God, and the Son of God is Jesus. The gnosis that the manducation of the fruit procures to Adam

and Eve is the knowledge of the Father which led to an aversion towards the moulders of their bodies.

The sequel of the text Irenaeus summarizes, is a reinterpretation of the paradise narrative which introduces two doublets :

When Prounikos perceived that the powers were thus baffled by their own creature, she greatly rejoiced, and again cried out, that since the incorruptible Father existed before, he who called himself the Father was a liar; and that, while Anthropos and the first woman existed previously, this one sinned by making a counterfeit of them.

Yaldabaoth, however, through that oblivion in which he was involved, not paying any regard to these words, cast Adam and Eve out of Paradise, because they had transgressed his commandment. For he had had a desire to beget sons by Eve, but did not accomplish his wish, because his mother opposed him in every point. She secretly emptied Adam and Eve of the dew of light with which they had been sprinkled, in order that the spirit which proceeded from the supreme power might participate neither in the curse nor opprobrium. Thus being emptied of the divine substance, they were cursed by Yaldabaoth and cast down from heaven to this world.

But the serpent also, who was acting against his father, was cast down by him into this lower world; he reduced, however, under his power the angels there, and begat six sons, he himself forming the seventh person, after the example of that Hebdomad which surrounds the Father. They further declare that these are the seven mundane demons, who always oppose and resist the race of men, because it was on their account that their father was cast down to this lower world.

Adam and Eve previously had light, and clear, and as it were spiritual bodies, such as they were at their creation; but when they came to this world, these changed into bodies more opaque, and gross, and sluggish. Their soul was also feeble and languid, inasmuch as they had received from their creator a merely mundane inspiration. This continued until Prounikos, moved with compassion towards them, restored to them the sweet savour of the dew of light, by means of which they came to a remembrance of themselves, and knew that they were naked, as well as that the body was a material substance, and thus recognized that they bore death about with them. They thereupon became patient, knowing that only for a time they would be enveloped in the body. They also found out food, through the guidance of Sophia; and when they were satisfied, they had carnal knowledge of each other, and begat Cain, whom the serpent, that had been cast down along with his sons, immediately laid hold of and corrupted by filling him with mundane oblivion, and urging into folly and audacity, so that, by slaying his brother Abel, he was the first to bring to light envy and death. After these, they affirm that, by the forethought of Prounikos, Seth was begotten, and then Norea, from whom they represent all the rest of mankind as being descended. They were urged on to all kinds of wickedness by the inferior Hebdomad, and to apostasy, idolatry, and a

general contempt for everything related to the superior holy Hebdomad, but the mother was always secretly opposed to the work of the Powers, and carefully preserved what was peculiarly her own, that is, the dew of light. They pretend, moreover, that the inferior Hebdomad is the seven stars which they call planets; and they affirm that the serpent cast down has two names, Michael and Samael. (*Adv. H. I,XXX,7-9*)

This lengthy quotation calls for some comments. As we remarked earlier the text Irenæus summarizes here contains a number of reinterpretations of the original myth often involving doublets.

It is not said that Yaldabaoth renewed his blasphemy, nor that he was punished for it — the serpent will be punished in his stead —, nor that Sabaoth supplanted him — he retained his position —, and yet Sophia cried out again that Yaldabaoth had lied. The purpose of this doublet is to introduce another new reproach : Yaldabaoth had sinned when he modelled a counterfeit of Man, i.e. of God, out of matter.

The command Adam and Eve transgressed which led to their curse was not the interdiction to eat from the tree of gnosis, but the command to "Increase and multiply" (Gen 1.28). This command was given to the man and woman created "in the image" (Gen 1.27), but will only be obeyed after the curse and their expulsion from paradise.

To prevent the curse from affecting "the spirit from the supreme Power" within Adam and Eve, the "dew of light" which Yaldabaoth had breathed onto them by depriving himself, the Mother is said to have taken the precaution of emptying them of it after the manducation of the fruit, and to have lost no time in restoring it to them once the curse was pronounced. Here the gnosis procured by the tree is divided into two successive stages : the knowledge of God and self-knowledge. Now, whereas in the original myth Adam and Eve knew first their nakedness, namely, "their lack of perfection" and, then as a result, who they were and the Father from whom they originated and to whom they must return, here the order is reversed : in the first stage by eating the fruit they know the supreme Power and despise their creator; and secondly, after the curse, through Sophia's direct intervention, they know themselves.

Therefore, Yaldabaoth was not cast out of heaven for his blasphemy by the angel of fire from Zoe's breath (*Hyp. Ar. 95,9-14*), since the serpent, his son, was cast out in his stead by his father's curse. But this son of Yaldabaoth is Yaldabaoth himself : like his alleged father, he engendered six sons, and his sons with himself as the seventh comprise the seven planets that govern the world; it is *Heimarmenê*, "astral Fate", who is against the race of men.

Here Cain and Abel are not considered as the product of the intercourse of Eve and Yaldabaoth or the serpent, but it is the serpent, clearly identified with the devil, who corrupted Cain, and it was Cain, jealous and the murderer of his

brother, and no longer Yaldabaoth, jealous of Sabaoth, who was the first to make Jealousy and Death appear.

That the serpent is called Samael is perfectly normal since Samael is one of the gnostic appellations for the Jewish god, but that he is also called Michael, is unexpected. The archangel Michael whose name means "who is like God" is, according to tradition, from Revelation (12.7) to the Letter of Jude (9), from the Apocrypha to the Church Fathers and in iconography, the adversary and victor of Satan, the one who casts him out of heaven. But earlier, since Daniel 12.1, he is also "the chief prince, the defender of the children" of Israel. Being the first in heaven after YHWH, whose hypostases are not distinct from himself, he might have been identified with this Intellect who possesses the wriggling shape of a snake, the son of Yaldabaoth, created after the six others each one bearing one of his biblical names, and who are in fact identical to him.

Irenaeus' summary continues with an exposition of doctrines outside the scope of this chapter, and concludes his report with a reference to a variant on the identity of the serpent :

For some of them assert that Sophia herself became the serpent; on which account she was hostile to the creator of Adam, and implanted knowledge in men, for which reason the serpent was called wiser than all the others. Moreover, by the position of our intestines, our internal configuration in the form of a serpent reveals our hidden generatrix. (*Adv. H.* I,XXX,15)

The identification of Sophia-Zoe-Eve-Epinoia (Wisdom-Life-(spiritual) Eve-Thought of light) with the serpent is spelled out in the *Hypostasis of the Archons* : "Then the spiritual woman came into the serpent, the instructor" (*Hyp. Ar.* 89,31-33; p. 78); but it seems that this is a secondary identification with regard to its identification with the tree of knowledge which the *Book of Enoch* had already called the tree of Wisdom (32.6; p. 80). The *Apocryphon of John* tells us "The tree called to know good and evil is the Epinoia of light" (*Apoc. John B* 57,8; p. 75), and *On the Origin of the World* relates that in order to escape from the archon's lustful desire, spiritual Woman enters the tree and transforms it into the tree of gnosis (*Orig. World* 116,28-32 not cited *supra*).

As regards the image of the serpent in our intestines, the reference to "our internal configuration in the form of a serpent revealing our hidden generatrix" enables to connect it with the Naassene or Peratae doctrines we shall encounter later.

## THE SECTS IN ELENCHOS BOOK V

As his first overbrief treatise (*Syntagma*) had failed to produce the desired effect on the heretics, the author of the *Elenchos* or the *Refutation of all heresies*

— its attribution to Hippolytus is contested today —, attempted to give a detailed account of their doctrines so as to unmask their impiety and show that they drew their principles from Greek philosophical systems and popular mysteries. The work comprises ten books. The first four denigrate philosophical doctrines — hence the first title given to the work, *Philosophumena*, and its earlier attribution to Origen —, the next five point out the absurdity of Christian heresies, and the last summarizes the entire work and sets forth the "true doctrine".

Of the ten books, the most significant for the historian is undoubtedly the fifth — the first one devoted to heresies — because it describes systems unknown to the other heresiologists. The fifth book is devoted to sects "who dared to worship the serpent, responsible for the error, in a language he inspired".

### THE NAASSENES (*Elenchos*, V,6-11)

The *Elenchos* devotes a long article on the Naassenes, so named from the Hebrew word *naas* meaning serpent. The first and longest part of the article is an account of the exegesis of a hymn addressed to Attis. We shall set it aside, not because there is doubt about its connection with the Naassenes, but because it does not concern our topic. The second part briefly exposes the Naassene rejection of procreation, and proceeds with an account from which we only need to extract the passages that interest us most :

And they do not worship any other object but Naas, from thence being styled Naassenes. But Naas is the serpent (...) And these affirm that the serpent is a moist substance, just as Thales also, the Milesian, spoke of water as an originating principle, and that nothing of existing things, immortal or mortal, animate or inanimate, could consist at all without him, and that all things are subject unto him, and that he is good, and that he has all things in himself (...) He tramps as if passing through all, just as "the river proceeding forth from Eden, and dividing itself into four heads" (Gen 2.10-14). This, he says, is "the water that is above the firmament", concerning which, he says, the Saviour has declared, "If you knew who it is that asks, you would have asked from Him, and He would have given you to drink living, bubbling water" (Jn 4.10) (...) That Man, however, he says, is of no reputation in the world, but of illustrious fame in heaven, being betrayed by those who are ignorant of his perfections to those who know him not, being accounted as a drop from a cask" (Is 40.15). (*Elenchos*, V,9)

In this confused account, which my excisions have helped to obscure even more, it follows nevertheless that the serpent has become the water, not the water of original chaos, but the water from above the firmament, the water of the paradisiac river from which all beings, whether immortal or inanimate, draw their substance like a plant draws water through its roots. This water is apparently

identified with Jesus as coextensive with the totality of beings, immanent without ceasing to be transcendental and personal, as in the *Gospel of Thomas 77* : "Split a piece of wood, and I am there. Lift up the stone, and you will find me there" as H.-Ch. Puech explains (*En quête de la gnose*).

The account in the *Elenchos* concludes with the magnificent Naassene hymn; the Greek is ill-used in the unique manuscript, but is easily restored and enables the following translation, though the restitution of the word "soul" remains doubtful :

See, O Father! Exposed to misfortune  
 (the soul) still wandering over the earth far from your breath,  
 seeks to flee the odious chaos  
 and knows not how to cross it.  
 This is why, O Father, send me!  
 I will descend bearing the seals  
 I will cross all the eons,  
 I will reveal all mysteries,  
 I will show the forms of the gods,  
 and I will transmit under the name of gnosis  
 the secrets of the holy way. (*Elenchos V, 10*)

#### THE PERATES (*Elenchos, V,12-18*)

The account on the Naassenes is followed by one on the Perates, the meaning of which still remains unclear. Once again references to Greek mythology abound and the incredibly literal exegesis by the first gnostics is replaced by another exegesis just as incredibly allegorical, since discussions with the Jews forced to take into account something more in the Bible than the first chapters of Genesis. Here follows the passage on the serpent :

And this, the Perates assert, is the departure from Egypt, that is from the body. For they suppose little Egypt to be body, and that it crosses the Red Sea, that is the water of corruption (...) and that it reaches a place beyond the Red Sea, that is, generation; and that it comes into the wilderness, that is, that it attains a condition independant of generation, where there exist promiscuously all the gods of destruction and the god of salvation.

Now, he says, the stars (= the archons) are the gods of destruction, which impose upon existent things the necessity of alterable generation (= *Heimarmenê*). These, he says, Moses denominated serpents of the wilderness, which gnaw and utterly ruin those who imagined they had crossed the Red Sea. To those, then, he says, who of the children of Israel were bitten in the wilderness, Moses exhibited

the real and perfect serpent; and they who believed on this serpent were not bitten in the wilderness, that is were not annuled by the powers. No one therefore, he says, is there who is able to save and deliver those that come forth from Egypt, that is from the body and from this world, unless alone the serpent that is perfect and replete with fullness. Upon this serpent, he says, he who fixes his hope is not destroyed by the snakes of the wilderness, that is by the gods of generation. This statement is written, he says, in the book of Moses. This serpent, he says, is the power that attended Moses, the rod that was turned into a serpent. The serpents, however, of the magicians — that is the gods of destruciton — withstood the power of Moses in Egypt, but the rod of Moses reduced them all to subjection and slew them. (*Elenchos*, V,16)

The *Testimony of Truth* in his exegesis of the paradise narrative quoted earlier also opposed the snakes of the wilderness, the snakes of the magicians of Egypt with the bronze snake and that of Moses' rod, and suggested that the former represented "the gods of generation", the archons, and the latter including the one of paradise, represented "Christ". The passage from the Perates' work continues as follows :

This universal serpent is, he says, the wise discourse of Eve. This, he says, is the mystery of Eden, this is the river of Eden; this the mark that was set upon Cain, that any one who finds him might not kill him. Cain, he says, is the one whose sacrifice the god of this world did not accept. The gory sacrifice however of Abel he approved of; for the ruler of this world rejoices in offerings of blood. This, he says, is he who appeared in the last days in form of a man, in the times of Herod, being born after the likeness of Joseph who was sold by the hand of his brethren, to whom alone belonged the coat of many colours

This serpent, he says, is the great beginning respecting which Scripture has spoken. Concerning this, he says it has been declared : "In the beginning was the Word..." (Jn 1.1-4). And in him, he says, Eve was made, Eve who is Life; now Eve is "the mother of all living beings" (Gen 3.20) — a common nature, that is, of gods, angels, immortals, mortals, irrational creatures, and rational ones. For, he says, the expression "all" he uttered of all existences. (*Elenchos*, V,16)

The serpent of paradise identified with Jesus, Jesus identified with Sabaoth and Sabaoth identified with the creator Word has become the cosmic serpent which the Gnostics depict as a serpent biting its own tail, uniting the beginning and the end, and symbolizing the eternal becoming. Here the serpent is identified with the "Beginning" which is both the first word of Genesis, *Bereshith*, "In the beginning" — which a certain exegesis personifies by translating "In Beginning" — and the first word in the Gospel of John. Both references to the beginning are united in an exegesis of the most debated verse in John's Prologue, for the phrase "in him Eve was made, Eve who is life" corresponds exactly to *ho gegonen en*

*antô; zoê ên*, "what was made in him was Zoe", Zoe meaning life, the Greek translation of Eve in Hebrew. Eve, the mother of all the living, is not fleshly Eve, but spiritual Eve more or less equivalent to Sophia's daughter or Sophia herself.

The Perate then sees the image of the serpent in the sky :

And if the eyes of any, he says, are blessed, this one, looking upward on the firmament, will behold at the mighty summit of heaven the beautiful image of the serpent coiled round the great Beginning of the sky, and becoming an originating principle of every species of motion to all things that are being produced. He will thereby know that without him nothing consists, either of things in heaven, or things on earth, or things under the earth. Not night, not moon, not fruits, not generation, not wealth, not sustenance, not anything at all of existent things, is without his guidance. In regard of this, he says, is the great wonder which is beheld in the firmament by those who are able to observe it. For, he says, at this top of his head, a fact which is more incredible than all things to those who are ignorant, "are setting and rising mingled one with other" (quotation from the poet Aratos, v. 62). This is in regard of which ignorance is in the habit of affirming : in heaven "Draco revolves, marvel might of monster dread" (Aratos, v. 46). And on both sides of him have been placed Corona and Lyra; and above, near the top itself of the head, is visible the piteous man "Engonasis", "Holding the right foot's end of Draco fierce" (Aratos, v. 70). And at the back of Engonasis is an imperfect serpent, with both hands tightly secured by Anguitenens, and being hindered from touching Corona that lies beside the perfect serpent. (*Elenchos*, V,16)

After this summary, the *Elenchos* summarizes another work just as admirable but more speculative :

According to the Perates, the universe consists of Father, Son and Matter (...) Intermediate, then, between the Matter and the Father sits the Son, the Word, the Serpent, always being in motion (...) At one time he is turned towards the Father; and receives the powers into his own person; but at another (...) is turned towards Matter. And Matter (...) moulds into itself forms from the Son which the Son moulded from the Father (...) For if any one, he says, of those beings which are here will have strength to perceive that he is a paternal mark transferred hither from above, and that he is incarnate (...), then he is of the same substance altogether with the Father in heaven, and returns thither. If, however, he may not happen upon this doctrine, neither does he understand the law of generation from which there is no escape, just as an abortion born at night he will perish at night. When, therefore, he says, the Saviour observes, "your Father which is in heaven", he alludes to that one from whom the Son deriving his characteristics has transferred them hither. When, however, the Saviour remarks, "Your father is a murderer from the beginning" (Jn 8.44), he alludes to the ruler and demiurge of matter,

who, appropriating the marks delivered from the Son, generated here below. From the beginning he was a murderer, for his work causes corruption and death.

No one, he says, can be saved or return into heaven without the Son, and the Son is the Serpent. For as he brought down from above the paternal marks, so again he carries up from thence those marks roused from dormant condition (...) transferring them hither from thence (...) As the naphtha drawing the fire from every direction toward itself; nay rather, as the magnet attracting the iron and not anything else, or just as the backbone of the sea falcon, the gold and nothing else, or as the chaff is led by the amber, in this manner, he says, is the portrayed, perfect, and consubstantial genus drawn again from the world by the Serpent; not does he attract anything else, as it has been sent down by him. (*Elenchos*, V,17)

These delightful comparisons are to be found, except that of fire, in the Naasenes (V,9) and the Sethians (V,21). They recall Jn 6.44-45, "No one can come to me unless drawn by the Father who sent me (...) Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me"; and Jn 8.47, "Whoever is from God hears the words of God. The reason you do not hear them is that you are not from God", or again, "My sheep know me" (Jn 10.14). There are therefore two kinds of men and two kinds of generation : those who are engendered from above in the Matter by the Word-Son-Serpent and those who are engendered from below, by taking the traits transmitted by the Son, by the Demiurge-Devil-serpent (Jn 8.44).

More generally, both the serpent of Paradise and the Old Testament god are divided into two new persons.

The first person is the Word, a creator like the Old Testament god, an instructor and a saviour like the serpent in Paradise and the bronze snake. He came down from the realm of the uncreated during Herod's reign in the shape of a man called Christ to make what had come down below rise above. He is the only one whose image, the great Serpent or Dragon, shines eternally in the pole of the sky as proof that nothing exists without his command.

The second person is Satan with his angels, the counterfeiters, the snakes of the wilderness. He is also a creator, but the men he engenders belong to Matter. He is also the serpent of Paradise, a seducer and not a saviour and his image in the sky is the small equatorial snake restrained by the Anguitenens or Serpentary whose heliac rising announcing winter, will symbolize the advent of evil into the world.

#### THE SETHIANS (*Elenchos* V, 19)

The Sethians who claim to be the descendants of Seth, Adam's legitimate son in his likeness and image (Gen 5.3), in contrast with the descendants of Cain and Abel born out of Eve's defilement by the Jewish god (Gen 4.1-2), profess a gene-

ral theory of the universe based on three principles : Light, Darkness and Wind or Spirit (the Hebrew word *rouah* has two meanings). According to them, a violent wind arose from the waters of Darkness inflating them into waves to produce all beings. The wind is none other than the Spirit of God moving on the water in Gen 1.2, that is the demiurge himself.

But the Wind (the demiurge), at the same time fierce and formidable, whirling along, is, in respect of its hissing sound, like a serpent. First, then, from the wind — that is, from the serpent — has resulted the originating principle of generation (...) After, then, the light and the spirit had been received, he says, into the polluted and baneful and disordered womb, the serpent — the wind of the darkness, the first-begotten of the waters — enters within and produces men, and the impure womb neither loves nor recognizes any other form. The perfect Word of supernal light being therefore assimilated in form to the beast, that is the serpent, entered into the defiled womb, having deceived it through the similitude of the beast itself, in order that the Word may loose the chains that encircle the perfect mind which has been begotten amidst impurity of womb by the primate offspring of water, namely, serpent, wind, beast. This, he says, is "the form of a slave" (Ph 2.7), and this the necessity of the Word of God coming down into the womb of a virgin... (*Elenchos*, V,19)

The identification of the serpent with the demiurge is obviously for an entirely different reason than the similarity between the whistling of the wind and of the serpent. The real reason is the reversal of gnostic exegesis which turns the serpent both into the Genesis god and the devil. But gnostic exegesis is not forgotten, despite the reminder not only of the "form of a slave" (Ph 2.7), but again of the virginal conception (Mt 1.18; Lk 1.26-38).

#### THE Gnostic JUSTIN (*Elenchos*, V,23-28)

Whereas the above doctrines were anonymous, and were gradually constituted, like that of the great Church, within religious groups that took the name of an idea (Gnostics or Perates) or a personage (Naassenes, Ophites, Sethians) on whom they call as the Christian will call on Christ, Justin's doctrine (a homonym of Justin martyr) appears to be an individual elucubration which had few followers. The reason for this is undoubtedly its strangeness and also the perfection of a system that apparently required no subsequent emendations.

For Justin, as in the previous systems moreover, there are three uncreated principles : the supreme god endowed with forethought, whom he calls the Good One; the demiurge who has two names : Elohim as without forethought, ignorant and blind; the Father as the father of all the begotten beings; and lastly, Matter, a young woman above the groin under the name of Eden, a viper beneath the groin

under the name of Israel. Elohim engenders from Eden (Matter) twelve paternal angels including Baruch (the Blessed) and twelve maternal angels including Naas (the Serpent). Baruch (= the Christ) is called allegorically the tree of life, and Naas (the Serpent) the tree of knowledge. Baruch forbids man to eat Naas, that is, to obey him because Naas (here = YHWH) committed adultery with Eve, but Naas stifled Baruch's voice. Then Elohim sent Hercules as a prophet, but Omphales seduced him. Lastly, in the reign of King Herod, Baruch (the Christ) is sent below by Elohim; he found Jesus (at the baptism of John) and revealed all the mysteries to him. Jesus preached; Naas wanted to seduce him (by tempting him in the wilderness); but unsuccessful, he had him crucified. Jesus surrendered his body to Eden (Matter), committed his spirit into the hands of Elohim the Father (Lk 23.46), and ascended to the Good One.

In this curious "mythological jumble" the roles are redistributed according to gnostic exegesis and its counter exegesis. We have indicated the identification of the persons between brackets. They can be regrouped as follows :

— three uncreated principles : the supreme god called the Good One (Mt 19.17); the ignorant blind creator who takes the name of the Father; matter which includes Israel as a viper (!);

— two created principles : that of goodness, Baruch, the tree of life, both the Genesis god, as forbidding to eat the tree of knowledge, and the Christ, as sent by the Father; and that of evil, Naas, the serpent of paradise, the tree of knowledge, the Genesis God who after committing adultery with Eve, made Adam and Eve sin and tried to make Jesus sin.

Jesus is a man like other men. Baruch, the Christ, the Messiah, sent by the creator, seizes him when he was baptized by John. Naas, the devil, tried to seduce him by tempting him in the wilderness and, unsuccessful, had him crucified. When Jesus died, he rendered his body to matter, committed the Christ to the creator who sent him, and ascended to the supreme god, the Good One from whom he originated like all men. This ascent is salvation.

## THE MANICHAEANS ACCORDING TO THEODOR BAR KONAI

Gnostic exegesis is also preserved in Manichaeism (though this is however an entirely separate religion). According to Theodor bar Konai (*circa* 800 CE) :

Manes also said that Jesus the luminous drew near Adam and awoke him from a death-like sleep (...) Then Adam examined himself and knew who he was. (Jesus) showed him the fathers above and his own self (...), mixed and enslaved, (...) chained in the stench of the Darkness. Mani added that Jesus made him stand upright and taste the tree of life (= the tree of the gnosis). Then Adam recovered his sight (= 'and their eyes opened') and wept, (...) and he said : 'Curse, O curse the

creator of my body, he who has imprisoned my soul, and woe to the rebels (the archons) who have enslaved me. (CSCO 66,317)

Here Jesus is attributed with the role which, in gnostic texts, is devolved to spiritual Eve, Zoe, that is he awakens Adam from his sleep of unconsciousness and makes him stand upright whereas the archons who had moulded him could only make him crawl on the ground. Jesus also plays the role of the serpent, but there is some confusion between the tree of knowledge and the tree of life.

### THE OPHITES ACCORDING TO EPIPHANIUS (*Pan.* 37)

As the Naassenes had taken their name from the Hebrew word *naas*, "the snake", so the Ophites took theirs from the Greek word *ophis*, the root of a number of names and adjectives in French and English related to the snake. What Epiphanius, in the midst of his apologetic considerations, relates about their doctrine, approximates it with that of the Gnostics of Irenaeus (*Adv. H.* I,XXX) and, especially, with the fundamental gnostic writing, the *Apocryphon of John*. Here are the passages from Epiphanius which interest us the most :

But they are called Ophites because of the serpent which they magnify (...)

But the snake which appeared at that time was not the only cause of so much evil for mankind. It was the one who spoke in the snake — I mean the devil — and who troubled the man's hearing through the women (37,1)

For their snake says it is Christ. Or rather it does not — it cannot talk — but the devil put this idea in their mind (37,2)

These so-called Ophites too ascribe all knowledge to this serpent, and say that it was the beginning of knowledge for men. (37,3)

After relating the myth of the birth of Yaldabaoth and his desire that his sons ignore that someone exists above him, Yaldabaoth adds

And they say that he, Yaldabaoth, is the God of the Jews. But this is not so, heaven forbid! God the Almighty will judge them, for he is God both of Jews and Christians, and of everyone — not any Yaldabaoth, as their silly mythology has it. (37,3)

Next Epiphanius relates the myth of man moulded by the archons, crawling on the ground unable to stand upright. Then, opposing Yaldabaoth's designs, the Mother from above, called Pronikos, to empty him of the spark of light from above that came from her, gave him the idea of infusing it into man by breathing onto his face (*Gen* 2.7); then man stood upright and knew the Father on high who is above Yaldabaoth.

And then Yaldabaoth was distressed because the things far above him were recognized by man. Bitterly he stared down at the dung of matter and sired a power that looked like a snake, which they also call his son. And so, they say, this son was sent on his mission and deceived Eve. She listened to him, gave him credence as to the son of God, and because of her belief ate from the tree of knowledge. (*Pan.* 37,4)

The expression according to which Eve obeyed the snake "as the Son of God", was encountered earlier in Irenaeus's account of the Gnostics. Here the serpent is given as the son of Yaldabaoth, namely he is identified with Sabaoth, effectively Yaldabaoth's son. Numerous gnostic amulets and talismans depict a many-headed serpent, bearing the inscription KYRIOS SABAOth. Sabaoth is in fact "the Lord of the powers", *kyrios tôn dunameôn*, and the powers, namely the demons, are his subjects and obey him. It is in his capacity as Sabaoth Lord of the powers that in the Roman introduction to the Sanctus, "the powers feared" Jesus (*tremunt potestates*) and that, in the gospels, the demons obey him, declare they know him, saying that he is "the Holy One of God" (Mk 1.24; Lk 4.34) or "the Son of God" (Lk 4.41). In this entanglement of identifications it can no longer be said whether the serpent deceives or undeceives Eve in his capacity as the son of Yaldabaoth or the Son of God.

Later on, Epiphanius continues his quotations or summaries :

We magnify the serpent for this reason, they say, it has been the cause of knowledge for the man. They say that Yaldabaoth did not want the Mother on high, nor the Father, remembered by men. But the serpent convinced them and brought them knowledge, and taught the man and woman the whole of the knowledge of the mysteries on high. Hence his father — Yaldabaoth, that is — was angry because of the knowledge he had given men, and threw him down from heaven. And therefore those who belong to the serpent, call him a king from heaven and nothing else. (*Pan.* 37,5)

Here again, there is some confusion. In actual fact the serpent is the son of Yaldabaoth because Jesus was identified with Sabaoth, and he became the Son of God when the Jewish god was identified with the Father; on the other hand, Yaldabaoth was truly angry with the snake (Gen 3.14-15) but only deprived him of his paws, and it is Yaldabaoth who was cast out of heaven.

What shook Epiphanius the most, is how the Ophites celebrate the Breaking of Bread :

And so, they say, they magnify the serpent for such knowledge and offer him bread. For they have an actual snake, and keep it in a sort of basket. When it is time for their mysteries they bring it out of the den, spread loaves around on a table, and call the snake to come; and when the den is opened it comes out. And

then the snake — which comes up of its own purpose and villany, already knowing their foolishness — crawls onto the table and coils up on the loaves. And this is what they call a perfect sacrifice.

And so, someone has told me, not only do they break the loaves the snake has coiled on and distribute them to the recipients, but they each kiss the snake besides. The snake has either been charmed into tameness by some sort of sorcery, or cajoled for their deception by some other work of the devil. But they worship an animal like this, and call what has been consecrated by its coiling around it the eucharistic element. And they offer a hymn to the Father on high — again, as they say, through the snake — and so conclude their mysteries. (37,5)

The Ophite rite of the eucharist, which has never ceased even today to scandalize the readers of Epiphanius just as incapable as he was to understand its meaning, is not repugnant for the fun of it, without cause; it expresses in the most eloquent way possible what we have learnt from the Emmaus account, namely that the eucharistic bread is a sacramental substitute for the tree of gnosis around which iconography depicts the serpent coiled to speak to Eve.

In conclusion to his refutation of the Ophite heresy, Epiphanius writes :

For Jesus Christ our Lord and the divine Word, begotten of the Father before all ages, without beginning and not in time, is no serpent — heaven forbid! He himself came to oppose the serpent. (37,8)

## CONCLUSION

To conclude our review of the sects which claim their authority from the serpent, we could twist Epiphanius' phrase around and say : "The saviour Jesus, later identified with Lord Sabaoth, the son of Yaldabaoth, who became the son of the Father, the creator Word and Messiah or Christ, is truly the instructor serpent of Paradise who came to oppose the creator god of Genesis, who later became the devil and was identified with this same serpent in Paradise, who became the seducer.

## Chapter 15

### THE PROBLEM OF HISTORICIZATION

Il y a le roman et il y a l'histoire.

D'avisés critiques ont considéré le roman comme de l'histoire qui aurait pu être, l'histoire comme un roman qui avait eu lieu. (André Gide, *Les caves du Vatican*)

To conclude, one last problem must be tackled. How were the principal characters in early Christianity, John and Jesus, who did not exist, any more than a few others who necessarily appear with them in the gospels, endowed with a quasi-biography? The most comprehensive answer to the question is that the so-called "memoirs of the Apostles", according to Justin's expression, combine what is appropriate for John and Jesus in accordance with the myth from which they originate, on the one hand, with what they should have been to make them acceptable to the Jews, on the other.

#### THE HISTORICIZATION OF JOHN THE BAPTIST

Whereas Jesus is a divine person first sent to Paradise and again under Tiberius to teach the path of salvation and institute the eucharist, the sacrament of *gnosis*, John, according to the hermetist myth of baptism in the crater (*C.H.* IV,4-6; see *Logique des sacrements*, p. 105-140) is simply a man chosen by the Father to proclaim baptism, the sacrament of *noûs*, the "intellect" or "spirit", a faculty of supernatural knowledge, the faculty of acquiring *gnosis*.

In accordance, therefore, with the logical precedence of the faculty of knowing over the acquisition of knowledge, baptism will precede the eucharist and John will be the forerunner of Jesus. It was easy to find biblical passages applicable to this situation: "Behold, I send a messenger before you" (Ex 23.20); "He will prepare the way before you" (Mal 3.1); "The voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord" (Is 40.3), quoted in Mk 1.2-3 and plls, the bad break in the last quotation gives it the meaning sought, which resulted in making John preach in the wilderness of Judaea.

As the Jews believed that Elijah who was taken to heaven (2 Kings 2.1) would one day return (Mal 4.5), John was invested with his coat of hair and leather belt (2 Kings 1.8; Mk 1.6).

In the infancy gospels John will be Jesus' cousin and necessarily his elder. He will die before him to leave him a clear field, and will be decapitated to symbolize, according to the Fathers, the cessation of the prophecy.

The first person of the new religion has thus become the last person of the ancient Law.

### THE HISTORICIZATION OF JESUS

The historicization of Jesus is obviously much more developed than that of John — it pervades the gospels — and also much more studied by the critics. It would be worthwhile to review the history of this research..

### THE JESUS OF FAITH AND HISTORICAL JESUS

Since 1778, when G.E. Lessing published a "fragment" taken from the 4000 manuscript pages left by H.S. Reimarus (1694-1768) entitled "The Object of Jesus and his Disciples", it is customary to distinguish between the historical Jesus and the Jesus of faith. In reviewing attempts to write the life of Jesus published between 1778 and 1901 in *From Reimarus to Wrede* (1906), Albert Schweitzer (of Lambarene) showed that it was impossible to reach the historical Jesus. At the same time, Alfred Loisy wrote that by 1894 the only article of the symbol of faith he took literally, was that Jesus had been "crucified under Pontius Pilate" (*Choses passées*, 1913, p. 165). And in *Jésus et la tradition évangélique* (1910), he wrote "if doubt is cast on this fact, there are no grounds for affirming the existence of Jesus" (p. 45). In actual fact Loisy did not uphold the existence of Jesus for critical reasons, but because he was attached to the Church, and he needed a spark to kindle a fire: "Show me a spark", he retorted for the benefit of his contemporary mythologists, namely A. Drews in Germany, Paul-Louis Couchoud and Prosper Alfaric in France. This challenge is equally valid for their successors: Georges Las Vergnas, Georges Ory, Marc Stéphane, Guy Fau and, currently in England, G.A. Wells. It is not enough to show that there is no proof for the existence of Jesus, nor that his life was written relying heavily on so-called prophecies, as P. Alfaric has clearly shown in his two short publications on the gospel of Mark, *La plus ancienne vie de Jésus* and *Pour comprendre la vie de Jésus* (1929), it is necessary to define why there was a need to write his life and explain how Christianity could have arisen without the existence of the one given as its founder, when it did in fact found him.

### THE FORM CRITICISM SCHOOL

After the first world war, the great names of exegesis not to be ignored are those of Martin Dibelius with his book *Die Formgeschichte des Evangeliums* (The History of Genres in the Gospel) (1919) and Rudolf Bultmann, the author of *Die Geschichte der synoptischen Tradition* (1921, The History of the Synoptic Tradition). These two Evangelical writers were among the first to apply to the gospels a method originally developed by Herman Gunkel for the study of traditions recorded in Genesis, a method to which the name of *Formgeschichte*, after the title of Dibelius' book, remains connected. The method consists of examining each of the small units or pericopes which compose the gospels and sorting them according to their literary genre or "form": biographical narratives, miracles (...); words or sayings, proverbs, parables, etc. and tracing them back to their formulation in the oral tradition. The results of the analyses based on this method show that none of the units, whatever the genre, narrative or saying, makes it possible to ascertain the historical Jesus, but only what a community of believers thought about him and what they made him say to justify their faith in him and place their doctrine and rules of conduct under his authority.

### THE REDACTION CRITICISM SCHOOL

The almost non-existent role attributed to the historical Jesus appeared too weak to exegetes to substantiate and justify the Jesus of faith, so after the second world war a movement emerged from the form criticism school which embarked on a "new quest of the historical Jesus" after the title of a book by James M. Robinson, *A New Quest of the Historical Jesus* (1959). Its principal exponents were Bultmann's disciples: H. Conzelmann, G. Bornkamm, W. Marxsen, J. Jeremias... Using the same method as their predecessors, they nevertheless paid greater attention to explaining the redaction of pericopes and the gospels, distinguishing what stemmed from an earlier tradition and what was added or modified by later redactors depending on the requirements of their Church. Chapters One to Three on the Feeding narrative and the Last Supper are a good example of what should be the history of redaction (*Redaktiongeschichte*), though the results presented were obtained without a concern for applying a classified method, I was about to say a recipe. The "new quest for the historical Jesus" led the exegetes to develop rules ranging from two to ten depending on the greater or lesser requirements of the authors; their application should enable to discern what might originate from Jesus, and which they hasten to state did in fact come from him. The current trend therefore increases historicity; no one still confines himself to the crucifixion under Pontius Pilate, and the mythist hypothesis is held to be completely far-fetched.

To conclude, we can say that the problem of the historicization of Jesus and the writing of the gospels was almost entirely resolved by critics in the 19th and 20th centuries, whether or not they called on form criticism or redaction history methods. But for a clear understanding of the origins of Christianity, a gulf — not only psychological — exists between the supposition that Jesus existed — even if one admits to knowing nothing certain about him or denies him as the founder of Christianity — and the statement that he does not belong to history and that gnosticism and later Christianity invented him. The interpretation of the New Testament and of the too often neglected writings which frame it before and after must therefore be completely renewed within this new perspective. The following study on Jesus' family is a modest attempt in this direction. The paper was read at the *XI Incontro di Studiosi dell'Antichità cristiana* (at the Institutum Augustinianum, Rome, 6-8 May 1982), though not published in the Acts. The opening is a reminder or fairly comprehensive summary of the major theses of this book.

## JESUS' FAMILY IN THE APOCRYPHA AND THE NEW TESTAMENT

And the Virgin conceived and bore;  
And she was in labour, and bore a Son without feeling pain...  
She bore like a man voluntary (*Odes of Solomon*, 19, 6-10)

The statements about Jesus' family contained in the Apocrypha and the New Testament are somewhat contradictory. It would be methodologically incorrect to favour some affirmations to the detriment of others with the illusory pretext of establishing the reality of the facts. The only "facts" attainable are the texts. I shall not quote all the texts nor group them together chronologically here — an impossible task — but confine my endeavours to establish the logical sequences of the concepts they reflect.

The general underlying problem is the relationship between the divine and the human in Jesus. There are three fundamental viewpoints:

— the gnostic viewpoint, which regards Jesus as merely a god in human form;

— the Jewish-Christian viewpoint, which wants to regard him as the messiah, that is an ordinary man chosen and "annointed" by God;

— the viewpoint which will become orthodox, and combines both viewpoints and defines him as true God and true man.

The way in which Jesus' family is conceived depends on which viewpoint dominates.

## 1. THE Gnostic VIEWPOINT

According to the gnostic conception, Jesus is an instructor, a revealer who descended from the Father on high, the true God, to teach gnosis, the knowledge of salvation. He is a second manifestation in the world of the supernatural Being who first appeared in paradise in the form of a serpent to incite Adam and Eve to thwart the ruse and lie of the creator god of the material world who, by forbidding the tree of knowledge, wanted to keep them in ignorance of the Father and enslave them as the Jews whom he subjected to the Law later.

This conception was held by the earliest sects, who claim their authority from the snake: the Naassenes, Perates, and Sethians described in the fifth book of the *Elenchos*; the gnostics described by Irenaeus (*Adv. H.* I,XXX,7); the Ophites of Epiphanius (*Pan.* 37,2-8); the Manichaeans according to Theodore Bar Konai (CSCO 66,317). It is directly attested in the Nag Hammadi writings in the *Testimony of Truth* (NH IX,3,48,20 sqq.) and the *Apocryphon of John* (NH II,1,22,9) where Jesus declares that he incited Adam and Eve to eat the fruit. It is also professed by the first author of the Emmaus narrative taken up in Lk 24.13-35 when failing to recognize Jesus, the two disciples are undeceived by him as to the true nature of the messiah, as Adam and Eve were undeceived by the serpent about the true nature of the tree, and where the eucharistic bread like the fruit of paradise opens eyes and procures knowledge (Gen 3.5-7; Lk 24.30-31).

The Saviour's second mission on earth is presented as a hidden descent followed by a glorious ascent. The *Ascension of Isaiah* shows how he was sent by the Father, to avoid recognition when he crossed through the five lower heavens, how he assumes the form of the angels who inhabit them and, finally, appeared on earth as a human being and then, after his crucifixion, reascended in glory, this time honoured by the astonished angels of each heaven (10,7 sqq.). Ignatius of Antioch in his *Letter to the Ephesians* (19) describes the turmoil caused by the apparition of a star among the stars whose brilliance surpassed them all and who is none other than God appearing in human form.

The Philippians hymn 2.6-11, earlier than Paul, shows Jesus existing in the form of a god and taking the form of a slave; made like man and in appearance taken for a man, he is obedient to the point of death on a cross. Then God — the Jewish god identified with the Father — superexalts him and gives him the Name above all names — his own name: YHWH Sabaoth — so that every tongue may proclaim that Jesus is *Kurios*, "Lord", in the glory of the Father.

Similarly, the Letter to the Hebrews teaches us that "the one who for a while was made lower than the angels, Jesus, we see him now crowned with glory because of the suffering of death" (Heb 2.9). However, unlike out-and-out gnostics, the author of Hebrews, a Jew who wants to convert the Jews, grants Jesus a body of flesh, a passion and a real death because "he had to become like his brothers in every respect to save them" (Heb 2.14-17; 5.7; etc.). Nonetheless, by applying to "Christ entering into the world", the modified verse from Ps 40.7-9: "You wanted neither sacrifice nor oblation, but you arranged a body for me (...) Then I said: See, I have come (...)" (Heb 10.5-7), the author seems to say that Jesus received his body before leaving heaven. In any case, he excludes that Jesus could have been born and have had a human family because he is a priest according to Melchizedek's order, who was "without a father, without a mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning or ending of days, resembling the Son of God" (Heb 7.3).

This was also, it appears, the position of the author of the Prologue of John if one accepts that verse 13 was put into the plural to avoid saying that the Word made flesh "was born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God".

## 2. JEWISH-CHRISTIAN REQUIREMENTS

To make the Jews believe in the gnostic Saviour he had to be presented to them as one of the persons whose return or coming they expected in a more or less confused manner: Elijah, the prophet like Moses, or better still, the Messiah. In this last capacity Jesus had to be the son of David: "Christ is descended from David and comes from Bethlehem, the village where David lived" (Jn 7.42); "God will give him the throne of his father David" (Lk 1.32; 1.69). And in the mouths of the crowd: "Is that the son of David?" (Mt 12.13), "Have mercy on us, son of David" (Mt 2.27; 15.12; 20.30-31; Mk 10.48), "Hosanna to the son of David" (Mt 21.9 and plls).

Proof of filiation must however come through paternal genealogy. Jesus therefore would have had a father according to the flesh, Joseph, of the lineage or house of David (Mt 1.20; Lk 1.27; 2.24), and two different authors will take pains to enumerate his ancestors. The genealogy preserved in Luke retains something of gnostic ideas by tracing Jesus, the Son of God, back to Adam, the son of God; the genealogy preserved in Matthew, wholly Jewish in inspiration, makes Jesus descend from Abraham, substitutes the unknown lineage of David in Luke by a royal lineage, and gives Joseph one Jacob for father, like the patriarch, to infer that Jesus was both the messiah of Judah and of Israel (Lk 3.23-38; Mt 1.1-17).

Jesus, the son of Joseph, therefore has a mother called Mary like Moses' sister, and siblings, since his parents must have obeyed the commandment "Increase

and multiply" (Gen 1.28; etc.) and would have been blessed with numerous offsprings according to the ideal of a true Jewish family. Mark and Mathew have preserved the names of his brothers: James, Joset or Joseph, Jude and Simon (Mk 6.3; Mt 13.55). Until the *History of Joseph the Carpenter* (2), the names of his sisters, Asia and Lydia were not known.

### 3. THE CHRISTIAN SYNTHESIS

Joseph's paternity is opposed to divine paternity: as a person, in his "self" Jesus cannot have two fathers, be the Son of God and the son of man at one and the same time, and in this competition the divine will obviously win. The two genealogies only enter into the gospels with a gloss that destroys their significance: instead of "Matthan begot Jacob, Jacob begot Joseph, Joseph begot Jesus", we read in the received text of Mt 1.17, discounting the other variants : "(...) Jacob begot Joseph, the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born, who is called Christ"; and in Lk 3.23, instead of "Jesus began his ministry, being the son of Joseph, son of Heli (...)", we read "(...) being, as was thought, the son of Joseph".

Jesus will not therefore have a father according to the flesh, but to affirm the reality of his body against gnostic docetism, he retains a mother who is necessarily a virgin. The virginal conception of Jesus within the marriage of Mary and Joseph and their other children requires some explanation which will be given by Luke and Matthew, who added their infancy gospels to the nucleus constituted by Mark. Luke wrote his gospel from Mary's point of view; Matthew from Joseph's point of view in accordance with Jewish ideas; differences in time, place and circumstances make it difficult to reconcile them.

### 4. VAIN GNOSTIC PROTESTS

Jesus' davidic filiation and Mary's virginal maternity were both as contrary to gnostic thought as they were to each other.

The opposition to the davidic filiation used to express the Old Testament text of Ps 110.2, the most often quoted in the New Testament, "How can the scribes say that the Christ is the son of David? David himself declared: The Lord said to my Lord... David himself calls him Lord; so how can he be his son?" (Mk 12.35-37; Mt 22.42-45; Lk 20.41-44). The statement is ascribed to the scribes and the refutation put in Jesus' mouth. But as for the Jews Jesus must be the messiah, although he did not accomplish the expected mission by restoring the kingdom of Israel (*Ps. Sol.* 17; Lk 24.21; Acts 1.6) and despite a father by adoption, Jesus' davidic filiation will be taken as granted, even before the idea of justifying it by linking Mary to David as well (*As. Is.* 9,2, *Ps-Mt* 1.12).

Gnostic thought cannot admit that Jesus could be in anyway connected with carnal generation instituted by the creator, since he came, contrary to the statement in Mt 5.17 but in accordance with Marcion (*Adv. H.* I,27,2), "to abolish the Prophets and the Law and all the works of this god who made the world, and that he also calls the Cosmocrator", which the *First Letter of John* (3.8) also expresses in equivalent terms, saying that "the Son of God appeared to destroy the works of the devil", the identity of the Jewish god and the devil being clearly established in the gnostic movement (cf. Jn 8.44). It is therefore ruled out that Jesus could have had a mother, and all the more reason, a Jewish mother. Furthermore, the circumstances of carnal generation and especially birth appear to the gnostics as a profanation. "God could not have become incarnate and remained pure"; "a divine birth is a shameful thing" Marcion also states. The *Acts of Peter* (24) quote an unknown prophet: *Non de vulva mulieris natus, sed de caelesti loco descendit*, "he was not born from the vulva of a woman, but came from a celestial place". And, much later, the *Acta Archelai* (47): *Absit ut Dominum N. J. C. per naturalia pudenda mulieris descendisse confitetur; ipse enim testimonium dat quia de sinibus Patris descendit*, "Let it not be said that our Lord Jesus Christ came from the shameful parts of a woman; he himself witnesses that he came from the Father's bosom".

The condemnation of carnal generation, the work of the devil, entails a double obligation: to hate one's parents who brought one into the world, and not to procreate.

The first obligation is clearly proclaimed by Jesus in Lk 14.26: "Whoever does not hate father and mother, wife and children, [brothers and sisters, yes and even life itself], cannot be my disciple". The same statement occurs in the *Gospel of Thomas* 55 and 101, whereas Mt 10.37 mitigates this requirement in two ways: "Who loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me". So, therefore, if Jesus had had a mother and brothers, he should have hated them. Consequently, the mother and brothers enumerated by his fellow citizens in Nazareth with complacency marvelling at his doctrine (Mk 6.3) reappears not to be disowned but denied: "Who are my mother and brothers? And looking at those who sat around him, he said here are my mother and brothers" (Mk 3.31-35; p11s).

The second obligation also rules out that he could have had a mother and, similarly, he denies he has one. To the woman in the crowd who raised her voice and said: "Blessed is the womb that bore you and the breasts that nursed you", Jesus replies "Blessed are those who listened to the word of the Father and put it into practise in truth! For days will come when you will say: Blessed is the womb that never conceived and the breasts that did not nurse!" (*Gosp. Th.* 79). If Jesus had had a mother, she would not have practised the word of the Father not to procreate for the Archon. The symmetrically perfect logion in the *Gospel of Thomas* will be demolished in our gospels. Luke transposes the beatitude of sterility to the anguished days of the ruin of Jerusalem (Lk 23.28-29), which in the

synoptic apocalypse becomes a lament for pregnant or nursing women (Mk 13.17; Mt 24.19; Lk 21.23), so that the woman's exclamation (Lk 11.27-28) despite the *Quinimmo beati* restriction which agrees with the negation of brothers (Mk 3.35; plls), will definitively remain to the glory of Mary.

## 5. THE DOCETIC REVENGE: "IN PARTU" VIRGINITY

The advent of Jesus into the world through a virgin mother will also come to be established as a fact even for the gnostics, though docetism will not admit defeat. Its weapon will be overstatement. In order to deny the impossible reality of Jesus' body, miraculously conceived though born naturally according to Isaiah's prophecy 7.14 quoted in Mt 1.22-23: "Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son", belief in his divinity will imagine a virginal birth. As after his resurrection Jesus will be said to have disappeared before the disciples at Emmaus and have passed through the doors or walls of the cenacle, so at birth he will be said to have passed through Mary's body without causing her pain. He was not therefore born *ek partenou, ex Maria virgine*, "from the virgin Mary" as the symbols of faith insist on stating, but *dia parthenou* "through a virgin", and without taking anything from her, "like water passes through a pipe" according the Valentinian comparison quoted by Irenaeus (*Adv. H.* I,7,2; III,2,3) and repeated after him by twenty-five heresiologists (See M. Tardieu in B. Barc, *Colloque international sur les textes de Nag Hammâdi*, 151-177).

This doctrine of the virgin birth should quite naturally be historicized in the narratives. In the interpolation called Christian in the *Ascension of Isaiah*, "Mary saw a little child and she was frightened (...) and her breast was the same as before her conception (*Asc. Is.* 11,8-9). In the more popular infancy accounts — *Protoevangelium*, *Pseudo-Matthew*, *Gospel of the Nativity of Mary* —, the establishment of preserved virginity is entrusted to a midwife and birth is accompanied or constituted by a luminous phenomena. The connection with docetism is especially explicit in the old part of the *Latin revision of the Protoevangelium*: "I was stricken with fear, said the midwife Zachel. I saw a great light appear. Gradually as the light intensified, it assumed the shape of a newborn baby. I dared to lean forward, took it and lifted it up (...) I was frightened because it was weightless. I examined it: it was without impurity. Its whole body shone with divine dew, light and splendid (...)" *Virgo concepit, virgo parturit, virgo perman-sit*, "a virgin she conceived, a virgin she gave birth, a virgin she remains".

## 6. POST-PARTUM VIRGINITY

The passages in Lk 2.7: "Mary gave birth to her firstborn son", and Mt 1.25: "(Joseph) had no marital relations with her until she had borne a son", imply that

Jesus' siblings mentioned in the gospels are the younger children of Joseph and Mary. But how to admit that she whose virginity had been preserved *in partu*, "including childbirth", could have defiled herself later by marital intercourse! The brothers and sisters of Jesus must be Joseph's children from an earlier marriage and, consequently, he was imagined as an old man whom the Jewish high priest entrusted with the care of the virginity of the mother of the (gnostic) saviour.

A further step was made by monastic piety, the heir and continuator of gnostic ascetism. In his ardent refutation of Helvidius, Jerome states that Jesus and Mary must have been entrusted to a virgin man, that "Joseph himself was a virgin" and that Christ, a virgin, was born out of a marriage between virgins" (*Adv. Helv.*, 19). And therefore, Jesus' half-brothers and sisters are only his cousins.

## 7. OTHER GNOSTIC CONCEPTIONS

The author of *Pistis Sophia* opposed in advance that Mary could ever be declared the mother of God. Jesus explains to the Apostles that he spoke to Mary in the shape of the angel Gabriel, that he thrust on her the body he wore in the world above and instead of the soul, the Virtue he had received from the Great Sabaoth. Mary then tells her son that, when he was with Joseph in the vineyard, another child like him came to the house and asked, "Where is my brother Jesus?" When the two children meet they embrace and became one person, like Pity and Truth in Ps 85.11. Pity is the Spirit from above, spiritual Jesus; Truth is psychic and hylic Jesus, the son of Mary. Jesus and the apostle Thomas, his twin, who are so alike that they are mistaken for one another, appear to be approximately in the same relationship.

According to the 19th Ode of Solomon, the Virgin conceived and "bore like a man voluntary". The text is to be set aside logion 114 of the *Gospel of Thomas* where Simon Peter recalls, concerning Mary Magdalen, that the female sex is not worthy of life and where Jesus replies that every woman who will become masculine will enter the kingdom. Through her virginal motherhood Mary returns to the original state of man created in the image of God male and female (Gen 1.27), androgynous like God himself, Primordial Man, who begot without the concourse of a feminine principle. In taking Eve from Adam's rib as he slept and therefore against his will, the Jewish god destroyed "man in the image" by separating the sexes. In Mary, who gave birth without knowing a man, both sexes are reunited once again, and man in the image of god is reconstituted.

## EPILOGUE

The answer to the question asked on page one of this book, 'Tell me, what is Jesus ?' corresponds to none of the beliefs professed by the established religions or the religious movements which stemmed from them. Jesus appeared in succession or simultaneously as the Serpent of Paradise, Lord god Sabaoth, the son of Yaldabaoth, then the son of the Father, the Davidic Messiah, who suffered, rose from the dead and ascended to heaven from whence he will return as judge.

At the same time or as a counter balance, the god of Genesis and of Israel was the devil or Satan, then his own son Sabaoth, and, identified with the Father, becomes once again the one and only true God. All these speculations were based on exegesis, that is the reasoning applied to texts believed revealed.

I think I have conducted my investigations in good faith, in an unbiased, dispassionate and disinterested way in accordance with the oath I took, as recorded in "Problem and deontology". May the reader be inspired by the same principles of intellectual independence and emotional detachment.

I do not underestimate the personal and public consequences resulting from the acceptance of the results of my investigations in scholarly circles and their transmission to a wider public sooner or later. I both wish for and dread them. I only hope that the ensuing transformations will take place in an atmosphere of understanding, tolerance, friendship, patience and respect for individuals and ideas. However difficult and painful they may be, let us remember the words from the Gospel of John (8.32): "The truth will free you".



**NOTE ON GNOSTIC WRITINGS**  
**BIBLIOGRAPHY OF WORKS CITED**  
**INDICES**



## NOTE ON THE Gnostic WRITINGS

As the general public is unfamiliar with the gnostic writings, it is as well to present them briefly.

Our knowledge of the gnostic movement is based on the refutations by the Church Fathers and on gnostic writings translated or written in Coptic (late Egyptian), unearthed in Egypt at different periods. There are two groups:

### I. Three pre-1945 collections:

1) The London manuscript (British Library Additional 5114) or *Codex Askewianus* after the name of its first owner, Antonius Askew, better known as *Pistis Sophia*. English translation: *Pistis Sophia*, edited by C. Schmidt, translation and notes by V. Mac Dermot, Leiden, 1978 (NHS 9).

2) The Oxford MS. (Bodleian Library, Bruce MSS 96) or *Codex Bruceanus: The Books of Jeu and the Untitled Text in the Bruce Codex*. Text edited by C. Schmidt, translation and notes by V. MacDermot, Leiden, 1978 (NHS 13).

3) The Berlin papyrus (P. Berolinensis 8502) or *Berliner Codex*, including the *Gospel of Mary*, the *Apocryphon or Secret Book of John*, *Sophia or the Wisdom of Jesus Christ*, the *Acts of Peter*. English translation: E.R. Hardy in R.M. Grant, *Gnosticism*, New York and London, 1961, p. 65-85. In French: translation and commentary by Michel Tardieu, *Le Codex de Berlin*, Paris, 1984 (SGM 1).

For more details about these three collections, see Michel Tardieu and Jean-Daniel Dubois, *Introduction à la littérature gnostique I: Collections retrouvées avant 1945*, Paris, Cerf, 1986.

II. The library of fourth-century papyrus manuscripts discovered in 1945 at Nag Hammadi in Upper Egypt consists of thirteen codices, some damaged, published in *The Facsimile Edition of the Nag Hammadi Codices*, Leiden, E.J. Brill (12 volumes published between 1972-1979). Translation: *The Nag Hammadi Library in English*, translated by members of the Coptic Gnostic Library Project of the Institute for Antiquity and Christianity, James M. Robinson, General Editor, Leiden, E.J. Brill, 1977; third, completely revised edition, 1988.

For an introduction to the gnostic movement, see the small volume by Hans Jonas, *The Gnostic Religion*, Boston, Beacon Press, 3rd ed. 1970 and the important more recent work by Bentley Layton, *The Gnostic Scriptures*, London, SCM Press, 1987, 526 p., where the author wanted to present the gnostic and some of the heresiologist texts in a coherent synthesis.

Three important collections of studies on gnosticism are worth mentioning:

— *Nag Hammadi Studies* (NHS), edited by M. Krause, J.M. Robinson, F. Wisse (forty volumes published so far).

— *Bibliothèque Copte de Nag Hammadi* (BCNH), edited by Paul-Hubert Poirier, Laval University (Quebec), Leuven, Editions Peeters (20 volumes published).

— *Sources Gnostiques et Manichéennes* (SMG), edited by Michel Tardieu, Paris, Editions du Cerf (2 volumes published).

Prior to the publication of the gnostic documents discovered in modern times, the main source for our knowledge about the gnostics were the Patristic writings, Irenaeus' *Adversus Haereses*, the *Elenchos* attributed to Hippolytus, Tertullian's treatises and Epiphanius' *Panarion*.

The gnostic tractates are cited by the name given in the manuscripts and when the title is missing, by name based on the contents, followed by 1) the name of the codex or collection (e.g. B, NH); 2) for the Nag Hammadi texts, the codex number in Roman numerals (e.g. NH III) and, in Arabic numerals, when appropriate, the number of the tractate in the codex (e.g. NH II,5; 3) the number of the page and the first and last lines of the passage cited (e.g. *Apoc. John (Apocryphon of John)*, NH II,1,28,32-29,15 = Nag Hammadi codex II, tractate 1, page 28, line 32 to page 29, line 15).

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**TRANSLATOR'S NOTE—** The translations of the classical, patristic and gnostic texts are based on available printed translations, indicated in the bibliography. Quotations from the Bible are taken from the New Revised Standard Version, except for the Septuagint. However, in many instances, all the translations have been made more accurate by the Author.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jean Magne, born on 20 July 1910, seminarist at Issy theological college and a student at the Angelica and Gregoriana Pontifical Universities, country priest before and after his captivity in Germany, returned to Rome for three years of study, at the end of which his investigations forced him to leave the Church in February 1959 at the age of forty-eight. Misplaced in industry for two years, he was able to resume his studies, thanks to Professor André Dupont-Sommer, with a post as librarian of the Institut d'Etudes Sémitiques at the Sorbonne University and then at the Collège de France. Graduate of the Ecole pratique des Hautes Etudes (Religious sciences), Doctor in Religious Sciences (Patristics), author of numerous articles in specialized journals, at the age of seventy-nine he decided to publish a synthesis of the results of fifty years of analysis and reflection which he endeavoured to make accessible to the non-specialist.

**From Christianity to Gnosis**  
and  
**From Gnosis to Christianity**  
*An Itinerary through the Texts to and from the Tree of Paradise*

Starting with the eucharistic liturgies, proceeding with the Feeding and Last Supper narratives, the author arrives at the account of the Emmaus pilgrims and points out that the eucharistized bread given by Jesus opens the eyes of the two disciples as the fruit of Paradise eaten at the serpent's instigation opened the eyes of Adam and Eve.

The parallel between the bread at Emmaus and the fruit of Paradise supposes a positive interpretation of the Genesis narrative: just as the two disciples were saved by acknowledging the crucified Jesus as the Messiah "at the Breaking of bread", so Adam and Eve were saved by acquiring the knowledge of good and evil, *gnosis* or the science of salvation, through the manducation of the fruit.

Attested and refuted by the early heresiologists, this positive interpretation of Adam's disobedience is set out in the gnostic writings discovered at Nag Hammadi in Upper Egypt in 1945.

The author puts forward the hypothesis, subsequently proved by the texts, that the gnostic movement originating in this anti-Judaic interpretation of Genesis, gave rise to Christianity through a gradual but Law-less rejudaization.



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